



COUNCIL: 19 July 2017

Report of: Borough Treasurer

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SUBJECT: APPRENTICESHIP POLICY STATEMENT AND UPDATE ON THE HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY AND WORKFORCE PLAN

Wards affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To approve a new Policy Statement on Apprenticeships and to highlight progress made in relation to the Human Resource Strategy and Workforce Plan 2015 – 2018.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the new Policy Statement on Apprenticeships set out in Appendix 1 be approved.
- 2.2 That the progress on the Human Resources Strategy and Workforce Plan 2015 - 2018 be noted.
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3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Human Resources Strategy and Workforce Plan 2015 – 2018 provides an overview of the key strategic priorities for the Council in respect of our workforce, and demonstrates how we will align our workforce planning with corporate and financial planning processes. This strategy is published on the Council website and can be viewed using the following link:

<http://www.westlancs.gov.uk/media/232876/published-version-hr-strategy-and-workforce-plan.docx>

3.2 The Government has committed to creating three million new apprenticeships over the next few years to meet skills gaps and has introduced a range of new measures to achieve this outcome. As a result the Council's approach to Apprenticeships, which forms part of the Strategy and Workforce Plan, now needs to be updated.

3.3 Under the new approach an apprenticeship is seen as a way for young people and adult learners to earn while they learn in a real job, gaining a real qualification and skills for the future. Depending on the sector and job role, an apprenticeship can take anything between one and five years to complete. It is a package of training and qualifications. Key features include:

- Must be employed in a real job - they may be an existing employee or a new hire
- Must work towards an approved apprenticeship standard
- Training must last at least 12 months, but any contract needs to be at least a year and a day
- Must spend at least 20% of time on off the job training

4.0 APPRENTICESHIPS

4.1 From April 2017 the Government has introduced an apprenticeship levy, which is a payment made by the Council based on a percentage of our total pay bill. It is envisaged that the levy will cost around £55,000 per annum. This levy fund is held in a Government account and can only be used by the Council to pay for training that fits within the definition of an apprenticeship, for either new or existing employees.

4.2 In addition, public sector bodies with 250 or more staff in England, have been given a target to employ an average of at least 2.3% of their staff as new apprentice starts over the period of 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2021. The Council must have regard to the target, which means that in making workforce planning decisions, the Council should actively consider apprenticeships, either for new recruits or as part of career development for existing staff. Apprentices are only considered as 'new apprentices' who will count towards the target, in the year in which they begin their apprenticeship. For the Council this target would be an average of just over 12 new apprenticeship starts per year over the 4 year period to March 2021.

4.3 To reflect these changes a new Policy Statement on Apprenticeships has been produced and is set out in Appendix 1. This new approach has been developed taking into account the Council's business strategy, the age profile of the workforce and consideration of skills gaps and shortages. Members are now asked to consider and approve this Policy Statement.

- 4.4 Consultation has taken place with the Trade Unions on the Policy Statement and any comments received have been considered in the development of the statement.
- 4.5 It should be noted that the Government is not providing any additional funding to meet the new targets, and consequently any new apprenticeships that are created will need to be met from within existing resources. The new policy statement will look to achieve this by developing our existing processes so that:
- Heads of Service in conjunction with the relevant manager will assess whether any vacancies that arise are suitable to be converted into an apprenticeship
 - Specific consideration is given to apprenticeships for the career development of existing staff as part of the employee development appraisal process
- 4.6 Progress on achieving the target will be included in the suite of Quarterly Performance Indicators that are reported to Cabinet and Corporate and Environmental Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

5.0 HR STRATEGY AND WORKFORCE PLAN

- 5.1 The current HR Strategy and Workforce Plan covers the period 2015-18 and good progress has been made against it in a number of areas including:
- A comprehensive range of training and development courses is being provided following identification of training needs through the appraisal process. Feedback on courses is good and amendments have been made when necessary.
 - An e-learning facility was launched in February 2017 for both Officers and Members with an extensive range of courses, and a phase two launch with additional courses is anticipated in July 2017. The system was procured with Chorley Council and represents a positive example of partnership working.
 - A second phase Leadership and Management Development programme is currently being run, which consists of six modules and will be completed in October 2018. Two of the six modules have been undertaken by managers to date.
 - The ITrent payroll self-service system has now been rolled out, which has enabled payroll services to be streamlined.
 - Levels of employee sickness absence have reduced and stood at 7.44 days lost per full time equivalent member of staff as of 31st March 2017, and this performance is better than the target of 8.08 days.
 - The Council has successfully appointed to its vacancies, including numerous senior manager posts, within the last twelve months.

- Measures to improve and develop employee engagement continue to be delivered, including through the development appraisal process, staff suggestion schemes, reward packages and the training opportunities available for staff.

5.2 It is intended that an updated Strategy and Workforce Plan covering the period 2018-21 will be reported to Council next year for approval.

6.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY

6.1 There are no significant sustainability impacts associated with this report and, in particular, no significant impact on crime and disorder. The report has no significant links with the Sustainable Community Strategy.

7.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are financial and resource implications arising from this report in respect of the creation of new apprenticeship posts as the Council will need to redirect budgets to fund them. It is also estimated that the Council will pay around £55,000 in levy payments per annum and this has been built into the budgets for the current financial year. These levy payments can be used to fund the training for new apprenticeship posts and to fund existing staff to undertake apprenticeship courses.

8.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

8.1 The Council needs to update its arrangements on Apprenticeships to ensure compliance with new government rules and regulations.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

There is a direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders; therefore, an Equality Impact Assessment is required. A formal equality impact assessment is attached as an Appendix to this report, the results of which have been taken into account in the recommendations contained within this report

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Policy statement on Apprenticeships
Appendix 2 - Equality Impact Assessment