

SALTASH TOWN TEAMS

Business Training and Skills Support Programme

A Committee Report and Delivery Framework

Prepared for the Saltash Town Teams Committee

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Status: For Committee Consideration and Decision

Contents

1. Executive Summary

Saltash's local economy rests on a broad base of independent retailers, hospitality businesses, professional and trade services, community enterprises, and a growing number of home-based and micro-businesses. This diversity is a civic strength, but it also means that support needs are varied, and that many businesses lack the scale, time, or budget to access training that is otherwise available across Cornwall.

This report sets out a considered, evidence-led and financially disciplined proposal for Saltash Town Teams to establish a Saltash Business Skills Programme: a 12-month pilot of demand-led, low-cost, locally delivered training, coordinated by Town Teams and delivered in partnership with Cornwall Council, the Cornwall Growth and Skills Hub, further education providers, business representative bodies and private specialists.

The report recommends that a Business Skills Working Group be formed under Town Teams to govern the pilot, that a short business needs survey and provider mapping exercise precede any expenditure, and that a maximum indicative budget of £3,500 be earmarked, with a clear expectation that at least 50% of costs will be met through external funding, sponsorship or in-kind partner contributions.

The proposed programme addresses ten priority themes ranging from digital skills and artificial intelligence through to business resilience and emergency preparedness, and is designed explicitly to complement — not duplicate — existing provision. A governance structure, risk register, communications plan, equalities considerations and a monitoring and evaluation framework are included so that the Committee can take a single, fully informed decision covering both the principle and the practical delivery of the programme.

Key recommendations at a glance

- Approve the establishment of a Saltash Business Skills Working Group, reporting to Town Teams.
- Commission a business training needs survey and a provider mapping exercise before committing further funds.
- Approve an indicative maximum pilot budget of £3,500, contingent on securing at least 50% external contribution.
- Deliver a minimum of four training sessions within 12 months, subject to evidenced demand.
- Receive a full evaluation report, including outcomes and a recommendation on continuation, at the end of the pilot.

2. Background and Strategic Context

Saltash businesses make a significant contribution to local employment, town centre vitality and the wider Tamar Valley economy. As a gateway town between Devon and Cornwall, Saltash occupies a distinctive position: it benefits from passing trade and visitor footfall, while also serving as a genuine local high street for residents.

Smaller businesses in the town face a recognisable set of structural barriers to training and development:

- Cost: many courses are priced for larger organisations or corporate training budgets.
- Time: owner-operators and small teams cannot easily step away from day-to-day trading.
- Location: relevant training is frequently delivered in Plymouth, Truro or online only, at times that do not suit shift and trading patterns.
- Awareness: businesses are often unaware of existing free or subsidised support already available to them.
- Capacity: micro-businesses, sole traders and family-run firms often operate with no spare staffing capacity to release someone for training.

These are not unique to Saltash, but a locally coordinated response — rooted in the town and delivered by an organisation businesses already know and trust — can meaningfully lower the barriers described above without creating additional bureaucracy.

Alignment with wider policy and provision

The programme is designed to sit alongside, and draw down from, existing provision rather than compete with it. Relevant context includes:

- Cornwall Council's economic growth and regeneration priorities, including town centre vitality and high street support.
- The Cornwall Growth and Skills Hub, which brokers free and subsidised business support and training across the county.
- Cornwall College and other further education and university provision, including apprenticeship and adult skills programmes.
- National business support schemes delivered through the Federation of Small Businesses, Chambers of Commerce and sector bodies.
- Cornwall's Net Zero and energy efficiency support schemes, relevant to the proposed cost-reduction strand of the programme.

This report recommends that, before any Town Teams expenditure is committed, a formal mapping exercise establishes exactly what is already funded and available, so that Town Teams resource is targeted only at genuine gaps.

3. Governance and Committee Structure

To ensure the programme is delivered with proper oversight, transparency and accountability to Town Teams, it is recommended that a dedicated Business Skills Working Group be established as a sub-group of Saltash Town Teams.

Proposed Working Group structure

Role	Responsibility
Working Group Chair	Overall coordination, liaison with Town Teams and Cornwall Council, chairing quarterly reviews.
Town Teams Officer / Coordinator	Day-to-day administration, survey delivery, provider liaison, venue booking.
Business Representative(s)	Two to three local business owners co-opted to ensure the programme remains demand-led.
Finance Lead	Budget monitoring, tracking of external funding and sponsorship secured against target.
Cornwall Council Liaison	Ensures alignment with Council and Growth and Skills Hub provision; avoids duplication.

The Working Group should report to full Town Teams at each of its regular meetings during the pilot, with a formal written update at the three, six and twelve-month points, culminating in the final evaluation report described in Section 10.

Decision points reserved to Town Teams

1. Approval of the programme in principle and the indicative budget envelope.

2. Approval to proceed to Stage 3 (delivery) following the survey and provider mapping in Stages 1 and 2.
3. Any decision to commit Town Teams funds where external contribution falls below the 50% target.
4. Approval of continuation, extension or closure of the programme following the pilot evaluation.

4. Objectives

The programme is built around five core objectives, each with a defined rationale and success measure.

Objective	Description	Rationale
1. Identify local training needs	Undertake a short business survey and direct engagement to establish the skills gaps businesses themselves consider most important.	Ensures the programme is demand-led rather than assumption-led, and avoids commissioning training nobody attends.
2. Improve access to training	Create a simple local directory of existing training and support already available to Saltash businesses.	Addresses the awareness barrier at negligible cost, and is of value even if no new training is commissioned.
3. Deliver targeted training	Where a clear gap is identified, organise affordable workshops or training sessions in Saltash.	Converts identified need into practical, local, low-cost provision.
4. Support business growth	Help businesses develop skills to increase productivity, improve customer service and attract new custom.	Links training directly to commercial outcomes for participating businesses.
5. Strengthen the local economy	Support the resilience and competitiveness of Saltash businesses and a vibrant town centre.	Connects the programme to Town Teams' wider town centre and economic remit.

5. Stakeholder Mapping

Successful delivery depends on engaging the right partners from the outset, both to maximise free or subsidised provision and to ensure the programme reaches the businesses who need it most.

Stakeholder	Potential Role
Saltash Town Teams	Programme owner, coordination, venue, promotion, and residual funding of gaps.
Cornwall Council	Policy alignment, potential funding, economic development support, promotion via Council channels.
Cornwall Growth and Skills Hub	Free business advice, potential co-funded or fully-funded training delivery.
Cornwall College / universities	Accredited and non-accredited training, apprenticeship and adult skills provision.
Federation of Small Businesses / Chambers of Commerce	Member expertise, sponsorship, promotional reach, speaker access.
Local banks and financial institutions	Business finance, fraud and cybersecurity expertise, possible sponsorship.

Stakeholder	Potential Role
Local businesses and sole traders	Programme beneficiaries; survey respondents; co-opted Working Group members.
Cybersecurity and digital marketing specialists	Delivery partners for specialist sessions, potentially pro bono or subsidised.
Saltash-based community and voluntary organisations	Venue support, promotion to home-based and micro-businesses.

6. Proposed Training Programme

Ten priority themes have been identified through informal engagement with the business community and comparison with training gaps reported elsewhere in Cornwall. Final prioritisation should be confirmed by the Stage 1 survey (Section 8).

A. Digital Skills and Artificial Intelligence

Target audience: micro-businesses, retailers, hospitality, sole traders and professional services.

- Introduction to AI for small businesses
- Using AI tools to save time and improve productivity
- Creating social media content efficiently
- Digital marketing fundamentals
- Online booking and payment systems
- Website improvement and basic maintenance
- Email marketing
- Using Google Business Profile effectively

B. Social Media and Marketing

- Facebook and Instagram for business
- Creating effective posts
- Taking better product and venue photographs on a smartphone
- Building a local following
- Understanding and responding to online reviews
- Promoting events and special offers
- Converting social media engagement into sales

C. Cybersecurity and Fraud Prevention

Recommended for delivery in partnership with a specialist organisation or local bank.

- Protecting business email accounts
- Recognising phishing and scams
- Password security and multi-factor authentication
- Protecting customer information
- Payment fraud awareness
- Social engineering risks

- Basic cyber incident response

D. Finance and Business Management

- Understanding cash flow
- Managing rising operating costs
- Pricing products and services
- Budgeting and forecasting basics
- Basic bookkeeping
- Tax awareness
- Accessing grants and finance
- Planning for unexpected costs

E. Customer Service and Retail Skills

- Improving customer experience
- Dealing with difficult customers
- Encouraging repeat business
- Selling without being intrusive
- Supporting vulnerable customers
- Accessibility and inclusive customer service

F. Recruitment and Staff Development

- Recruiting staff effectively
- Writing clear, effective job descriptions
- Interview techniques
- Staff retention
- Staff training and development
- Apprenticeships
- Supporting young people into employment

G. Hospitality and Tourism

Reflecting Saltash's role as a gateway to Cornwall.

- Hospitality service skills
- Customer experience for visitors
- Food and service standards
- Promoting Saltash as a destination
- Cross-promotion between local businesses
- Encouraging visitors to stay longer and spend locally

H. Energy Efficiency and Cost Reduction

- Reducing energy bills
- Energy-efficient equipment
- Building energy efficiency
- Available grants and schemes

- Renewable energy options for small premises
- Waste reduction

I. Access to Grants, Funding and Business Support

- Navigating Cornwall Council and Growth and Skills Hub support
- Understanding eligibility for national and regional grant schemes
- Writing a simple funding application
- Avoiding common funding-application pitfalls

J. Business Resilience and Emergency Preparedness

- Business continuity planning for small firms
- Responding to flooding, power outages and severe weather
- Insurance essentials
- Supply chain and single-supplier risk

7. Proposed Delivery Model

A three-stage pilot is recommended, sequencing evidence-gathering ahead of any spending commitment.

Stage 1 — Business Skills Survey (Months 1–2)

A short survey of Saltash businesses, distributed via Town Teams channels, Cornwall Council business networks, local business groups and direct outreach. Proposed questions:

5. What type of business do you operate?
6. What are your biggest current challenges?
7. What training would be most useful to you?
8. What time of day is most convenient for you to attend?
9. Would you attend evening or weekend sessions?
10. Would you prefer online or face-to-face training?
11. Would you be willing to pay towards training?
12. What would prevent you from attending?

Stage 2 — Training Provider Engagement (Months 2–3)

Identify existing providers and negotiate free provision, subsidised training, group discounts, partnership delivery or sponsorship. The objective is to maximise external funding before Town Teams commits its own resources. Potential partners are set out in Section 5.

Stage 3 — Pilot Delivery (Months 3–12)

Deliver a minimum of four pilot workshops over the remaining life of the 12-month pilot. Further sessions should be commissioned only where there is demonstrated demand from Stage 1 and attendance at earlier sessions.

Session	Topic	Target Audience	Indicative Month
1	AI and Digital Productivity	All businesses	Month 4
2	Social Media and Digital Marketing	Retail & hospitality	Month 6
3	Cybersecurity and Fraud Prevention	All businesses	Month 8
4	Finance, Cash Flow and Funding	Micro-businesses	Month 10

Indicative programme timeline

Phase	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10	M11	M12
Survey & engagement	✓	✓										
Provider mapping & negotiation		✓	✓									
Session delivery				✓		✓		✓		✓		
Follow-up surveys (per session, +3 months)							✓		✓		✓	✓
Evaluation & report to Town Teams												✓

8. Risk Register

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Low business engagement with survey or sessions	Medium	High	Multi-channel promotion; direct in-person outreach by Working Group members; keep sessions short and practically framed.
External funding target (50%) not achieved	Medium	Medium	Approach multiple funding sources in parallel; phase commitments; report to Town Teams before committing full budget.
Duplication with existing free provision	Low	Medium	Mandatory provider mapping in Stage 2 before any session is commissioned.
Venue or provider cancellation	Low	Low	Build contingency into budget; confirm bookings in writing; maintain a reserve list of providers.
Programme perceived as favouring certain business sectors	Low	Medium	Ensure survey and programme design cover retail, hospitality, trades, professional and home-based businesses equally.
Working Group capacity / volunteer burnout	Medium	Medium	Keep the Group small and clearly scoped; share administrative load with a paid or supported coordinator role where possible.

9. Proposed Expenditure

An indicative pilot budget is set out below. Figures are provisional and should be refined following discussions with potential partners in Stage 2.

Item	Estimated Cost
Business survey and engagement	£250
Venue hire (four sessions)	£400
Four training sessions (delivery / trainer costs)	£1,600
Promotional materials	£250
Digital promotion	£250
Refreshments	£250
Contingency	£500
Total potential budget	£3,500

The preferred approach is to reduce the Town Teams contribution through sponsorship, grants and partnership delivery. A target should be set to secure at least 50% external contribution before the full budget is committed, with spend released in stages against that target.

10. Recommended Funding Approach

A clear funding hierarchy is recommended to ensure Town Teams resource is used only to fill genuine gaps, and that public and partner funding is exhausted first:

13. Priority 1 — Use existing publicly funded training wherever available.
14. Priority 2 — Seek free delivery from partner organisations.
15. Priority 3 — Seek local business sponsorship.
16. Priority 4 — Apply for relevant grants and economic development funding.
17. Priority 5 — Use Town Teams funding to fill genuine gaps in provision.

This approach ensures that Town Teams funding adds value rather than duplicating existing public services, and protects Town Teams' limited resources for the areas where no alternative funding exists.

11. Monitoring, Evaluation and Measures of Success

The programme should be evaluated against clear, comparable indicators, tracked from the outset and reported to Town Teams at each milestone.

Indicator	Target / Measure
Businesses engaged (survey respondents)	Baseline to be set following Stage 1
Businesses attending training	Tracked per session and cumulatively
Training sessions delivered	Minimum of four within 12 months
Cost per participant	Calculated after each session
Business satisfaction	Post-session feedback form, target 80%+ positive
Increased confidence reported	Post-session and 3-month follow-up survey
Improved digital capability reported	3-month follow-up survey, where relevant
Businesses accessing further support	Tracked via follow-up survey
External funding secured	Target: at least 50% of total programme cost
Evidence of increased business activity or productivity	Qualitative feedback and, where available, business-reported data

A short follow-up survey should be issued to attendees three months after each session to capture longer-term impact rather than immediate satisfaction alone.

12. Equalities and Accessibility Considerations

The Working Group should ensure the programme is genuinely accessible to the full diversity of the Saltash business community:

- Offer a mix of daytime, evening and, where demand supports it, weekend sessions to accommodate different trading patterns.
- Offer both face-to-face and online/hybrid options where practical, to support home-based businesses and those with caring or mobility constraints.
- Select venues that are step-free and accessible, with accessible parking or public transport links.
- Keep any participant cost low or free, so that price is not a barrier to smaller or newer businesses.

- Promote the programme through a range of channels, not solely digital, to reach businesses less active online.
- Actively invite sole traders, home-based businesses and under-represented sectors identified through the Stage 1 survey.

13. Communications and Promotion Plan

Channel	Purpose
Town Teams newsletter and website	Primary channel for survey launch, session promotion and outcomes.
Saltash business networks and business groups	Direct reach to engaged business owners.
Cornwall Council business communications	Wider reach and added credibility.
Social media (Facebook, Instagram)	Event promotion, visual content, reminders.
Direct in-person outreach	Door-to-door or market-day engagement with businesses less likely to respond online.
Local press / community noticeboards	Reach residents and home-based businesses outside digital networks.

14. Proposed Actions for Committee Decision

It is recommended that Saltash Town Teams:

18. Approves the principle of developing a Saltash Business Skills Programme.
19. Approves the establishment of a Business Skills Working Group, as set out in Section 3.
20. Commissions a business training needs survey within the Saltash business community.
21. Engages with Cornwall Council and existing training providers to identify current provision.
22. Requests that existing training and business support programmes are mapped before any new expenditure is committed.
23. Develops a pilot programme of up to four training events, subject to evidence of demand.
24. Seeks external funding and sponsorship to minimise the financial contribution required from Town Teams.
25. Sets an indicative maximum budget of £3,500, subject to further approval and confirmation of external contributions.
26. Requests a written update from the Working Group at three, six and twelve months.
27. Receives a final report following the pilot, covering attendance, feedback, costs, external funding secured, outcomes achieved and a recommendation on continuation.

15. Recommendation

Saltash Town Teams is recommended to approve the development of a 12-month Saltash Business Skills Pilot Programme, beginning with a business training needs survey and mapping of existing provision, and governed by a dedicated Business Skills Working Group reporting back to full Town Teams.

The programme should be demand-led, partnership-based and financially responsible. Town Teams should not commit significant expenditure until it has established what businesses actually need, what support already exists, what can be delivered free of charge, and what external funding is available.

An indicative budget of up to £3,500 could be considered for the pilot, with the clear expectation that the Working Group will secure external funding, sponsorship and in-kind support wherever possible, and report transparently to Town Teams throughout.

The overall aim remains simple: to help Saltash businesses access the practical skills and support they need to grow, become more resilient, and contribute to a stronger and more vibrant local economy.

16. Appendix A — Draft Business Skills Survey

The following draft questions are proposed for the Stage 1 survey and may be adapted following Working Group review:

28. What type of business do you operate? (e.g. retail, hospitality, trade, professional services, home-based)
29. How many people work in your business, including yourself?
30. What are your biggest current challenges?
31. Which of the following training topics would be most useful to you? (list from Section 6)
32. What time of day is most convenient for you to attend training?
33. Would you attend evening or weekend sessions?
34. Would you prefer online, face-to-face, or hybrid training?
35. Would you be willing to pay a small fee towards training, and if so, how much?
36. What would prevent you from attending training in Saltash?
37. Are you aware of any existing free or subsidised training already available to you?

17. Appendix B — Potential Delivery Partners

- Cornwall Council (Economic Development)
- Cornwall Growth and Skills Hub
- Cornwall College
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Local Chambers of Commerce
- Local banks and financial institutions
- Independent cybersecurity and digital marketing specialists
- Saltash-based community and voluntary organisations