

# Apprenticeship Update

Cabinet Member for Innovation, Commercialisation and Corporate Services

Date:	01 October 2020
Agenda Item:	Apprenticeships Update
Contact Officer:	Samantha Mills
Tel Number:	01543 308826
Email:	Samantha.mills@lichfielddc.gov.uk
Key Decision?	NO
Local Ward Members	None



## Employment Committee

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 All public bodies in England with more than 250 employees must report on the apprenticeship target. This target is to employ at least 2.3% of the workforce as new apprenticeship starts for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2021. It is assessed as an annual average over this 4 year period, and it is mandatory to report this annually. The deadline for the report to be completed is 30 September each year from 2018 to 2021.
- 1.2 This report outlines the data and some of the narrative we will need to submit to the .Gov website and our apprenticeship account. Between October and December 2020 we will be re-launching our apprenticeship programme following disruption caused by the Covid 19 pandemic earlier this year. There is still no clear indication from government as to what the penalty of failing to reach the target will be and many employers and smaller councils have struggled to use their levy and meet the targets set with research showing that only 11% of public sector bodies meeting it (Public Sector Apprenticeship Target Reporting – see link below).
- 1.3 Progress towards the target has been slow for a number of factors detailed in the report. The table below sets out what we have achieved and reported to date:

Year	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Target	10	7	7
Head count	414	304	290
Actual	4	3	3
% of workforce	0.96%	0.97%	1.03%

- 1.4 By December 2020, we will have increased that figure to 2.06% of the workforce (this is inclusive of existing apprentices) bringing the total number to 6. Further programmes in 2021 for existing staff to achieve qualifications using the apprentice scheme will significantly increase this by at least a further 6.
- 1.5 From 1 August 2020 to 31 January 2021 the government's new incentive 'hire a new apprentice payment' is available for employers that take on new apprentices. We meet the criteria for this payment and we have one apprentice eligible so far for the government's incentive payment of £2,000, (16 -24) in addition to the £1,000 we have already received.
- 1.6 From August 2019 to August 2020 the council has been unable to spend some of its levy funds resulting in a loss of £28,531.98 back to central government of expired funds, offset against a levy income of £33,953.70. (Figures of GOV.UK website).

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That members of the committee note the progress made to date, planned actions for the coming year and returns made to the government portal.

## 3. Background

- 3.1 We like many other many other district councils have faced numerous challenges in appointing apprentices including:

- Lack of dedicated resources – to promote and support the development of effective frameworks with providers that meet our requirements. It has taken many months for frameworks that support the professions in local government to be developed.
- Requirement for experienced staff – due to our limited resources much of our recruitment has required positions to be filled by experienced staff so that we can fulfil our statutory obligations. We advertised over 80 jobs in 2018 -19, of these vacancies which articulated the need for experienced staff. Very few teams have capacity for trainee or development positions.
- Capacity and availability of management and pastoral care in teams to support staff new to working environments and undergoing training. Most managers at the council are also professional or technical officers with limited capacity to provide support to inexperienced or staff undergoing training.
- Types of trades and volumes of workers to support development and career progression are limited within our authority. The only large cohort of staff are within our joint waste and operational services, where most apprenticeships have been traditionally based.
- Length of some apprenticeships -This has proved to be a barrier for some employees and managers and when considering undertaking an apprenticeship, especially as it requires 20% 'off the job training'. Dependent on the apprenticeship it is often quicker to complete a non-levy funded qualification than work with a provider within the apprenticeship standards.

- 3.2 Since our last report we have also had some success:

- During 2019 one apprenticeship was offered as a development role on the standard job hourly rate – this attracted over 40 applicants and we successfully recruited.
- Professional frameworks have been developed and released for key areas of local authority work. We are in the progress of appointing an apprentice Building Control Inspector.
- We now have an identified resource that will continue to drive the work on apprenticeships within HR. We also have the expertise and background of our newly appointed Communications Manager who is looking at which routes are more effective to engage our workforce and managers on this subject.

3.3 In the coming months we have further plans to use our levy funding and improve the take up and use of apprenticeships including:

- **Levy transfer** - We are able to transfer up to 25% of our levy to other local businesses/organisations. Presently we are in discussions with West Midlands Combined Authority (broker) and internally with our Economic Development team. We will look to share some of our levy (up to £7,823) locally to assist a return to work role.
- **Targeted apprenticeships for existing staff** - We are looking to better utilise the levy that we currently have in funding elements of a management development programme in the spring of 2021. Much will depend on the commitment needed by individuals to use this option, but where we can, we will use the money that currently sits within our levy pot (£61,811).
- **Pay** – our experience is that national minimum wage at apprenticeship rate is insufficient to attract young people to roles. We are considering levels of pay for different types of apprenticeships and shifting focus away from school leavers, as these require significant pastoral support to integrate into our workforce. We are looking at rates of pay that other local authorities offer and opportunities for succession planning and career graded posts where appropriate. These have been used successfully in the past.
- **Professional Sectors** – Going forward, if we wish to utilise the levy more fully in professional roles that are hard to recruit to (such as planning and environmental health) we may need to consider creating additional roles to the existing establishment for us to develop people to full professional status. This would require a growth bid subject to a business case in each instance and place additional budgetary pressures on the council but may be the only way to ensure succession in key areas where recruitment continues to be problematic.
- Whilst the uptake national and locally still remains a challenge for districts we are optimistic that with our re-launch, improved communications (with employees and managers), we will improve the position on apprenticeships. This will likely be a blend of various interventions mentioned above but tempered with the realisation that not all areas across the council will be able to look at apprenticeships or apprentices as an option due to their existing pressures around capacity and capability in delivering their essential services.

### 3.4 Kickstart Programme

In July government announced the creation of a Kickstart Scheme to fund 6 month job placements for young people on Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment. Details of the scheme were released in early September and include:

- The intentions for placements to begin nationally in November.
- Funding to cover National Minimum Wage and on-costs for 25 hours per week per placement.
- £1,500 per placement to cover setup, support and training.
- A minimum of 30 placements must be offered by the employer or groups of employers in partnership (and £300 towards the costs of setting up such a partnership).

Whilst it is unlikely we will have capacity to accommodate 30 placements within the Council, we will be exploring opportunities to enter into partnership with other local districts/businesses to apply for funding. Further updates will be provided if the discussions progress or further guidance is available.

Alternative Options	N/A
Consultation	1. We actively are consulting with managers, our staff, unions and our external stakeholder and partners who are actively supporting us with this agenda.

LGA / West Midlands Employers/ WMCA.

#### Financial Implications

1. The current balance in our levy pot stands at £61,811
2. £28,531.98 has been given back to central government of expired funds so far, though this is set to cease shortly as expired sums are committed with each new apprentice and by December 2020 it is anticipated that no funds should be returned after this date.

#### Contribution to the Delivery of the Strategic Plan

1. Apprenticeships support the District Council's Strategic Plan 2020 - 2024.
2. It links into our strategic themes and corporate health indicators
3. Underpins the culture we are trying to create.

#### Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications

1. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty we have ensured that all guidance and policy framework are developed in line with regional and national guidance. **For example:** This includes making reasonable adjustments for disabled applicants at all stages of the recruitment process, removing the barriers faced by the disability seen or unseen, so the individual can work and apply for jobs in the same way as someone who is not disabled.

#### Crime & Safety Issues

1. None

#### Environmental Impact

1. None

#### GDPR/Privacy Impact Assessment

The council continues to work with its stakeholders and training provides ensuring that all statements contain compliance with GDPR regulations, which are signed by all parties and adhered to along with a copy of the councils GDPR Policy.

	Risk Description	How We Manage It	Severity of Risk (RYG)
A	That we do not achieve our 2.3% target	By providing resources to improve communications and a range of interventions to promote and make best use of the levy funding	<b>Amber</b> Likely hood – high Impact - low
B	That our levy funds continue to expire	All possible avenues to spend the levy including sharing are being explored and this expiration will cease soon.	<b>Green</b> Likely hood - medium Impact - low

#### Background documents

Previous reports to committee

#### Relevant web links

[Public Sector Apprenticeship Target Report](#)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/removal-of-apprenticeship-frameworks>