

**REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR – CUSTOMERS, GOVERNANCE AND EMPLOYEES****FIRST UPDATE ON THE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES STRATEGY****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of the report is to provide an update on the Council's Skills Development and Employment Opportunities Strategy which was approved at Personnel Committee on 15 December 2021 and on the existing strands of the strategy currently being delivered.

**Information**

2. Personnel Committee approved the establishment of a new Team Leader post which has now been recruited to. The successful candidate is focussed on identifying actions to ensure the successful delivery of the agreed strategy. Part of this work included drawing together the existing activity in the Council to maximise capacity to deliver and to avoid duplication of effort.
3. In his recent Spring Statement, the Chancellor of the Exchequer referred to a review of apprentices and the wider "levelling up" agenda, but no further detail was provided. We will continue to lobby Central Government for a more flexible approach to be taken in respect of what the levy can be spent on, including salaries, to maximise spend and so increase the benefit to the local economy
4. An initial introductory meeting was held with internal stakeholders already engaging with strands of the new strategy on Wednesday 16 March 2022. This was an extremely positive meeting that provided colleagues with the opportunity to hear first-hand of the support and commitment given to the strategy by Councillor Gordon Wheeler, elected members serving on Personnel Committee and from senior officers across the Council.
5. The key action from this meeting was for colleagues to submit any existing strategies or action plans covering any aspect of the skills development and employment opportunities agenda to enable the development of an overarching action plan with identified success measures and key performance indicators for the first year of the strategy being in place.
6. Further updates on progress will be provided under the revised governance arrangements agreed at Full Council on 31 March 2022. However, a number of individual updates on the various trainee programmes covered by the strategy are provided below.

## Apprenticeships

7. The Council currently has 243 employees following an apprenticeship journey, of which 69 are employed in Council Maintained Schools. These placements are summarised in the following table:

Department	No.	School District	No.
ASCH	55	Ashfield	5
Chief Executive's	51	Bassetlaw	8
Place	39	Broxtowe	6
Children & Families	29	Gedling	8
		Mansfield	15
		Newark & Sherwood	15
		Rushcliffe	12

8. The range of apprenticeship standards that are on offer has increased and this has resulted in a number of teams embedding apprenticeships into their structures to form part of the solution to ongoing recruitment challenges and futureproofing the skills required in order to carry out the functions of the teams. The teams currently benefiting from this approach include Trading Standards Service, Internal Audit, Business Intelligence Unit, Public Health and Adult Social Care.
9. The number of applications to undertake an apprenticeship has started to rise again as we enter a period of recovery from the pandemic and a number of new contracts with training providers for new apprenticeship standards will be entered into in the next few months.
10. The Council continues to seek creative ways to maximise the use of the apprenticeship levy. The transfer of 25% of the Council's unspent levy has proved to be popular with local SME's and a total of £639,500 has been committed to fund over 80 apprenticeships in Nottinghamshire companies or for Nottinghamshire Residents. These levy transfers include support for apprentices in ARC and Voluntary Aided Schools. The Council was recently invited to share its experiences and mechanisms for levy transfer at a recent D2N2 event as evidence of good practice.

## Graduate Development programme

11. The Graduate Development Programme continues to progress well. Trainees from both cohorts continue in their placements and will rotate into new placements during April. Once again there was an excellent response from managers across the Council, offering placement opportunities to enable trainees to be matched according to their development needs and career aspirations and to assist the council address ongoing skills gaps. Employee Performance and Development Reviews (EPDRs) were completed for Cohort 3 trainees in January 2022 which have helped identify suitable final placements for them and to potentially create permanent career opportunities going forward. We have several graduates attending Committee to answer any questions Elected Members may have regarding their experiences of the scheme.
12. Applications for this year's recruitment to Cohort 5 opened on Wednesday 16 March and will close on Tuesday 19 April. As in previous years, a series of activities have been planned to

support the recruitment process and to encourage applications from those meeting or exceeding the selection criteria. Refinements to the previous process include: the development of a new improved landing page ([www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/graduates](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/graduates)); social media activity via Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook to highlight the scheme and drive people towards the website; university presentations; attendance at job and career events; information/drop-in sessions for internal staff. Existing employees were further encouraged to apply for the scheme in a video made by Councillor Gordon Wheeler, posted on the Council's intranet, and in his presentation to one of the virtual launch events for the Nottinghamshire Plan held on Wednesday, 30 March 2022.

13. Local universities also ensure that the scheme is advertised as widely as possible with their students and alumni. As with previous years shortlisted applicants will be invited to attend an assessment centre (planned for 14 to 16 June). Successful candidates will be invited to attend final interviews between 27 and 30 June. It is expected that Cohort 5 trainees will start on Thursday 29 September.

### **Change100 Supported Internships**

14. Working in partnership with Leonard Cheshire, the Change 100 programme is designed to open employment opportunities to disabled people who are either in their final year of university or have recently graduated. As part of the programme the Council offers paid three-month internships for candidates over the summer.
15. The Council has been participating in the Change 100 scheme since 2017 with four placements available and continued to offer placements throughout the Coronavirus restrictions last year, all be it at a reduction of one placement. Two of the participants in previous years have been successful in gaining employment with the Council as a direct result of their engagement in the scheme.
16. There are five potential placements this year, all working on specific projects in the following teams:
  - Quality and Market Management Team
  - Strategic Commissioning – ICS Autism Strategy
  - East Midlands Association of Directors of Adults Social Services
  - Integrated Children's Disability Service – Post 16 Assessment
  - Integrated Children's Disability Service – Post 16 SEND

### **Work Experience**

17. Work is underway to relaunch our current work experience programme and to develop a more interactive, virtual experience. We will continue to offer the more traditional type of work experience and will be sending out communications to all Nottinghamshire schools as we develop the programme. We will build in to this the opportunity for colleagues to visit schools and provide information about the many different types of roles there are within the Council and its partner organisations.

### **Other Options Considered**

18. Skills development leading to genuine and sustainable employment opportunities is a clearly stated ambition in the Skills Development and Employment Opportunities Strategy. It is one

of the key levers to achieving the ambitions set out in the Nottinghamshire Plan to help make Nottinghamshire “Healthy, Prosperous and Green”. Having a clear strategy in place, with key metrics and performance indicators currently being developed, will provide a helpful and transparent framework against which to measure and monitor progress being made. The drawing together the various activities already underway under this one strategy provides the most demonstrable commitment to this agenda and provides a platform to build on what already exists.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

19. The Council invests significant time and money in delivering a range of trainee programmes and it makes sense to try and retain the skills that have been developed for the longer-term benefit of the Council and the individual employee. The strategy has been developed within the context of significant recruitment and retention challenges, recognised locally and nationally, in areas where this has not previously been an issue. Thinking more creatively about how we grow and retain employees with the skills, knowledge and experience required by a large, modern, public service employer is a core requirement and success measure for the delivery of the strategy.

### **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 data protection or information governance implications arising from this report as no individuals are named in its contents.

### **Financial Implications**

22. There is a significant financial risk facing the council if it cannot develop its workforce and address areas of skills shortage. This may lead to a greater reliance on the contingent labour market which is generally a more expensive way to cover vacancies. The delivery of the strategy and the development of the range of trainee programmes will be met from existing service budgets and maximising the use of the Government’s apprenticeship levy.

### **Human Resources Implications**

23. The range of training programmes enables the Council to maximise career development opportunities and to expand the offer of in-work training to ensure its workforce has the right skills and knowledge required by a modern, public service organisation. The challenge to create sustainable employment opportunities will require a change of mind-set in recruiting managers, with support from senior leaders, to explore appointing candidates who will develop into roles rather than being employed as “the finished article”.

## **Public Sector Equality Duty implications**

24. The proposals in this report meet the Council's existing commitment to meeting, and where possible exceeding, the statutory requirements of the Equality Act 2010. The transfer of levy funds with a focus on delivering opportunities for under-represented and vulnerable groups, supports the Council in meeting its statutory obligations.

## **Smarter Working Implications**

25. Any smarter working implications will be considered as part of the Hybrid Working Policy which will apply to relevant sections of the Council's workforce. Greater flexibility in how work is delivered and from where, creates new opportunities for some people previously restricted in their access to work spaces.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that:

- 1) Elected members acknowledge the early work undertaken to begin to draw together the range of activity undertaken across the Council in the area of skills development and employment under the scope of the Skills Development and Employment Opportunities Strategy.
- 2) Approve the development of an action plan to create clear performance indicators to enable effective measurement of successful delivery of the strategy.

**Marjorie Toward**  
**Service Director, Customers, Governance and Employees**  
**Chief Executives Department**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact: Gill Elder, Head of Human Resources, on 0115 9773867 or [gill.elder@nottscc.gov.uk](mailto:gill.elder@nottscc.gov.uk)**

## **Constitutional Comments (KK 23/03/2022)**

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

## **Financial Comments (SES 22/03/2022)**

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

28. There is a significant financial risk facing the council if it cannot develop its workforce and address areas of skills shortage. This may lead to a greater reliance on the contingent labour market which is generally a more expensive way to cover vacancies. The delivery of the strategy and the development of the range of trainee programmes will be met from existing service budgets and maximising the use of the Government's apprenticeship levy.

## **HR Comments (JP 06/04/2022)**

29. The initiatives identified in this update report support the Councils delivery of the Skills Development and Employment Opportunities Strategy.

## **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