

Agenda item 7

For Information – Update on projects with the business community

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Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the projects FTC has delivered with the business community over the last 6 months. A verbal presentation will be made by Vivienne at the meeting.

Background

FTC is committed to developing initiatives that bring businesses together with the aim of identifying what businesses need, can share with other businesses and give back to the community. The projects highlighted in this report reflect that approach.

Business Breakfasts

The schedule for Business Breakfast events for 2019 was released in February. Topics range from IT security, making your business more energy efficient, mental health awareness in the workplace, business strategy, through to marketing and goal setting. The Breakfasts are on the first Wednesdays of the month and are held at different venues across the town to enable the host venues to showcase their work/ services - the April Breakfast was held at the new Stony Street House restaurant. A full list of the Breakfast events is available at <https://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/your-business/frome-business-breakfasts>.

Discuss & Do

FTC continues to work with the Chamber of Commerce towards our early evening business event Discuss & Do, which offers local businesses the opportunity to get together to discuss business related topics including tax and finance, social media and business planning. These events take place on the 4th Tuesdays of the month at 6pm. <https://fromechamber.com/whats-on/discuss-do>

Soul Traders

Soul Traders takes place once a month in the Town Hall to support people working on their own. Topics over the last 6 months have included identifying barriers, goal setting and how to find the clients you want.

Visitor Conference

On 12 February we held a Visitor Conference to bring together individuals and businesses who are working to promote Frome as a destination. Over 50 people attended, all with an interest in keeping Frome a thriving town for tourism.

The event was free to attend and included information about the celebrations to mark 200 years since the birth of J.W Singer, along with information about FTC's Walkers and Cyclists Are Welcome initiatives and Discover Frome's online booking system for accommodation providers. The conference was a great opportunity for local businesses who work in tourism to network and to discuss how they can work together to promote Frome as a top destination. More information can be found at: <https://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/discover-frome-visitor-conference>

Apprenticeships and Employability

On 3 April, FTC hosted an Apprenticeship Conference in the Town Hall. Local businesses were invited along to hear about the benefits that apprentices can bring to their business, the steps involved, and how Frome Town Council can help throughout the process.

The event brought key organisations together to hear how businesses can become more involved in developing work skills for people in Frome, including Frome College, Critchill School, Somerset Education & Business Partnerships, Somerset Skills & Learning, and representatives from the local Job Centre.

One of the outcomes of the conference was that there are a number of ways businesses can help prepare young people for work, such as work experience placements, taking part in careers talks and mock interviews, and supported interns, and FTC will be working more with the organisations above to promote these to local businesses.

In March, Jacob Lee completed a two-week work experience programme with Bosch in Frome's twinned town of Murrhardt in Germany. This was arranged by FTC and Murrhardt Council and is part of an international work experience programme.

Frome Busks

Frome Busks was held on 30 March. The event provides young musicians with the chance to perform in public, as well as increasing footfall in the town centre. Some of the performers had never performed in public before and their confidence clearly grew throughout the day.

Retailers commented that the day had given the town a real vibrancy, that their customers had greatly enjoyed seeing the performers, and that they would very much like to see the event repeated next year. Prizes for the winners included the chance to perform at the Sunrise Festival and the Rook Lane Chapel, plus a recording at the Cheese & Grain's new

recording studio. <https://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/frome-busks-brings-music-to-the-towns-streets>

Good Business Reviews

Over the last 6 months, we have met with four local businesses to offer Good Business Reviews. FTC will continue to promote these to businesses and plan to offer a revisit to businesses we reviewed previously to see how they are progressing, if they need any further help, and to hopefully get some success stories to promote the service further.

Communications with business

Any business that would like to stay up to date with information about what FTC is doing to support the business community can sign up to receive information from our Business Update Mailing List. We send out regular Business Bulletins to let businesses know about activities that are relevant to them, along with promoting FTC business events.

The business section on the FTC website has information to help businesses stay informed of business activities in the town, as well as useful links to help their business develop.

Conclusion

The business community in Frome is generally very open to and supportive of the events and initiatives FTC offers. Through providing the above activities, FTC encourages businesses to come together to share knowledge and support each other, and in turn create a strong business community.

We will continue to monitor and review the work we are doing to make sure it is relevant to business needs, accessible, continues to increase the vibrancy of the town and benefits the wider community.