

Agenda item 5

For decision – Findings and actions from Vocational Training Steering Group

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Summary

This paper provides an update on the Vocational Training Steering Group which was established to review and improve vocational training opportunities in Frome. Included in the paper is the Group's statement of intent for approval.

Background

On 10 September 2019, Frome Town Council hosted a meeting at the Town Hall to review what vocational training opportunities are currently available in Frome and where potential gaps might be.

The meeting was chaired by Cllr Maxine Crawley and attended by representatives from Frome College, Somerset Skills & Learning, Frome Community Education, the Cheese & Grain, Eaventure, Frome Chamber of Commerce, Mendip District Council and Frome Town Council.

Prior to this, individual meetings were arranged with Strode College, Bath College and Wiltshire College to understand what these FE Colleges were offering students, some of whom travel from Frome, and what future developments they may be interested in in Frome.

There have been two subsequent Steering Group meetings since 10 September where representatives from Jobcentre Plus, Upskill Bath College, Wiltshire College, Critchill School, Gold Seal Project (mentoring and training provider) have been invited along to share with the group ways of improving vocational training in Frome.

Two young trainees from SS&L also attended the last meeting on 20 January to feedback their experiences of looking for training in Frome and to hear some of the group's suggestions.

Outcomes so far from the Steering Group

Statement of intent

A statement of intent has been drafted to summarise the Group's commitment to vocational training and education and this has support amongst the members. Please see statement below:

Vocational education & training – a statement of intent

The skills and experience of local people will underpin the future success of Frome's economy. In order that we can meet future economic challenges and opportunities, we will need to make the most of residents' economic potential and develop a highly skilled and adaptable workforce. Key to achieving these aims will be filling a gap in the provision of vocational education and training in the town and improving access to learning opportunities.

Our focus will be on:

- Scaling up the provision and accreditation of vocational education and training in the town with reference to growing sectors of employment, e.g. the green economy.
- Offering improved information, advice, guidance and opportunities to develop life and employability skills to help people of all ages enter and re-enter the workforce. An emphasis will be placed on supporting school-leavers and young people and those returning to work whose skills need to be updated.
- Ensuring that training provided in Frome meets the current and future needs of local employers and society as well as developing skills that are flexible and transferable.

We will work together and closely with the business community, training providers and others to explore how we can deliver these improvements.

Connecting training providers and referrers

The meetings have offered a positive environment for training providers to connect with each other and provide them with a platform to promote their varying training opportunities to local organisations such as Frome College, Critchill School and Jobcentre Plus.

Promoting training opportunities to young people in Frome

Two trainees from SS&L attended the last meeting stating that when they were looking for training, they couldn't find any information about what was available. They felt that more needed to be put on social media to let young people know what was available and that short videos would be the best means of communication.

Training providers event

One of the outcomes of the steering group was the decision to organise a collaborative event for providers offering training in and around Frome. FTC and SS&L have partnered to run the event which is being held in SS&L's new offices in Palmer Street.

The event is planned for 25 March 2020 and is targeted at individuals wanting to learn new skills, including young people and people wanting to retrain/ return to work. Frome Community Education, Jobcentre Plus, Bath College, Strode College, Wiltshire College,

Edventure, Jobcentre Plus, Frome College, Critchill School, Cheese & Grain and Mendip District Council have all been invited to be a part of the event.

During the event, information will be gathered from attendees about what their training needs are, and they will then be linked up with suitable providers.

Life-skill coaching at Frome College

Frome College presented a proposal to the group about a mentoring programme they are interested in for some of their underperforming Special Educational Need students who are most at risk of becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training). This was broadly supported.

Mentoring would focus on life skills such as:

- Self-confidence – discussing strengths and areas for development
- Job Searching – how to search and apply for jobs
- Rehearsal interviews – practising responses to interview questions
- Exploring possible career or training paths
- Personal finance and money skills – understanding budgeting, loans, rent mortgage and credit cards
- Presentation skills – presenting and talking in front of others

Next Steps for the vocational training steering group

- Work with Frome College towards finding life-skills coaches for their mentoring programme.
- Collate and analyse findings regarding attendees' training needs from the training event on 25 March.
- Create a vocational training page on the FTC website with links to providers and promote through social media.
- Promote agreed statement of intent.
- Carry out an in-depth survey into what business' training needs are in Frome and identify business champions to promote improving vocational training. We are currently in discussions with partners about how this could be delivered.
- FTC's role will continue to be one of coordination and promotion involving staff time only.

Recommendations

Approve the vocational training statement of intent and endorse the next steps identified above.