

APPENDIX 1 - ADULT SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY TASK GROUP- PROGRESS UPDATE MARCH 2014

NAME OF SCRUTINY PANEL: Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel

NAME OF SCRUTINY REVIEW/TASK GROUP: Review of Adult Skills and Employability

DATE OF FINAL REPORT: June 2013 – **This update is for November 2014**

	RECOMMENDATION	PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	PROGRESS UPDATE NOV 2014
1	<p>Recommendation 1 That Cabinet engage the councils apprenticeship group, and work closely with the Economic Well Being Sub Group (EWG) to utilize existing good practice, to increase the number and diversity of apprenticeships available to adults from 18 years onwards (and beyond 24 years of age) to increase employment opportunities for adults.</p>	<p>Officers sit on both the Sutton and Merton Apprenticeship Forum and the Economic Well Being Group (EWG) and so information and good practice is shared between the groups. Representation includes officers from Children, Schools and Families who work with NEET's and looked after children. There are also training providers, JCP, RSL's, Merton Chamber of Commerce, Grenfell and Commonsense Trust representatives.</p>	<p>Sara Williams futureMerton</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>The EWG and joint apprenticeship groups continue to work together to support employment and particularly apprenticeship opportunities. The EWG group meet every six weeks to discuss progress and to highlight opportunities to bid for funds. Members feedback to the Sutton and Merton apprenticeship forum meetings which are quarterly.</p> <p>Members of the EWG are actively involved in the review of the Skills and Employment Action Plan to set the priorities for the next two years.</p>

APPENDIX 1 - ADULT SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY TASK GROUP- PROGRESS UPDATE MARCH 2014

		The Employment and Skills Action Plan (2013-14) sets out reducing youth unemployment/NEETs as a priority		
2	Recommendation 2 That Cabinet identifies and establishes 100 new apprenticeships in the borough for adults of all ages within the next 12 months.	<p>The EWG can encourage employers to employ apprentices by promoting the benefits of apprenticeships. The EWG launched the “Take One” initiative led by Merton Chamber of Commerce. This is a programme of engagement with local businesses to encourage them to take on one new person as an apprentice, for work experience or employment.</p> <p>The number of apprenticeships placed can be reported back to Scrutiny within an agreed timetable.</p>	Sara Williams futureMerton	<p>The Employment and Skills Action Plan saw the development of the Take One initiative. As at the end of September there are 174 apprentices in post through Take One. MCC have been funded by the access to Employment and Skills funds (Economic Development reserves) up to the end of September 2014.</p> <p>Merton Chamber of Commerce (MCC) are now using the Take One and EWG model to promote a “Skills for the Workforce” pan London initiative which is to promote and support SME’s to participate in the Apprenticeship programme and to offer opportunities to young adults. This will be launched in November and will run until July 2015. It is funded by current European Social Fund (ESF) managed through Newham college. Part of the programme includes showcasing Merton’s Economic Wellbeing Group as best practice to other LA’s to demonstrate how to work</p>

APPENDIX 1 - ADULT SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY TASK GROUP- PROGRESS UPDATE MARCH 2014

				in partnership when engaging with businesses. The other participating local authorities are Croydon, Sutton, Richmond, Hounslow, Southwark, Greenwich and Newham.
3	<p>Recommendation 3 That the Council, engaging with all relevant departments increase the number of apprenticeships available for adults through the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tendering process; • Community Plan; and • Regeneration Plans for Merton 	<p>Merton’s Skills and Action Plan (2013-2014) sets a priority action of increasing employer demand and take-up of apprenticeships. This will be actioned by using suppliers and the Councils procurement policy to increase the number of apprenticeships through suppliers and contractors.</p>	<p>Procurement Team</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Currently there are 39 apprentices working across 18 different sections across Merton. Most of these are studying Business Administration, however some apprentices are also studying, IT, legal, facilities, waste services, customer services, gardening, engineering and communications. Since July 2014 22 new apprentices have been recruited across Merton. There are 29 apprentice vacancies at different stages of the recruitment process.</p> <p>The number of looked after young people recruited by Merton has increased from 2 to 5 since July. This is a result of working closely with leaving care services and other partners in publicising the opportunities we have across the council. All LAC candidates</p>

APPENDIX 1 - ADULT SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY TASK GROUP- PROGRESS UPDATE MARCH 2014

				<p>are guaranteed an interview if they meet the job spec. All managers are notified if a LAC young person applies.</p> <p>More work needs to be done on this recommendation to ensure there are corporate measures in place to support the departments in increasing the number of apprentices through the tendering process. The Community Plan was refreshed in 2013 and a new plan will be written in the next two years but the soft touch refresh in 2015 can include the theme of skills/employment with a focus on apprenticeships.</p>
4	<p>Recommendation 4- That Cabinet considers establishing an information portal for use by partner organisations to facilitate greater information sharing, working with the Economic Well Being Sub Group.</p>	<p>A portal has not been created but information is shared through the EWG minutes. Information amongst members on good practice, bid opportunities and share information is regularly discussed. This is serviced through futureMerton. Meetings take place every 6 weeks. A portal would require a</p>	<p>Sara Williams futureMerton</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>The first newsletter has been produced and sent for October 2014. This is sent on a monthly basis to a number of partners, training providers, schools and registered providers. The newsletter will be produced until there is sufficient content to develop a communication portal. The content is produced by members of the EWG and the employment and skills officer in</p>

APPENDIX 1 - ADULT SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY TASK GROUP- PROGRESS UPDATE MARCH 2014

		dedicated officer to manage and update.		<p>futureMerton coordinates this.</p> <p>In addition to this, futureMerton are now regularly tweeting on the social networking site twitter. The tweets include retweets from local partners and providers, information on local events and opportunities, as well as advertising internal and local job and work experience opportunities.</p>
5	<p>Recommendation 5 That Cabinet support/endorse adult employment and skills activities being delivered through the Partnership's Economic Wellbeing (EW) Sub Group.</p>	<p>The EW Group has been recognised for the achievements to date. There is a proposal for the Group to apply for Flexible Support Funds to support adult employment and skills activities.</p>	EWG	<p>The FSF bid is being led by Grenfell Housing. It has been postponed following new guidelines from JobCentre Plus. The bid will be reworked and in the region of £50k.</p> <p>Other successful partnership bids include funding for a “Demand Led Pilot” programme and further funding from the London Learning Consortium for a community learning fund. (£350k and a further £32k).</p> <p>Other funding has been received from the National Apprenticeship Service (via London Councils) for the Take One project. (£20k). this led to a pan London project (see recommendation 2).</p> <p>Grants from the Economic Development Strategy’s access to</p>

APPENDIX 1 - ADULT SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY TASK GROUP- PROGRESS UPDATE MARCH 2014

				<p>employment and skills reserves fund were provided to partners for projects being delivered by one or more of the stakeholders. This included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Merton chamber of Commerce’s “Take One” business engagement to Sept 2014 - £11,500. • Commonsense Trusts “Step Forward Programme” supporting 100 families with problems arising from debt, housing problems, domestic violence, low skills - £5,000 • Merton Adult Education (MAE) “Route to Self Employment” courses and market trading workshop for 30 unemployed Merton residents - £4,992 • Grenfell Housing’s “Home Instead Programme” of training to prepare candidates to work in the field of care - £10,125
6	<p>Recommendation 6 That Cabinet endorse the provision of tailored support programmes in local libraries to support writing applications, CV’s, and accessing online</p>	<p>There is a Citizen Advice Bureau website which is facilitated through the libraries and this provides guidance on job-ready activities such as applications and CV writing.</p>	<p>Anthony Hopkins Head of Library & Heritage Services</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>All libraries provide employability support workshops on a weekly basis and events have recently been added to further broaden the offer.</p>

APPENDIX 1 - ADULT SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY TASK GROUP- PROGRESS UPDATE MARCH 2014

	resources for interview practice etc, building upon the good practice that already exists in libraries, as part of the councils assisted digital strategy.	The Council are working closely with JobCentre Plus and the voluntary sector to deliver programmes of on-line activity to support unemployed residents. In our libraries we now have support programmes.		An online training package is currently being rolled out to staff to further improve their skills in providing employability support for customers.
7	Recommendation 7 That Cabinet agree to debate and consider the Councils inward investment Strategy by December 2013.	<p>The brief for the Inward Investment Strategy and Action Plan (IIASP) is being prepared.</p> <p>Cabinet and the Adult Skills & Employment Task Group will be consulted on the IISAP.</p> <p>When completed the IISAP will include :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Merton's offer for attracting inward investment (from foreign and UK companies) • Place marketing (marketing & promotion of Merton as a place for inward investment) • Specific projects for attracting inward investment –and the 	Eric Osei, Business Growth Officer	<p>IIBR Strategy and Action Plan completed 30 Sept 14. It sets out in a clear and practical manner what LBM and its partners should be doing to attract new companies. (both domestic and foreign companies) as well as supporting existing firms (business retention and aftercare).</p> <p>A business event targeted at Merton's large, medium size and high growth companies to be held on 13 November 14. The aim of the workshop/event is to seek input from the companies and key partners on the delivery of the strategy and their potential role in delivering the jobs, re-investment /expansion, attracting new companies and other outputs.</p> <p>Delivery of smaller short term projects underway. However larger projects will require external funding. Officers will be seeking appropriate sources of external funding.</p>

APPENDIX 1 - ADULT SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY TASK GROUP- PROGRESS UPDATE MARCH 2014

		type of investment the borough can realistically attract		
8	<p>Recommendation 8 That Cabinet undertake an appraisal of the opportunities for exploiting the SW19 brand to attract investment to the borough, working with the Wimbledon Business Improvement District, to develop a partnership led strategic vision for the borough.</p>	<p>A future Wimbledon Conference took place on 17th October 2013. Information collected from businesses and developers at the event will be included in the Councils overall Inward Investment Strategy and Action Plan (IISAP). futureMerton work closely with LoveWimbledon (Wimbledon BID) and the Head of Sustainable Communities sits on the BID Board so partnership is well established and any ideas on promoting SW19 within our forthcoming IISAP are/will be in consultation with LoveWimbledon.</p>	<p>Paul McGarry futureMerton</p>	<p>Wimbledon and the SW19 offer will be a major element of the overall Inward Investment and Business Retention Strategy (IIBRS).</p> <p>FutureMerton plan to commission a master plan for Wimbledon in 2015 to guide investment and manage growth for the next 15 years, considering the potential of Crossrail2 as a catalyst for growth.</p> <p>In 2014 it held an ideas competition is a pre-cursor to that master plan as an opportunity for rising stars and community champions so share their ideas for Wimbledon to share their aspirations at the earliest stage and inform the future plans.</p> <p>The competition, organised by Merton Council, Love Wimbledon Business Improvement District and Design Council, attracted ideas from professionals and local creative</p>

APPENDIX 1 - ADULT SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY TASK GROUP- PROGRESS UPDATE MARCH 2014

				<p>communities whose imaginations were fired by the possibility of imagining the Wimbledon town centre of 2030.</p> <p>Nearly 100 entries were submitted to a panel of judges. An exhibition of competition entries is taking place at New London Architecture and in Wimbledon town centre between 9th October and 7th November.</p> <p>The futureWimbledon website can be seen here:</p> <p>http://www.futurewimbledon.co.uk/Home</p>
9	<p>Recommendation 9 That Cabinet consider the feasibility of offering business rate incentives and more flexible packages to attract investment into the borough.</p>	<p>futureMerton and Revenue & Benefits have developed policy and eligibility criteria for the new Business Rate “Discount” scheme. The proposals are pending approval.</p> <p>In addition, advice on business rate (including rate relief) is advertised on the Council’s website as well as the new futureMerton brochure on business</p>	<p>David Keppler, Head of Revenue & Benefits.</p>	<p>A scheme is in place offering business rates discounts to those that meet the eligibility criteria. Details are on our Merton web pages.</p> <p>Businesses submit an application and are awarded if they meet the criteria of the scheme. To date we have given relief to 3 businesses to a value of £5,600. The take up has not been substantial and requires more marketing to promote the offer.</p>

APPENDIX 1 - ADULT SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY TASK GROUP- PROGRESS UPDATE MARCH 2014

		support and finance for Merton businesses.		
10	Recommendation 10 That Cabinet, in consultation with local businesses, considers the viability of offering additional courses/training that meet employer demand and may increase the employment opportunities of residents in the borough. The Task Group acknowledges that any delivery model and the courses that will be delivered are part of a wider Cabinet decision on the outcomes of the Public Value Review being undertaken of Merton Adult Education. (MAE)	Business consultation training needs exercise to be undertaken. MAE have engaged with the Tesco South Kensington and New Malden branches regarding IT and ESOL training for staff	Yvonne Tomlin MAE	Much networking has been undertaken to capture some training needs. Survey has not yet been completed Have liaised with Wimbletech campus in offering free and reduced rates on room usage at Wimbledon and Whatley site this has resulted in increased requests for room lettings. Room letting promotion has commenced with listings on a number of key sites, in the Google search for venues in Wimbledon MAE is high on the list
11	Recommendation 11 That Cabinet explore the possibility of offering an enhanced set of courses and qualifications that are more attractive to employers for example, offering bespoke training to local companies	Discussion underway with the Higher Education Funding council regarding degree programmes. Consultation on the types of courses required will be integrated in the survey in point 10.	Yvonne Tomlin MAE	Meeting with ABE a business focused examination body, was scheduled in March 2014. Two report writing courses have been developed one focused on Social Workers the other a more generic audience. The course has been developed in partnership with 'Create

APPENDIX 1 - ADULT SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY TASK GROUP- PROGRESS UPDATE MARCH 2014

	or diplomas that enable students to graduate and move into the second year of a degree programme.	Bespoke Adult Social Care courses being developed for launch in the new year. The service has undergone a staffing re-structure whereby new commercially focused sales roles have been established.		Expectation'. The first course is due to launch in May 2014. Further social media, marketing and business courses under development, with plans to launch in June.
12	Recommendation 12 That Cabinet support the development of the Merton Adult Education service as a commercial brand, alongside longer term work on further developing the reputation and provision of MAE.	Development and implementation of commercial business plans.	Yvonne Tomlin	The service has completed the Target Operating Model (TOM) exercise and produced action plans for the commercial short courses. Adult Learning Review has resulted in further activity taking place a decision is due to take place in January 2015 regarding the future of MAE
13	Recommendation 13 That Cabinet consider setting up a virtual Merton Business School that will support Merton residents and existing and prospective businesses.	MAE will develop further for possible implementation in 2015	Yvonne Tomlin	No current updates

APPENDIX 1 - ADULT SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY TASK GROUP- PROGRESS UPDATE MARCH 2014

<p>14</p>	<p>Recommendation 14 That Cabinet agree to Merton Adult Education (MAE) becoming accredited to deliver higher level qualifications and to engaging local in the delivery of these courses.</p>	<p>Discussion underway with the Higher Education Funding council regarding degree programmes.</p> <p>Currently delivering the CELTA Cambridge higher level qualification</p>	<p>Yvonne Tomlin</p>	<p>MAE is exploring extending the curriculum offer to include Access Courses.</p> <p>ABE offer degree level courses, a meeting was scheduled in March 2014.</p> <p>ABE Accreditation to deliver Higher Education Qualifications has been prepared, submitted and approved, a range of leadership and marketing courses now on offer. A specifically designed marketing campaign is being developed for launch in 2015</p> <p>Contacted Kingston University regarding possible partnership working. A successful meeting took place at the university whereby we have agreed enrichment activities for our Early Years programmes as this could result in progression onto the Kingston widening participation degree</p>
<p>15</p>	<p>Recommendation 15 That Council endorse the development and refresh of the Adult Skills Strategy and engage futureMerton and partners in this process to make the relevant linkages in terms of economic</p>	<p>The current Employment and Skills Action Plan (2013-2014) is being implemented. It is proposed that an update report be presented for the first years activities to Cabinet in December/January 2014.</p>	<p>Sara Williams futureMerton</p>	<p>Currently the Economic Well Being Group (EWG) is working with Shared Intelligence to review the existing Employment and Skills Action Plan and considering priorities for the next 2 years (2015-2017). The research should be concluded by the end of the year.</p>

APPENDIX 1 - ADULT SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY TASK GROUP- PROGRESS UPDATE MARCH 2014

	development in the borough.	Taking forward a further Plan beyond 2014 could require additional funds to be provided for activities to support the objectives and outputs.	<p>Stakeholders are being interviewed to establish priorities and understand what has worked well. A number of focus groups will be taking place in November to understand the barriers to employment from the claimant's perspective.</p> <p>Although youth unemployment/ NEET's will remain a priority for the forthcoming action plan, we shall also be prioritising those 25 and over and those on long term health related benefits.</p>
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