

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 8 OCTOBER 2020**

**Question to Philip White  
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills**

**By David Brookes**

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**Question**

I noted the announcement regarding the Leader of Solihull welcoming the massive funding from the Staffordshire apprentice scheme of £250k. Why wasn't this money raised in Staffordshire spent to help our residents from this fund?

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**Reply**

The Apprenticeship Levy was introduced by government in April 2017 and focuses on large employers with a wage bill of over £3m per annum. The levy takes 0.5% of the wage bill and places it into a digital account that can only be used to fund apprenticeship training.

It is right that we are focussed on growing apprenticeships nationally, however the rules that apply to the scheme mean there are challenges for organisations in spending all their levy. Despite the challenges Staffordshire as a place is currently performing above the national averages, especially in supporting apprenticeships for young people.

Part of the management of the levy allows organisations to spend (also known as "gift") up to 25% on funding apprenticeships in their supply chain or local economy. Staffordshire County Council has been successfully funding external apprenticeships in partner organisations that deliver our priorities and through local businesses. We also joined up with councils from across the West Midlands to jointly promote the initiative to Small and Medium Enterprises (SME's) across the region. The benefit of this approach being efficiencies of scale in terms of marketing and administration.

Another benefit is that there are other private businesses in the partnership and if any council uses its full allocation the private businesses are asked if they will fund additional applications which means we get more funding to use in the area if we need it.

Within the partnership it is a rule that each local authority uses its own allocation for its own businesses and residents. All of Staffordshire's £250,000 that has been allocated through the partnership has gone to Staffordshire businesses and residents to help them in recruiting apprentices or in developing existing staff.

