

Update on the apprenticeship growth in the Wiltshire Council workforce

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to provide Children's Select Committee with an update on the progress on apprenticeships since the last report in January 2019, including the councils spend against the apprenticeship levy.

Background

2. The apprenticeship levy was introduced in April 2017 to fund new apprenticeships with the aim of developing vocational skills and improve the quantity and quality of apprenticeships. It was anticipated that the levy would help to deliver new apprenticeships as well as supporting quality training for employees.
3. The levy is charged at a rate of 0.5% of an employer's pay bill and is collected monthly by the HMRC through PAYE deductions. The levy can only be used to fund the training costs of an apprentice's qualification. Funding for apprenticeship training stays in the digital account for 24 months and then any unused funding disappears.
4. The public sector target for public sector bodies with more than 250 employees in England is to employ an average of at least 2.3% of their staff as apprentices from 2017-2021. This means that the council needs to have approximately 106 apprentices in the workforce each year until 2021, and for schools this is approximately 150 apprentices.

Main Considerations

5. Work has continued with the development of our apprenticeship programme with apprenticeship numbers increasing and we continue to ensure that the council is maximising the use of its apprenticeship levy. The ongoing release of new apprenticeship standards has enabled the council to broaden the range and type of apprenticeships for services, which has had a positive impact on workforce planning.
6. The total number of apprentices employed by the council since the levy was introduced is 206 (185 are within the council, 21 are within Wiltshire Schools) as of 29th Aug 2019. 30 of these are new recruits of which 10 have completed their training and have moved into permanent posts. Permanent employment on completion of apprenticeship training is something the council guarantees, which is one of our unique selling points and sets us apart from other employers. The remaining 155 are existing employees who are upskilling.
7. Of the 30 newly recruited apprentices, 66% were educated in Wiltshire schools in Trowbridge, Melksham, Westbury, Warminster, Chippenham and Corsham and 2 are Wiltshire care leavers.
8. The current number of council apprentices equates to 4% of our staff which exceeds the public sector target of 2.3%. However, maintained schools have only 0.4% of their workforce as apprentices so our combined public sector figure to report back to central government is currently 2%. Despite this we are still confident that the public sector target of 2.3% will be met by 2021.

9. The table below show a breakdown of where these apprentices are employed in the council. Details of the apprentices in schools can be seen in appendix 1.

<u>Carlton Brand</u>		<u>Terence Herbert</u>		<u>Alistair Cunningham</u>	
Directorate	No. of Apprentices	Directorate	No. of Apprentices	Directorate	No. of Apprentices
Legal, Electoral and Registrations	6	HR and OD	21	Highways and Waste	31
Access and Reablement	11	Corporate Services	17	Communities and Neighbourhood services	15
Public Health	4	Families and Children	28	Housing and Commercial	17
Learning Disabilities and Mental Health	3	Joint Commissioning	4	Growth and Investment	0
Digital and information	1	Education and Skills	5	Finance and Procurement	14
				Economic Development and Planning	8
Total	25		75		85

10. There has been an increase in the capacity within HR&OD to support apprentices which allows the apprenticeship coordinator to work more closely with the HR business partners to identify new opportunities for apprentices in the workforce. The additional capacity is providing much needed support with the tracking, administration and pastoral care of the apprentices on programme.
11. More engagement with schools has been taking place to encourage them to use their contribution to the levy. This has resulted in a small increase in the number of apprenticeships, however we expect this to continue.
12. Apprenticeships have continued to be targeted to care leavers. An introduction of core skills to all role descriptions has been added after feedback that care leavers were unsure on what essential criteria they needed to meet.
13. Long-term career pathways are being trialled in some service structures. A long-term career pathway means that an apprentice can start on a lower entry level apprenticeship (level 2, 3 or 4) and upon successful completion can take a higher-level apprenticeship which will support their career progression. These career pathways can be built into service structures and are currently being trialled in our highways and procurement services.
14. In these services apprentices will be recruited to complete a level 3 or 4 apprenticeship and once completed they will then move onto a level 6 apprenticeship. This means we can support young people to achieve their long-term career aspirations and provides a good alternative to university. In these scenarios these young people will gain vital skills and experience whilst gaining qualifications and will support us in filling our skills gaps and with our hard to recruit roles. As more standards become available we will roll this out to other services.

15. Below are examples of the current standards being used for our apprenticeships:

- L3 Building Control
- L6 Building Control Surveyor (currently enrolled)
- L3 Business Administration
- L4 Business and Administration
- L2 Swimming Coach
- L3 Team Member (Leisure)
- L3 Payroll Administration
- L3 Children and Young People's Workforce
- L4 Children, young people and families practitioner
- L5 Children, young people and Families Manager
- L3 Accounting Technician
- L4 Professional Accounting
- L4 Data Analyst
- L3 Civil Engineering
- L6 Civil Engineering (New cohort enrolled)
- L4 Associate Project Management
- L3 HR Support
- L5 HR Consultant/Partner
- L3 Digital Marketing
- L6 Marketing
- L5 Learning and Development Consultant
- L3 Team Leader/Supervisor
- L6 Operational/Departmental Manager
- L7 Senior Leader
- L7 CIPFA (currently in enrolment)

16. The council is the corporate parent for care leavers in Wiltshire and has a responsibility to improve the lives of these young people. The apprenticeship levy provides the council with an opportunity to invest in training for these young people.

17. We have continued to have initiatives in place to:

- a. Provide care leavers with access to a mock interview and support in writing their CV in preparation for applying for an apprenticeship, or other roles. To date, only three care leavers have taken up this offer despite ongoing promotion of this via care leavers personal advisors. We are now working with the personal advisors to develop an extension of this programme to include other support to care leavers in applying for jobs and preparing for interviews to improve the take-up and make this more effective.
- b. Offer guaranteed interviews to all care leavers who apply for an apprenticeship. However, there is also low take up with this initiative despite continual promotion to the personal advisors. Of the 30 apprenticeships vacancies we have only received six applications from care leavers, four were a no show at interview or withdrew their application, the other two have been employed within the council on apprenticeships in fostering and adoption and in children's support and safeguarding respectively.

18. We are aware that some care leavers are not able to apply for apprenticeships due to the requirements for levels of numeracy and literacy. As a result, the apprenticeship coordinator is working with the HR business partner for children & education to create a plan that will allow care leavers to be more work ready. This will include additional training for the personal advisors, so they can support care leavers with CV preparation and to provide information and guidance on preparing for interviews and career opportunities. In addition, steps to enable care leavers to take their initial assessments in English and Math's to show that they

can complete the apprenticeship at the right level before applying, are also being taken.

19. We are aware that apprenticeships are not the only option for care leavers. As part of the council's care leaver promise, we pledged to facilitate work experience in any of our services. To date, we have had one care leaver, who is a Psychology undergraduate, spend two weeks' in occupational health and our legal team have provided career guidance to a Law graduate who is due to commence a master's qualification in September 2019. The legal team also used their contacts at other local authorities to arrange a work experience placement in Plymouth where the care leaver lives.
20. In addition to these unpaid work experience placements, we have created an entry level role in ICT for one of our care leavers. This trainee ICT engineer role, which has been in place since June, has provided a part time opportunity to support the care leaver in their first paid employment. This has gone well and recently the care leaver has agreed to increase their hours in this role.
21. We are continuing to commit to supporting local business and our partners by transferring up to 25% of our apprenticeship levy. This will include organisations in our communities who can provide apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers. We are already working in partnership with BANES, Swindon and Wiltshire Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (BSW STP) and have utilised our apprenticeship levy to fund 11 Training Nursing Associates for Primary Care Settings.

Next Steps

22. Plans and ongoing actions to further increase apprenticeship numbers include:
 - a. The launch of level 6 (degree level) and level 7 (masters) leadership and management apprenticeships, with training providers for both now procured.
 - b. Continuing to be trailblazers for new apprenticeship standards, existing trailblazers include highways engineer, CIPS (Chartered Institute of Procurement & Supply) level 6, and a higher-level teaching assistant level 4 apprenticeships, working collaboratively with Somerset, Hampshire, Rochdale, Derbyshire, Manchester, East Sussex, Walsall, East Riding and Bexley councils. Recently the systems thinking practitioner apprenticeship standard has been approved, following a trailblazer that was led by the council.
 - c. Continuing to work with services to limit recruitment of roles graded C to E so that these can become apprenticeship opportunities.
 - d. Preparation for the proposed launch of the new social worker apprenticeship in September 2020. We are talking to training providers now about how this can be delivered, including options to create a bespoke programme for the council. One option is to create a new trainee (apprentice) social worker role within both children's and adult services which will enable these apprentices to move into a target social worker post once they have completed their training, ensuring that they have a permanent job at the end of the apprenticeship.
 - e. We will continue to raise the profile of the council with care leavers as an employer of choice, by attending career days and events for care leavers and ensuring we are present in care leaver steering groups and meetings of the care leaver champions. We will continue to provide them with valuable employability skills and experiences and pathways to increase their work readiness. In addition, the apprenticeship coordinator recently attended the corporate parenting panel meeting to highlight apprenticeships within the group.
 - f. We will work with our colleagues in employment and skills to identify opportunities to transfer some of our apprenticeship levy funding to small businesses to enable care leavers to access apprenticeships in areas they are interested in such as hairdressing, retail or other career paths as anecdotally we understand that these are the careers that are more appealing to some of these young people, however we have not yet had any

care leaver interested in this.

- g. We will continue to encourage the take up of apprentices in schools, but progress continues to be slow as there are still limited apprenticeship standards available.
- h. Following the increase in April 2019 employers can transfer up to 25% of their apprenticeship levy to smaller firms. We will continue to take steps to identify organisations who would benefit from this and as well as providing opportunities for care leavers the focus will also be on providers of social care who the council already work with.
- i. The national introduction of T-levels (technical levels, these are like A-levels, however they are for technical subjects and require a 90-day work placement) means that we are in a unique position to be able to work with local colleges to provide placements for these students, and this is something we will progress. On completion we hope that these T-level students will be interested in employment with us, including as an apprentice.

Financial considerations

- 23. The apprenticeship levy is charged at a rate of 0.5% of an employer's pay bill and is collected monthly by the HMRC through PAYE deductions. Based on current calculations this means that the council's contribution to the levy per annum will be approx. £0.47m, with schools (maintained and VC) contributing £0.53m to the same levy account. These figures are approximate as our staff numbers fluctuate and, therefore, so does our employer's pay bill.
- 24. Funding for apprenticeship training stays in our digital account for 24 months and then any unused funding will disappear. The council is due to have these unspent funds removed in January 2020 (however the amount will be reduced with the increase in learners, especially with a new cohort of leadership and management and 7 Civil Engineering apprentices due to start mid-September).
- 25. To date we have drawn £441,051.72 of our levy, but have a total committed spend of £1,625,451.00 in respect of the 206 apprentices.

Equalities considerations

- 26. The apprenticeship programme continues to support the council in fulfilling its responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty/PSED (2010) through increasing equality of opportunity and improving life chances, particularly for those groups named within the Equality Act (e.g. disabled people) and vulnerable groups such as care leavers.

Risks

- 27. A lack of engagement from services in recruiting new apprentices and/or converting existing staff to apprentices continues to be a risk to the achievement of the public sector target for apprentices.
- 28. Despite the increased capacity in HR&OD to support the increase in apprentices, and to provide support to those employed, there is still a risk that this capacity may not be enough as other council priorities continue to conflict with this work, for example the increasing demand on HR&OD from the various transformation programmes. In addition, on-going budget savings targets for HR&OD may result in a reduction in the capacity allocated to this work.

Conclusion

- 29. The progress on increasing the number of apprenticeships has been positive with a 42% increase in the number of apprentices since the report to the committee in January. This positive progress was reinforced when the council won the Large Business Apprentice Employer of the Year award at the Wiltshire College Apprenticeship Awards in March 2019.

30. Despite this there is further work to do to develop the understanding of the opportunities the levy can provide with some services to meet the public sector target. The recent increase in the capacity in HR&OD to support services to develop apprenticeship opportunities, and entry level apprenticeship roles, means that the apprenticeship numbers should continue to grow.
31. The number of care leavers applying for apprenticeships and the support available to them to prepare them for applying for roles and interviews remains lower than we would like. We will continue to work with care leavers personal assistants to develop their skills and knowledge in this area and will ensure that the appropriate support is in place for care leavers to access apprenticeships, as well as other employment opportunities with the council.
32. New apprenticeship standards will continue to be developed and as they become available HR&OD will continue to work with services to identify how they can make use of these to develop career pathways to aid recruitment and retention issues.

Recommendations

33. It is recommended that the Children's Select Committee note the contents of this report and the progress that has been made with the recruitment of new apprentices, and the use of the levy for upskilling current staff.

Joanne Pitt
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Apprenticeships in schools

Schools			
School Name	Town	Apprenticeship	No. enrolled
St Nicholas Primary CofE	Bromham	Supporting teaching and learning	2
Urchfont Primary School	Urchfont	Supporting teaching and learning	1
Westbury Leigh CofE Primary	Westbury	Supporting teaching and learning	1
Staverton Primary	Staverton	Supporting teaching and learning	1
Bellefield School	Bellefield	Supporting teaching and learning	4
Hullavington CE Primary	Hullavington	Business Admin	1
Hullavington CE Primary	Hullavington	Supporting Teaching and Learning	1
Startford Sub Castle Primary	Startford	School Business Manager	1
Ramsbury School	Ramsbury	Supporting teaching and learning	1
St Nicolas Primary	Chippenham	Supporting teaching and learning	2
Grove Primary	Trowbridge	Commis Chef	1
Kiwi School	Bulford Camp	Business Admin	1
Kiwi School	Bulford Camp	Supporting teaching and learning	3
		Total	20