

HR Committee

16 December 2021



Report of:	Alison Hurley, Service Director; Education Learning and Skills
Title:	Bristol City Council Apprenticeships Service
Ward:	Citywide
Officer Presenting Report:	Jane Taylor, Head of Service (Employment, Skills & Learning) Darren Perkins, Apprenticeship Manager
Contact Telephone Number:	07810 506586 (Jane Taylor) 07795 446211 (Darren Perkins)

Recommendation

To receive an update on the progress of the Council's apprenticeship provision for departmental staff and staff employed within maintained schools

Summary

Update on progress with developing the Bristol Apprenticeships offer, levy funding and joint working needed to embed apprenticeships as a primary source of staff development and training aligned to workforce planning

The significant issues in the report are:

1. 672 apprenticeships in total since May 2017
2. Post pandemic apprenticeship starts growth
3. Levy spend £2.1m against contribution £5.2m
4. Levy funds expired significantly reduced this £ year @ £70k to Oct 2021



Policy

1. This report and recommendation relates primarily to:
 - a) The Corporate Strategy makes a commitment to develop a diverse economy that offers opportunity to all and makes quality work experience and apprenticeships available to every young person.
 - b) The Organisational Improvement Plan makes a commitment to: support the recruitment and retention of apprentices to the council (252 per annum by 2021) and make full use of the apprenticeship levy to support learning and development and career progression.

Consultation

2. **Internal**
Not applicable
3. **External**
Not applicable
4. **Context**

4.1 In May 2017 the Apprenticeship Levy was introduced requiring large employers to contribute 0.5% of their salary bill into a Government managed fund for apprenticeship training costs. These funds are retained for employer use for 24 months from transfer to levy account (a digital ‘virtual’ funding system). After 24 months unspent levy funds are transferred to HM Treasury. The Enterprise Act 2016 also introduced a public sector duty requiring local authorities and others to ensure that each year public bodies start 2.3% of their staff onto apprenticeships. Based upon BCC workforce at 31st March 2021 (including maintained schools) this provides a target of 221 apprenticeships per annum.

4.2 Bristol City Council has been approved as a government contracted apprenticeship training provider since 2002. At time of writing report a ‘refresh’ application has been submitted and outcome awaited. We hold current OFSTED grade of 2 (Good) awarded Feb 2020 and our On Site Bristol provision has been a vital component of the development of construction apprenticeships in the greater Bristol area. This contracting and brokerage lent itself well to BCC developing an employer provider model for the blended delivery of apprenticeships to serve the needs of departments and other employers. This model was proposed and approved by Cabinet in July 2017 and the Bristol Apprenticeship Service commenced in October 2017. At present the service comprises 2 FTE staff within the Employment, Skills and Learning Team.

4.3 To ensure a continuation of high quality training the team worked with commissioning and procurement and developed a dynamic purchasing system (DPS) which has so far approved 27 providers approved to deliver training in 21 separate specialist areas of learning. Due to the impact of Coronavirus a refreshed procurement exercise (approved by Cabinet) was deferred and planned completion is now expected March 2022.

4.4 During year to 31st March 2021 129 Council employees commenced new apprenticeship programmes this is 1.35% of workforce and nearly 1% below our Public Sector Duty target. However, the growth of numbers in final quarter with 72 starts recorded has been replicated in first half of 2021/22 with 156 starts to-date and a further 20 starts expected this quarter. A highlight of this activity has been the joint work with Corporate Parenting Manager, Liz Small to create openings for care experienced young people to access an entry level apprenticeship (Customer Service level 2) with flexibility to gain from working across different teams and departments – including acting as Apprentice Ambassadors in schools – the first group has seen 5 young people flourish in their new roles. The wider offer has also expanded and we have seen our first starts on Occupational Therapy and Public Health Degree Apprenticeships (level 7) and other schemes such as Improvement Technician (level 3) and Data Analyst (level 4). The current pipeline has 36 additional apprenticeship starts due for quarter 4 and we are receiving 7 applications per week from existing staff which should convert to 60 or more starts before £ year end and achievement of Public Sector Duty. However, external recruitment of entry level apprenticeships remains subdued.

4.5 Since our last report an Apprenticeship Stakeholder Group has been fully formed with all Staff Led groups represented, Trade Unions and apprentice ambassadors and departmental representatives. We have also developed an apprenticeships data and performance dashboard (appendix 1). This group meets regularly and feeds into the planning and development of the service and also the interaction with BCC Talent and Development Steering group which provides Governance. Championed by the Young Professionals Network and their senior sponsor we have proposed consideration of developing a Council-wide entry level rotational apprenticeship scheme that would allow (subject to funding of salary costs) targeted recruitment of young people and positive action with a scheme that provides broad insights into Council roles/teams/departments. This project will need further consideration including HR and Finance input but we hope could help create a long term talent pipeline which spans early careers through to senior leadership. A presentation to Talent & Development Group (appendix 2) was positively endorsed and follow up actions are now underway with HR and Organisational Development.

4.6 Since May 2017 BCC has contributed £4.74 million to the levy and this has generated a government top up of £480,000 providing a total input of £5.21 million. To date £2.1 million has been spent and we have a further £1.03 million committed spend over next year at a rate of £86,000 per month (up from £45,000 per month in Feb 2021) and this should increase to monthly spend of £95,000 per month by January 2022. However, we still need to continue the increased rate of spend to prevent continued sums expiring to Treasury. Fully meeting our public sector duty target would now increase spend to approximately £110,000 per month and we will need to increase starts to approximately 240 per annum or an average of circa 350 staff on programme at any one time to fully utilise. In the year to March 2021 levy expiry – meaning funds lost from our apprenticeship levy account totalled £498,846.23 at a rate of £41,500 per month. Whilst this rate of attrition has been significantly reduced – a total of £70,954.37 April to October 2021 or £10,100 per month has expired.

4.7 We continue to see a disparity with many Council departments creating opportunities at a rate equal to 2.3% but maintained schools continuing not to engage in or utilise the scheme

with some barriers. The team continue to work with Trading with Schools and direct engagement with schools that has produced new apprenticeships in different schemes such as Operations Manager (level 5) and we hope to build upon this so school's can benefit more widely. Appendix 1 provides further information on these results reflecting activity since April 2021 when we introduced a new monitoring scheme.

Proposal

5. This report is being presented to HR Committee for information and discussion of options to increase our apprenticeship expansion in line with our public sector duty and through our Levy fund. Committee Members can provide support with promoting apprenticeships in the City Council and local schools, and also through the Levy Sharing scheme.

Other Options Considered

6. Covered above

Risk Assessment

7.1 The risk that Bristol City Council may not fully utilise our apprenticeship levy is included in the People Directorate Risk Register and continues to be reported upon. A number of mitigating actions identified to enable us to accelerate apprenticeship recruitment are now under way:

- i) An apprenticeships internal marketing campaign backed by internal communications and regular drop ins and information sessions for staff and managers
- ii) Improved system for monitoring departmental performance and reporting to senior leadership
- iii) Focused activity linked to maintained schools
- iv) Joint working with Local Government Association and Marine & Natural Environment to create a workforce and succession plan underpinned by more extensive targeted use of apprenticeships
- v) Participation in West of England Share to Support scheme which connects us to local employers and is supporting 11 organisations/SMEs to recruit 27 local apprentices in construction, health and social care, policing, security systems and digital media

The provision of directorate and team targets

Public Sector Equality Duties

- 8a) Before making a decision, section 149 Equality Act 2010 requires that each decision-maker considers the need to promote equality for persons with the following “protected characteristics”: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Each decision-maker must, therefore, have due regard to the need to:
- i) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under

the Equality Act 2010.

- ii) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to --
 - remove or minimise disadvantage suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic;
 - take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it (in relation to disabled people, this includes, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities);
 - encourage persons who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
 - iii) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to –
 - tackle prejudice; and
 - promote understanding.
- 8b) Our public sector equality duties are being fully considered and implemented through our apprenticeship planning, promotion, recruitment and reporting. An equality impact assessment was initially prepared when the Apprenticeship Service was created. A second equality impact assessment is currently being prepared in relation to the Levy Sharing Scheme

Legal and Resource Implications

Legal

Not applicable

Financial

(a) Revenue

Not applicable

(b) Capital

Not applicable

Land

Not applicable

Personnel

not applicable

Appendices:

Appendix 1. BCC Apprenticeship Starts

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers: None