

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR - CUSTOMERS AND HUMAN RESOURCES

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME **Purpose of the Report**

1. To update Members on progress to date in relation to the Council's Apprenticeship Programme and seek agreement to the actions set out in the revised action plan to continue the implementation of the Council's Apprenticeship Strategy.

Information

Background

2. The recruitment of apprenticeships into the workforce is a critical part of the Council's overall offer of work-based learning programmes aimed at attracting new employees into the Council's workforce. The Council's Workforce Strategy and the Council Plan identify links to the Council's wider Economic Development agenda to encourage skills development and improve the employability and social mobility of people across the County. This includes maximising the opportunities available given the Council's position as one of the largest employers in the area.
3. The initial focus of the Council's Apprenticeship programme was on the direct employment of apprentices within the Council and its maintained schools to work towards the government target of 2.5% of the workforce being employed in apprenticeships. This equates to 372 new apprentice starts by 2021. The programme also encourages existing employees to take up the opportunity of apprenticeship training to develop the full potential of the Council's current workforce and maximise the use of the Apprenticeship Levy introduced in April 2017.
4. At its meeting on 27th September 2017, Personnel Committee received a report setting out the implementation of the Apprenticeship Levy at the Council and agreed the Council's Employer Apprenticeship Programme and associated Action Plan.
5. There is recognition in Government that the last year has been a period of significant change and employers need time to adjust to the new approach. There are a number of challenges which resonate with public sector organisations across the country in relation to the levy implementation including those outlined below:
 - A range of Apprenticeship Standards more applicable to the public sector workforce are not yet ready for delivery.
 - Training providers are not yet available to deliver some of the newer apprenticeship standards.

- There is difficulty in identifying training providers to deliver for single apprentices due to this not being cost effective for them.
6. Further to the above there are local challenges around the creation of apprenticeships not on the current employee establishment as this incurs additional employment costs over and above the current staffing establishment. There also remains the issue of engaging managers and existing employees with the programme on an ongoing basis.

Progress to date

7. Since the implementation of the levy in April 2017, steady progress has been made to embed the programme within the Council and with maintained schools. A number of actions have been undertaken to create new apprenticeships and encourage take up of appropriate apprenticeship training from amongst existing staff including:
- Revising the Vacancy Control Decision Record (VCDR) process to ensure that all vacancies are considered at an early stage as a possible apprenticeship.
 - Establishing a training provider register and purchasing system, known as a Dynamic Purchasing System, to ensure that suitable providers are available to deliver Apprentice Standards as and when required and in accordance with Procurement regulations. This helps ensure potential apprenticeships are converted to actual apprenticeships.
 - Establishing a monitoring process for managing the effectiveness of contracts with training providers in delivering apprenticeship training.
 - Developing and undertaking an initial recruitment programme for posts which are additional to establishment apprentices.
 - Alignment of the Leadership Development Programme and the Graduate scheme with available apprenticeship standards to maximise the take-up of the levy.
 - Arranging coaching opportunities for all apprentices via the in-house coaching network to ensure they are able to transition into mainstream employment once the apprenticeship is completed.
 - Attending appropriate careers events to support apprentice recruitment, including a comprehensive activity plan for National Apprenticeship week which took place from 5th – 9th March 2018. This included attendance at the Public Sector Apprenticeships event at Nottingham Trent University to encourage new apprentices. The team also provided information stalls across County Council bases to encourage the take up of Apprentice qualifications for existing employees.
 - Engaging with maintained schools to promote and encourage the use of apprenticeships as a workforce planning tool.
 - Establishing a countywide apprentice network to support apprentices during their apprenticeship and encourage them to continue their employment with the Council.

- Develop a collection of case studies to promote the scheme and encourage new apprentices and existing employees to undertake apprenticeship training.
8. At the end of February 2018, the Council has recruited 74 apprenticeships, including 42 in schools and 32 within the Council. The biggest area of recruitment so far has been to Business Administration and Teaching Assistant posts which reflects the national picture within the public sector as the apprenticeship standards are most well developed and supported in these areas.
 9. However, as more apprenticeship standards are approved, interest is growing across the services offered by the Council and managers are becoming more aware of how apprenticeships can bring fresh talent into the organisation and how they can support the development of existing employees. It is hoped that through the approval of further apprenticeship standards related to roles in the public sector, such as planners, social workers and surveyors, the take up of apprenticeships will increase and growth in higher level apprenticeships will enable the Council to maximise the use of the levy funding. Apprenticeship opportunities have also been promoted to internal employees as part of their continuous professional development (CPD) enabling employees to undertake qualifications relevant to their current role or career progression.
 10. There are current financial commitments of £572,800 against the apprenticeship levy. The levy is accrued on a monthly basis and remains available for commitment for a rolling two year period. After which time, any unspent levy will be returned to central government.

Next Steps

11. An updated version of the current Action Plan has been included as **Appendix 1** which focusses on activities over the next 6 months.
12. As part of the next phase of the Leadership Development Programme, managers will be able to apply to undertake a relevant management qualification. This has been developed with a local university to deliver training against an accredited standard in order that the use of apprenticeship levy funds can be maximised. This approach will form part of a wider leadership and career development strategy which will be the subject of a separate report to Personnel Committee and launched in the next six months.
13. In the Council's role as Corporate Parent, and as outlined in the recently published Care Leavers Strategy, apprenticeships can provide opportunities to enable care leavers to achieve sustained and fulfilling employment and economic independence. As part of a wider initiative to engage care leavers in work experience programmes, the Workforce Planning and Organisational Development team (WPOD) are supporting care leavers to undertake apprenticeships by guaranteeing an interview for generic adverts for roles within the Council. Consideration is also being given to how the team can access apprenticeships for Care Leavers with other employers for roles that are not available within the public sector.
14. The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) have recently provided information on how levy paying employers can support non-levy paying organisations. From April 2018 organisations that pay the apprenticeship levy will be able to transfer a proportion of their

levy funds to another employer to pay for apprenticeship training and assessment. Nottinghamshire County Council, as a levy payer, will be able to transfer a maximum of 10% of its annual levy funds to one employer, which will be calculated from the total amount of levy declared during the previous tax year. Further work will be undertaken by the WPOD team to explore opportunities for using this functionality to work with the Council's arms-length organisation, Futures, to support the Council's planned activity for care leavers as outlined above.

15. The Local Government Association (LGA) has recently published a self-assessment tool entitled the Maturity Model (**Appendix 2**) which has been designed to shape and improve apprentice programmes across the country. The model identifies five key strands for assessment including:
- Leadership and Culture
 - Procurement
 - Workforce Development
 - Planning, Delivery Structures and Processes
 - Engagement
16. This model will be used by the Workforce Planning and Organisational Development team (WPOD) to assess progress being made in relation to the Council's Apprenticeship programme and to identify further actions to address some of the emerging issues and ensure the Council's programme is sustainable. The outcome of this assessment and the revised medium to longer term action plan will be reported to Personnel Committee in 6 months' time.

Other Options Considered

17. The Council could engage an external provider to oversee the apprenticeship programme, however this would incur management costs which cannot be funded via the levy. It would limit the Council's opportunity to make use of its Dynamic Purchasing System which has been set up to ensure that the most appropriate training providers for specific subject areas are appointed to deliver against the standards.
18. The LGA self-assessment tool will be helpful in assessing the effectiveness of the current approach and identifying any areas for improvement or any potential changes required.

Reason for Recommendations

19. Agreement for the WPOD team to progress the next steps set out in the action plan will enable progress to continue to be made and allow for an assessment to be made of the future actions required to embed the programme and ensure it is sustainable for the longer term. This will enable the Council to maximise the use of levy funding to provide employment opportunities for local people and ensure that the Council's workforce has the required knowledge, skills and qualifications.

Statutory and Policy Implications

20. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Data Protection and Information Governance

21. There are no direct implications arising from this report as the assessment relates to the Council's overall strategy and approach not individual apprentices or their data. In planning the next steps in relation to care leavers consideration will be given to whether it is necessary to undertake a separate Data Privacy Impact Assessment.

Financial Implications

22. HMRC deduct the levy on a monthly basis and place it in the Council's digital account, set up by the National Apprenticeship Service. The expenditure to date is as detailed in paragraph 10 and amounts to £572,800. The Workforce Planning and Organisational Development (WPOD) team hold a budget of £300,000 towards employment costs of those apprentices recruited to posts which are additional to the staffing establishment. All other apprenticeships recruited to are funded via the recruiting department.

Human Resource Implications

23. The support of the Council's recognised trades unions continues to be critical to the continued successful ongoing development of the apprentice programme. The recognised trades unions have confirmed their continued commitment to working with employers and apprentices to ensure positive outcomes.
24. Trade union colleagues have offered further involvement in the apprentice induction programme and for trained learner representatives to offer support to apprentices with their learning. Trades union colleagues are also keen to continue to support the Council to enable apprentices to move into permanent employment.
25. As a key part of its overall approach to workforce planning and underpinning its commitment to being an Employer of Choice, the County Council supports the use of Apprenticeships as a means of offering jobs, work based learning and career opportunities to a diverse range of new recruits and existing employees.

Public Sector Equality Duty Implications

26. The Apprenticeship Programme is open to anyone aged over 16 years and apprenticeships are offered from level 2 to level 7 providing entry level apprenticeships to enable those returning or entering the jobs market with opportunities to commence a career with the Council. All current direct employees of the Council are also able to apply for apprenticeship opportunities. The apprentice programme provides fair and equal access to employment opportunities within the Council and will enable the Council's workforce to be more reflective of the communities it serves.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 1) Approve the revised action plan set out in Appendix 1 to the report.
- 2) Agree to receive a further report on the outcome of the self-assessment and any identified areas for further action in 6 months' time.

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Constitutional Comments (KK 23/03/18)

27. The proposals in this report are within the remit of the Personnel Committee.

Financial Comments (RWK 22/03/18)

28. The financial implications are set out in paragraph 22 of the report.

Human Resources Comments (CG/07/03/18)

29. These are set out in the body of the report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- None

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All