

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE – 20TH DECEMBER 2022

Report of the Director of Finance, Governance and Contracts

Part A

Apprenticeship Reporting Update – 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide Personnel Committee with information relating to the apprenticeship scheme within the Council and the apprenticeship target reporting for the period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022.

Recommendation

That the findings of the apprenticeship reporting be noted by Personnel Committee.

Reason

The Public Sector Apprenticeship Targets Regulations 2017 came into force on 31st March 2017. The regulations have been updated to reflect amendments made to the Public Sector Apprenticeship Targets (Amendment) Regulations 2021, which came into force on 1st April 2021. All public bodies with 250 or more staff in England as of 31st March have a target to employ an average of at least 2.3% of their staff as new apprentice starts over the period of 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022. Bodies in scope must have regard to the target and should therefore 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.

Policy Justification and Previous Decisions

SLT were provided with details of this period’s apprenticeship reporting on 17th August 2022. The report was also discussed at the Joint Management Trade Union Meeting (JMTUM) on 12th October 2022.

This is the fifth report on the apprenticeship scheme covering the period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022.

Implementation Timetable including Future Decisions

The findings of the apprenticeship scheme reporting will be noted following agreement at Personnel Committee. The data has been published on the Council’s intranet prior to the Personnel Committee meeting, to ensure the publishing deadline of 30 September each year is met.

Report Implications

The following implications have been identified for this report.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this decision.

Risk Management

There risks outlined within this report are highlighted in Part B below.

Background Papers: None

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Part B

Background

1. The Government introduced the Apprenticeship Scheme with effect from 6th April 2017.
2. The regulations have been updated to reflect amendments made to the Public Sector Apprenticeship Targets (Amendment) Regulations 2021, which came into force on 1st April 2021. All public bodies with 250 or more staff in England as of 31st March have a target to employ an average of at least 2.3% of their staff as new apprentice starts over the period of 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022. Bodies in scope must have regard to the target and should therefore 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.
3. As required under that scheme, reports are due within six months of the end of each reporting period. This means that the information should be published by 30th September each year in an easily accessible location to the public. It is therefore considered that the appropriate place to publish the Return Section 1 - Data Publication is on the internal and external Council website. The Return Section 2 – Apprenticeship Activity return does not have to be published.
4. Apprenticeship starts can include both existing employees, who can take advantage of apprenticeship funding, as well as newly employed apprenticeship posts.
5. Work has continued each year to increase the amount of apprenticeship starts, to enable the Council to demonstrate its commitment to meeting the target, where possible. However, it should be noted that for the current and last reporting period, the coronavirus pandemic has impacted on our ability to demonstrate our commitment to meeting the apprenticeship target. The Council has not met its target for this reporting period, however it is anticipated that the next reporting period will show improvement in meeting the target.

Findings

6. Return Section 1 – Data Publication

The Data Publication includes several figures which will enable the Government and the public to understand each body’s headcount and the number of apprentices they employ, and then use that information to assess the progress a body has made towards meeting the target. The figures outlined in Section 1 will be published as outlined at paragraph 3.

Figure A: The number of employees whose employment in England by the body began in the reporting period in question.

50

Figure B: The number of apprentices who began to work for the body in that period and whose apprenticeship agreements also began in that period.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This includes employees who were already working for the body before beginning the apprenticeship, as well as new apprentice hires.
1
Figure C: The number of employees employed in England that the body has at the end of that period.
441
Figure D: The number of apprentices who work for the body at the end of that period.
8
Public bodies are also required to provide two percentages in order to give context to the other figures. These percentages do not reflect the progress a public body has made towards the target:
Figure E: Figure B expressed as a percentage of figure A.
2%
Figure F: Figure D expressed as a percentage of figure C.
1.81%
Figure G: The number of apprentices who worked for the body immediately before the period.
12
In addition, the Apprenticeship Activity Return (Return Section 2) requires public bodies to send the following figures, which will help identify their progress towards meeting the target, to the Department for Education. Public bodies could also consider providing these figures in the Data Protection.
Figure H: Headcount on the 31 March 2021
510
Figure I: Figure B expressed as a percentage of figure H.
0.20%

7. Return Section 2 – Apprenticeship Activity Return

The Apprenticeship Activity Return includes both information on a body's progress against the target and information to assess actions taken towards, and challenges faced in, meeting the targets.

The return includes quantitative and qualitative elements:

QUANTITATIVE
Headcount on the 31 March 2021
510
Figure B in Return Section 1 (the number of apprentices who began to work for

the body in the reporting period in question and whose apprenticeship agreements also began in that period), expressed as a percentage of headcount on 31 March 2021. This will enable the Government to assess the progress a body has made towards meeting the target.

0.20%

QUALITATIVE

Action that the body has taken to meet their apprenticeship target (i.e. how it has “had regard”)

- Promoted information on apprenticeship opportunities to managers.
- Due to covid restrictions there have been difficulties in promoting the apprenticeship scheme and managers supporting new apprentices.
- With the continued issues with Covid, CBC has focused on developing existing staff.

If the target has not been met, then specific further evidence may be required. This may include an explanation of why the target was not met, actions the body has taken to overcome the challenges it has faced and/or mitigating factors which demonstrate the body’s commitment to apprenticeships.

- The Covid pandemic continues to have a significant impact on our ability to recruit and support new apprentices. Feedback has suggested that staff shortages have also started to become a factor for existing staff finding the time to complete an apprentice. Due to service pressures, it has become harder to persuade managers to release staff for 20% of their time for learning.

Information about action the body proposes to take to meet their future apprenticeship targets: and

- CBC is proactively promoting apprenticeship opportunities with our managers and encouraging them to consider apprenticeship recruitment when they carry out reviews and re-structures. There are positive signs that recruitment of apprentice opportunities has already picked up in recent months. These have included areas such as Democratic Services and Food and Hygiene as well as existing staff undertaking a range of training opportunities across all levels.

If the body considers that a future target is not likely to be met, an explanation of why that is so.

- It is anticipated that the future target will continue to be impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, but we have seen early signs of improvement for the next reporting period.