

<b>REPORT REFERENCE NO.</b>	HRMDC/17/11
<b>MEETING</b>	<b>HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT &amp; DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE</b>
<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>	<b>18 SEPTEMBER 2017</b>
<b>SUBJECT OF REPORT</b>	<b>WORKFORCE PLANNING – APPRENTICESHIPS</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	<b>ASSISTANT CHIEF FIRE OFFICER – SERVICE IMPROVEMENT</b>
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<p>(a) <i>That Apprenticeships becomes an integral part of our People Strategies;</i></p> <p>(b) <i>That the Service works with partner organisations including Skills for Justice, other FRSs and local colleges to ensure that we maximise the training and development opportunities that use the Apprentice Levy funding;</i></p> <p>(c) <i>That the Service appoints a partner to provide a managed service for apprenticeships to support of the Service;</i></p> <p>(d) <i>That the Wholetime Firefighter recruits training will be in accordance with the new national apprenticeship standards for an Operational Firefighter;</i></p> <p>(e) <i>That the Service continues to progress with Support Staff apprenticeships in areas that we have already identified as where we will have either future skills shortages or stall needs and that this will include ICT, Fleet Workshops and Business Administration;</i></p> <p>(f) <i>That the Service identifies other new entry apprenticeship opportunities including Community Safety Advocates and On-call staff where these meet the apprenticeship requirements;</i></p> <p>(g) <i>That, where possible, in-career training is in accordance with the apprenticeship standards.</i></p>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<p>From April 2017 Government reforms have resulted in changes to the funding and delivery of apprenticeships to meet the national target of 3 million apprenticeships by 2020. This means that, as well as contributing to an apprenticeship levy, the Service as a public sector organisation has a target set by the Government to increase the number of people starting an apprenticeship. The target is a minimum of 2.3% apprenticeship new starters each year, based on the number of employees working for the Service.</p> <p>This report sets out the Service’s proposed approach to the delivery of apprenticeships in the future and makes some recommendations for consideration by the Committee.</p>
<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>	Apprenticeships provide the Service with the opportunity to recruit new staff and develop our existing staffing resources. From a financial resource perspective, there is the ability to draw down the levy funding which we are currently incurring.

<b>EQUALITY RISK &amp; BENEFITS ASSESSMENT</b>	Further work will be undertaken into the ERBA and any impact of introducing apprenticeships.
<b>APPENDICES</b>	Appendix A - House of Commons briefing paper – Apprenticeships Policy in England 2017
<b>LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>	<p>There is a wealth of supporting background information associated with apprenticeships specifically through the <a href="http://www.gov.uk">www.gov.uk</a> website, and Skills for Justice which is the Sector Skills Council for the Fire &amp; Rescue Service. There is also a very useful House of Commons briefing paper attached in Appendix A.</p> <p><a href="http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN03052/SN03052.pdf">http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN03052/SN03052.pdf</a></p>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 From April 2017, Government reforms have resulted in changes to the funding and delivery of apprenticeships to meet the national target of 3 million apprenticeships by 2020. This means that, as well as contributing to an apprenticeship levy, the Service, as a public sector organisation, has a target set by the Government to increase the number of people starting an apprenticeship. The target is a minimum average of 2.3% apprenticeships starting each year from 2017/18 to 2020/21, based on the number of employees working within the Service. This equates to approximately 5 support staff apprentices and 13 Wholetime apprentices.

1.2 The introduction of these changes and financial incentives represent a key opportunity for Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service (hereinafter referred to as “the Service”) to develop Apprenticeships as part of the Workforce Strategy. In the enabling People Strategy, the Service has set out that it will provide quality assured training and assessment in order that staff can develop and maintain their knowledge, skills and understanding to competently and safely perform their duties which sits well with using apprenticeships. Reference to apprentices is also made within the national draft Fire & Rescue People Strategy 2017-2022 which states that providing apprenticeships will need to become an integral part of workforce planning and training for the future. It is proposed that the Service strategy is one of apprentices becoming an integral part of Workforce Strategy in providing career pathways for new employees and existing staff to develop and support the Service in meeting our current and future workforce requirements. The Service will aim to maximise its use of apprenticeship training in 3 key areas:

- Wholetime new entry Firefighter recruits providing training to a nationally recognised standard;
- Support Staff apprentices providing new entry routes in areas where we have identified future staffing needs; and
- In career training for existing staff to undertake relevant apprenticeship qualifications aligned to our current and future skills requirements.

1.3 From 6 of April 2017, the Government has introduced a new apprenticeship levy, on all organisations with a pay bill in excess of £3 million. The levy is set at 0.5% of the pay bill, collected monthly in the usual PAYE payments and will be in the region of £220,000 per annum for this Service. The intention of the levy is to encourage greater participation in apprenticeship schemes (as well as raising money for apprenticeships and training for smaller organisations). Following collection, the levy funding will be placed into a new online apprenticeship service account and a 10% top up applied to each account by central government each month. The account is ring fenced and electronic vouchers can be used to purchase apprenticeship training. From this online apprenticeship account, organisations will be able to select an apprenticeship and pay providers. This enables funding to be accessed to pay for apprenticeship training schemes. The funds in the account will expire 24 months after they have entered the service account.

1.4 There is a common misconception that apprenticeships are for new employees only and are generally at lower qualification levels, however:

- Employees can be apprentices at any age;
- Almost any role can have an associated apprenticeship, including firefighters, management, administration, ICT, vehicle maintenance and finance;

- Apprenticeships can provide degree and masters level qualifications; and
- Apprenticeships can be taken at any point in an employee's career.

1.5 Apprenticeships present the Service with the opportunity to recruit new staff on a nationally recognised training course but also for existing staff to receive further training. In the face of increasing university costs and the lack of guaranteed postgraduate employment, many talented young people are choosing apprenticeships instead and the Service can benefit from this trend to attract and develop new talent into the organisation.

## **2. WHAT IS AN APPRENTICESHIP?**

2.1 An apprenticeship is a paid job which incorporates on and off-the-job training. It enables someone to develop and demonstrate the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to perform effectively in a particular occupation.

2.2 Off-the-job training is learning which is undertaken outside of the normal day-to-day working environment and which contributes towards the achievement of the apprenticeship. Apprenticeships must be for a minimum duration of one year and apprentices can be in either a new job role or an existing role where the individual needs significant new knowledge and skills. Apprentices must spend at least 20% of their working time on off-the-job-training.

2.3 If the apprentice works less than 30 hours a week, the training provider must extend the minimum duration of the training on a pro-rata basis. There must be an apprenticeship agreement with the apprentice which includes information on the occupation for which the apprentice is being trained, the standard and level being used and the start date and estimated finish date.

## **3. WHAT CAN BE FUNDED?**

3.1 Apprenticeships must be eligible for funding by being an approved apprenticeship. Funds from the online account can only be used for activity directly related to the apprenticeship such as;

- On and off-the-job training either through an external approved provider or evidenced costings from an employer provider.
- Assessments either during a programme or at an end point of the training.
- E-learning as part of blended learning that includes practical workplace learning.
- Registration, materials, examinations and certification.
- Administration directly linked to the training.
- Accommodation costs for learning delivered through residential modules where the residential learning is a requirement for all apprentices.

3.2 The funding from the online account cannot be used for apprenticeship wages, PPE or clothing required to carry out day to day work, travel costs or time spent by an apprentice's manager supporting or mentoring them.

- 3.3 The existing framework apprenticeship (Firefighter Emergency Fire Services Operations Apprenticeship) has a funding cap of £3K whereas the new Firefighter Apprenticeship standard has been given a funding cap of £6K and there are currently moves to seek a further increase to £9K. The Service is seeking to use the new apprenticeship standard when it is available.

#### **4. DEVELOPMENT OF AN APPRENTICESHIP**

- 4.1 Standards for apprenticeships are monitored through The Institute for Apprenticeships which is sponsored by the Department of Education (the government department responsible for apprenticeships) to ensure high-quality apprenticeship standards and advise Government on funding for each standard. The Institute will consider and approve expressions of interest, apprenticeship standards and assessment plans submitted by employer groups. Fire is categorised within Protective Services which also includes the Police, other emergency services, HM Forces and Prison services.
- 4.2 There are two different types of apprenticeship schemes, frameworks and standards. Apprenticeship frameworks are being progressively phased out and replaced by the newer apprenticeship standards. The existing Firefighter Emergency Fire Services Operations framework will cease on the 1 October 2017 and a new Firefighter Apprenticeship standard is being developed and should be available from October 2017. Apprenticeships are developed by employer groups known as trailblazers. These are groups which have a wide range of employers who are committed to working actively on the development of a new apprenticeship standard, and intend to use the apprenticeship standard once it's been approved for delivery. There must be at least 10 different employers as members. Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service has been the lead organisation for the development of the FireFighter apprenticeship. The standard has been approved by the Institute and the Assessment Plan is being finalised. All apprentices must be formally assessed at the end of their apprenticeship on the outcomes detailed within the Knowledge, Skills and Understanding of the Standard. It is necessary to define the method of assessment and who will do it and how it will be carried out.
- 4.3 Another apprenticeship for Community Safety Advisor Apprenticeship has commenced and a trailblazer group is being led by Greater Manchester and the Service will be a member of the lead group. The existing Community Safety framework is, however, available until 1 April 2018.
- 4.4 For non-fire service related apprenticeships such as Information and Communications Technology (ICT), the Service can use existing apprenticeship qualifications which are already developed.

#### **5. TRAINING PROVIDER**

- 5.1 Organisations will use training providers to deliver some, or all, of the off-the-job training element of an apprenticeship to their own staff and the Service has registered as an Employer-Provider. This means that for fire sector specific apprentices, it will have overall responsibility for the training and in-programme assessment and will arrange end-point assessment conducted by apprentice assessment organisations. However, the Service is not a specialist in this field and there are external quality assurance, compliance and OFSTED inspectorate requirements for which it would be beneficial to work in partnership with a local Training Provider to assist us through this process.

## **6. SUPPORT STAFF APPRENTICESHIPS**

- 6.1 ICT has identified the benefits of introducing two ICT Apprenticeships. This offers distinct merits to the Service since there is a high staffing demand level within this department. This is currently being met by contractors and the age profile lacks younger talent. The intent is to have one apprentice in ICT Service Delivery and one in ICT Development and there is an Apprenticeship course available through Exeter College, namely IT, Software, Web and Telecoms Professionals Intermediate and Advanced Apprenticeship scheme. The Intermediate apprentice is at a Level 2 and will attract a funding band of £4,000 whilst the advanced level is at Level 3 will attract a funding band of £9,000. The Level 2 course is for 18 months and the Level 3 course for 24 months.
- 6.2 There is also the opportunity to introduce apprenticeships in Business Administration with a training programme at SHQ and the Academy which will incorporate a wide range of placements in support departments and lead to highly skilled staff with a broad range of knowledge across the Service.
- 6.3 The Fleet Workshops have also identified the need for an apprenticeship and this is an area where the Service has previously introduced apprentices.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 As part of Workforce Planning, the Service needs to introduce Apprenticeships to provide the staffing resources that are required and to enable the full benefit from the apprenticeship levy to be realised. As a public sector organisation there is also a requirement upon the Service to achieve the government targets.

**GLENN ASKEW**  
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