

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	HRMDC/18/30
MEETING	HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	21 SEPTEMBER 2018
SUBJECT OF REPORT	WORKFORCE PLANNING – APPRENTICESHIPS
LEAD OFFICER	Director of Service Improvement
RECOMMENDATIONS	<p><i>(a) That the contents of this report are noted and;</i></p> <p><i>(b) that the Service continues to progress the apprenticeship schemes within the Service.</i></p>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>From April 2017, Government reforms have resulted in changes to the funding and delivery of apprenticeships. The Government is committed to creating 3 million apprenticeships by 2020. Public sector bodies have been set a target of a minimum average of 2.3% new starter apprenticeships in each year from 2017-18 to 2020-21, based on the number of employees within the organisation. An apprenticeship levy has also been introduced to encourage participation in apprenticeship schemes.</p> <p>The introduction of these changes, with the public sector target, financial incentives and opportunity to use nationally recognised training standards, provides a key opportunity for the Service to develop apprenticeships as part of its Workforce Planning. In the Fire and Rescue Plan, the Service commits to: “Introduce apprenticeship opportunities for new and existing staff to develop their career”.</p> <p>This report sets out the opportunities available for apprenticeships within Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service and identifies progress made in moving this forward.</p>
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	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.
EQUALITY RISK & BENEFITS ASSESSMENT	Further work will be undertaken into the ERBA and any impact of introducing apprenticeships.
APPENDICES	Nil.
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS	<p>There is a wealth of supporting background information associated with apprenticeships specifically through the www.gov.uk website, and Skills for Justice which is the Sector Skills Council for the Fire & Rescue Service. There is also a very useful House of Commons briefing paper at:</p> <p>http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN03052/SN03052.pdf</p>

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 From April 2017, Government reforms have resulted in changes to the funding and delivery of apprenticeships. In June 2015, the government committed to creating 3 million apprenticeships by 2020 and public sector bodies were set targets to help reach the target. In March 2017, the Public Sector Apprenticeship Targets Regulations 2017 came into force. Further statutory guidance for bodies in scope with these regulations was provided in February 2018 and the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service (“the Service”) will be required to provide the first return in September 2018. Further returns will be required over the next 3 years. The public sector target is a minimum average of 2.3% new starter apprenticeships in each year from 2017/18 to 2020/21, based on the number of employees working within the Service.
- 1.2 From 6 April 2017, the Government has also 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 is £216K per annum for the 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 is placed in 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 are 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. However if the Service uses all of our levy, additional government funding is available for up to 90% of the apprenticeship funding.
- 1.3 The introduction of these changes with the government target, financial incentives and opportunity to use nationally recognised training standards represent a key opportunity for the Service to develop Apprenticeships as part of its Workforce Planning. In the Fire and Rescue Plan, the Service states that it will:
- Introduce apprenticeship opportunities for new and existing staff to develop their career.***
- 1.4 This statement recognises that 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.
- 1.5 There are some common misconception that apprenticeships are for new employees only and 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
 - Apprenticeships can be taken at any point in an employee’s career

- 1.6 In the face of increasing university costs and the lack of guaranteed employment, many talented young people are choosing apprenticeships instead of continuing directly into further and higher education. The Service can take advantage of this trend to attract and develop the leaders of the future who are fully engaged with Service culture and values. This will also help the Service identify and develop career pathways and help it retain talented individuals who see the benefit of the opportunities that employment with the Service offers.

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. Apprentices cannot be employed with the sole purpose of delivering an apprenticeship so there must be genuine job opportunities after the apprenticeship has been completed. The only exception is where an apprentice is employed through an Apprenticeship Training Agency which is a third party provider.
- 2.2 Apprentices gain the technical knowledge, skills and practical experience for their immediate role and future career through a mix of workplace learning and formal off-the-job-training. Off-the-job training is learning which is undertaken outside 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 cost 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; and
 - 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 to cover the cost of employing an apprentice i.e. salary and superannuation costs.

- 3.3 Different apprenticeships have differing levels of funding. Prior to the apprenticeship reforms, the existing framework apprenticeship for Firefighters had a funding cap of £3,000 whereas the new Firefighter Apprenticeship standard has been given a funding cap of £12,000.

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). The Institute ensures ensure high-quality apprenticeship standards and advises the 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 new apprenticeship standards. For example, the previous Firefighter Emergency Fire Services Operations framework ceased on 1 October 2017 and a new Firefighter Apprenticeship standard was developed and approved in February 2018. 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. 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 For non-fire service related apprenticeships e.g. ICT, Vehicle Technicians the Service can use existing apprenticeship qualifications which are already developed.

5. APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING PROVIDER

- 5.1 Organisations will use training providers to delivers some, or all, of the off-the-job training element of an apprenticeship to their own staff. For non-fire service related apprenticeships we are able to use the College delivering the training as the Training Provider.
- 5.2 In September 2017, the Service made an application to the Education and Skills Funding Agency to become a registered Training Provider for the training of Operational Firefighters. The Service was not successful with this application and was unable to re-apply since the gateway is only active for set periods of time. Originally, it was anticipated that there would be 4 windows per year in which applications for Training Providers could be submitted, however, the gateway has remained closed until September 2018.

6. OPERATIONAL FIREFIGHTER APPRENTICESHIPS

- 6.1 The Service recruited 15 new Wholetime Firefighters in August 2017 and it was agreed that these recruits would use the national standard once available. However, when they commenced, the new apprenticeship standard was not ready and the old framework was due to be withdrawn. This has been problematic since the new standard was delayed and even when introduced there were not any Apprenticeship Training Providers who were prepared to oversee the training standard for the Service.
- 6.2 The Service is, however, working with Bridgwater & Taunton College which will become its main provider for operational Firefighter apprenticeships. If the Service goes above £100,000 in terms of apprenticeship funding then it will need to be registered as a sub-contractor and beyond £500,000, it would need to become a main provider.
- 6.3 Previously, it was thought that the Service would not be able to offer apprenticeships to On-call Firefighters since they do not work the required 30 hours per week and even on a pro-rata basis it would take too long to complete the apprenticeship. However, through researching other organisations, the Service has found that the NHS has operated apprenticeship schemes with variable pay/hours and it therefore intends to run a pilot with On-call Firefighters. This has huge potential for the Service since it currently recruits 100 on-call firefighters per year.

7. OTHER FIRE & RESCUE SECTOR SPECIFIC APPRENTICESHIPS

- 7.1 As well as Firefighters, there are other roles within the Fire & Rescue Sector where there are specific apprenticeships available. The Service was part of a trailblazer group to create a Business Fire Safety Advisor Apprenticeship at level 3 with funding of £2.5K. There are apprenticeships being developed for a Community Safety Advisor and Fire Safety Inspector which also have trailblazer groups to support them and the Service has had representation on these groups.
- 7.2 In April 2018, an Emergency Service Contact Handling apprenticeship was approved at level 3 with funding of £9K. This apprenticeship could be used for our Control staff.

8. UNIFORMED SUPPORT STAFF APPRENTICESHIPS

- 8.1 The Service budgeted in 2017-18 to recruit apprentices into specific areas of the Service where it had identified that apprenticeships could provide future talent. This included two positions within ICT, a Vehicle Technician and two Business Administration apprentices. The ICT positions were appointed as well as the Vehicle Technician. With further turnover of staff, the Service was able to recruit a further Vehicle Technician Apprentice. A Business Administration apprentice has also been appointed and the Service is seeking to recruit a second apprentice in Q3. The Service is also recruiting an e-learning Apprentice Technician for the Academy.
- 8.2 As new vacancies arise in the Service, we will give due consideration as to whether the vacancy should be filled with an apprenticeship appointment. Colleagues within another Service have shared their mapping of existing positions to apprenticeship standards which is beneficial for this purpose.

9. IN-CAREER APPRENTICESHIPS

- 9.1 The Service training provider for Leadership Training is working to the standards of the Institute of Learning & Development. However, at this stage we have not aligned this training to national apprenticeship standards e.g. Team Leader/Supervisor (level 3 - £5K) Apprenticeship and the Operations/Departmental Manager (level 5 - £9K) apprenticeships which have recently become available.
- 9.2 The Service has recently appointed a Service Leadership Manager and as part of his role, he will be reviewing our provision of Leadership training.
- 9.3 There are also other areas of in-career training and the Service has already introduced Exercise & Fitness apprenticeship training, an in-career Assistant Accountant course and also Vehicle Maintenance & Repair for Equipment Technicians who have taken on a new role.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 As part of our Workforce Planning, there are significant benefits in introducing apprenticeships which the Service has recognised and has therefore set as a commitment within the Fire & Rescue Plan and as part of our objectives.
- 10.2 In meeting this objective we will provide training to nationally recognised standards, be able to attract and retain staff that are highly motivated and share our values as well as supporting the nation in providing apprenticeships towards the national targets and using our apprenticeship levy funding.

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