

WILTSHIRE COUNCIL APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME: THE WAY FORWARD

Executive Summary

The Wiltshire Council Apprenticeship Programme commences in September 2009 with a Maximum Contract Value (MCV) for 2009/10 of £168,155. This is based on £106,123 worth of grant for 16-18 year olds (100% funded) and £62,032 worth of grant for 19 yrs plus (47.5% employer contribution).

The 2009/10 programme seeks to deliver apprenticeships for:

37 x 16-18 year olds

27 x 19-24 year olds

2 x 25 yrs plus

The Apprenticeships contract with the Learning & Skills Council (LSC) applies to both staff of Wiltshire Council and staff belonging to other public sector bodies in Wiltshire.

Following detailed liaison with key colleagues in DCE-Schools Branch (Adult Community and Learning), a way forward for delivering the Wiltshire Council Apprenticeship Programme has been jointly proposed by both HR and Economy & Enterprise and subsequently agreed. Wiltshire Council intends to sub-contract the delivery of its Apprenticeships programme to Wiltshire College. According to the last Ofsted inspection report (December 2008), Wiltshire College were regarded as 'excellent' for work-based learning with a 78% Apprenticeships overall completion rate of which 58% were timely. In both respects performance was above the national average.

Wiltshire College have welcomed the opportunity to deliver the Council's Apprenticeship contract based on the very same profile as currently exists. The LSC have also responded positively to the approach outlined for the provision of Apprenticeships stating that Wiltshire College have a good performance record in relation to Apprenticeships themselves and the sub-contracting route is the clearest route in order to ensure the funding awarded to Wiltshire continues to be spent locally as opposed to national reallocation.

The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet on the way forward that has been agreed for the delivery of the Wiltshire Council Apprenticeship Programme.

Proposal

That Cabinet approves the plan to sub-contract to Wiltshire College the delivery of the Wiltshire Council Apprenticeship Programme.

Reasons for Proposal

To deliver an effective Apprenticeship programme both internally and on behalf of the wider public sector in Wiltshire that will assist with the workforce development of the employer organisation improving skills and raising performance standards and enable learners the opportunity to earn a decent wage, while learning new skills that will lead to nationally recognised qualifications.

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Purpose of the report

To update Cabinet of the way forward that has been agreed for the delivery of the Wiltshire Council Apprenticeship Programme.

Background

The Wiltshire County Council bid to deliver apprenticeships both internally and across the Public Sector had received the commitment of CLT and there was strong agreement corporately that Apprenticeships offered a significant opportunity for the council to develop its workforce as well as deliver in a wider role as community leader around the employment and skills agenda. However, moving to implementation proved problematic and not a high priority given the other commitments on HR and Economy & Enterprise due to Local Government Reorganisation and the economic downturn. The Service Directors were charged with identifying options for taking the bid forward recognising that whilst we should be offering Apprenticeships within Wiltshire Council and the wider public sector the delivery of an apprenticeship programme was not core business at this time.

Options Considered

Option 1 - Withdraw from the programme.

There was clear consensus that the aim was to avoid at all costs losing the funding for Apprenticeships that had been awarded to Wiltshire and the importance of the

contract in terms of the Council's role in the community and expectation upon the Council to take the lead in the Public Sector delivery of apprenticeships. Very quickly broad agreement was reached that in light of the challenges outlined in the council delivering the programme itself and the high risk that if we declined the contract offer the funds that had been secured for Wiltshire would be redistributed on a national basis, this would not be a suitable option.

Option 2 - Create internal programme infrastructure

Wiltshire Council originally considered delivering the functional skills and NVQ accreditation working in partnership with Wiltshire College for the delivery of the technical certificates across all occupations. Since then concerns over the absence of appropriate infrastructure to deliver internally led to the Council exploring alternative methods of delivery.

Option 3 – Sub-contract delivery

Following detailed liaison with key colleagues in DCE-Schools Branch (Adult Community and Learning) whose role in terms of ensuring the programme meets all quality aspects and LSC and other external body audit requirements i.e. LSC quality frameworks (Framework for Excellence, Matrix etc) and Ofsted, a way forward for delivering the Wiltshire Council Apprenticeship Programme has been jointly proposed by both HR and Economy & Enterprise. It has been determined that Wiltshire Council would sub-contract the delivery of its Apprenticeships programme to Wiltshire College. According to the last Ofsted inspection report (December 2008), Wiltshire College were regarded as 'excellent' for work-based learning with a 78% Apprenticeships overall completion rate of which 58% were timely. In both respects performance was above the national average.

The way forward

Given the benefits of supporting apprenticeships within the public sector but recognising the constraints and the fact that it is not core business for Wiltshire Council, Option 3 is considered preferential and work to secure this outcome has been undertaken by officers from both services.

Wiltshire Council has obtained firm interest from Di Dale, Principal of Wiltshire College and Tim Keighley, Director of Workforce Development at Wiltshire College that they would welcome the opportunity to deliver the council's Apprenticeship contract based on the very same profile as currently exists. The LSC have also responded positively to the approach outlined for the provision of Apprenticeships stating that Wiltshire College have a good performance record in relation to Apprenticeships themselves and the sub-contracting route is the clearest to ensure the funding awarded to Wiltshire continues to be spent locally as opposed to national reallocation.

Several services have a key role to play in the Wiltshire Council Apprenticeships Programme and clarity over the precise responsibilities of those services in relation to the programme has now been established. HR has responsibility for determining where Apprenticeships sit within the council's Workforce Development Strategy and ultimately how such a programme ought to be delivered. Economy & Enterprise has responsibility for the council's Accountable Body role having successfully bid for the funding in the first instance. Both HR and Economy & Enterprise are responsible for determining the infrastructure requirements of delivering an effective Apprenticeships Programme. DCE-Schools Branch (Adult Community and Learning) has responsibility for the council's duties and responsibilities under Ofsted (data, quality

management services and inspection support). Additionally, all the LSC contracts are required to meet the LSC quality inspection frameworks and which will all be subject to audit requirements and non fulfillment could potentially result in contractual claw backs.

In considering the appropriate approach for the delivery of the Apprenticeships programme it was agreed that both the governance arrangements and infrastructure requirements would not be considered in isolation of other similar programmes particularly in light of the recent notification of Wiltshire's success in bidding to DWPs Future Jobs Fund (a separate report on the Future Jobs Fund has been prepared for Cabinet consideration).

Because Apprenticeships is combined with Train to Gain in a single contract with the LSC it is eminently sensible to manage both programmes under the same structure. For Train to Gain there is currently a steering group of internal providers that had been established by the Economy & Enterprise service in the autumn of 2008 once the contract had been secured. It is considered that the current model holds much potential to be re-engineered into a suitable operational structure to move forward with. However, it is clear that the model currently in existence lacks a strategic element acting more as an operational providers group and it is therefore proposed that a higher level steering group to set and manage the agenda for Train to Gain and Apprenticeships is established.

The overall Wiltshire Potential Programme will be jointly managed by HR and the Economy & Enterprise services, with HR taking responsibility for the Apprenticeship and Train to Gain programmes and Economy & Enterprise taking responsibility for the Future Jobs Fund (with its own steering group). The draft structure is explained in diagram format in **Appendix 1**.

Environmental Impact of the Proposal

No impacts identified at this stage.

Equality and Diversity Impact of the Proposal

The Apprenticeship offer has equalities considerations at its heart. Apprenticeships enable learners the opportunity to earn a decent wage, while learning new skills that will lead to nationally recognised qualifications. Wiltshire Potential Programme management staff will work with Wiltshire Council's Equalities & Diversity Team to ensure that the Wiltshire Potential Programme overall will be continuously quality assured in relation to promoting equalities and inclusion as part of an integrated approach to delivery. The role of the Wiltshire Council Equalities & Diversity Team specifically will be to provide scrutiny of the programme in order to identify areas for progression and areas of success.

Risk Assessment

Please refer to **Appendix 2**.

Financial Implications

The Action for Wiltshire Programme Board has approved £250,000 of funding to be awarded to the Wiltshire Potential Programme in order to establish the required infrastructure to effectively manage this bold programme of activity aimed at creating

a range of opportunities for young people to develop their education and skills further, to gain experience that will support applications for employment in due course and to gain skills that help to promote sustainability. The Wiltshire Council Apprenticeship Programme is included in this.

Wiltshire Council has negotiated with Wiltshire College that it will retain a 17.5% management fee as it is understood that even with the decision to sub-contract; in terms of the contract with the LSC Wiltshire Council would still be classed as the 'Provider'. This 'Provider' status means the Council still has full responsibility for delivery will be subject to the full LSC audit requirements and inspection frameworks plus the full requirements of Ofsted.

Legal Implications

There are numerous statutory and legal duties in respect to the delivery of the Wiltshire Council Apprenticeship Programme. Wiltshire College as the Sub-Contractor will need to acknowledge that the Council has various statutory and other legal duties in relation to this Agreement and fully co-operate with the Council in carrying its statutory and legal duties in respect to the delivery of this programme. Wiltshire College will also need to acknowledge that the Council has obligations to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) contract, signed by the Council for this programme. Wiltshire College as Sub-Contractor will be required to agree not to omit suffer or permit any act which would cause the Council to be in breach of its obligations to the LSC under this contract.

Economy & Enterprise will liaise with Legal Services in developing the sub-contracting arrangements between the Council and Wiltshire College for the provision of services to support the delivery of the Wiltshire Council Apprenticeship Programme.

Conclusion

Given the benefits of supporting apprenticeships within the public sector but recognising the constraints and the fact that it is not core business for Wiltshire Council, the plan to sub-contract to Wiltshire College the delivery of its Apprenticeship Programme is considered the best approach to ensure the programme is delivered effectively and the outcomes of the programme are met.

Background Papers

N/A

Appendices

Appendix 1: Wiltshire Potential Programme Governance Arrangements and Delivery Structure

Appendix 2: Wiltshire Council Apprenticeships Programme Risk Register