



Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 15 May 2019

Staffordshire County Council Apprenticeship Strategy

Cllr Philip White, Cabinet Member for Learning and Employability said,

“As one of the largest employers in the county, helping to grow apprenticeships is an important part of our business. We want to raise the skill levels and aspirations of our workforce, and our Apprenticeship Strategy will play a key part in this.

“An apprentice learns so much more than just how to do a job or achieve a qualification, and we want to use apprenticeships to explore new ways of working, improve the organisation and help employees to progress through their career.

As a county council we aspire to be an employer of choice, that attracts, develops and retains the most diverse, creative and innovative individuals with the required skills and abilities. This strategy will ensure we can fully maximise the opportunities contained within the new Apprenticeship Levy, by investing in our greatest asset: our employees.”

Report Summary:

The Apprenticeship Strategy for Staffordshire County Council sets out its approach to delivering Apprenticeships as an employer. It is one of the first big steps we are taking to deliver the Staffordshire County Council People Strategy that Cabinet approved in March 2019. To deliver the best possible outcomes for our residents, communities and businesses it is essential that the county council is able to recruit, retain and develop the right people, and apprenticeships are a key route to achieving this.

For years the county council has worked closely with the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and our business community to champion the role of apprenticeships in helping to grow the workforce needed for Staffordshire’s economy to thrive. The Apprenticeship Strategy sets out how we as an employer intend to fully maximise the opportunities presented through the new Apprenticeship Levy by investing in our employees and partner organisations.

Recommendations

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Approves the Apprenticeship Strategy 2019 – 2022 for Staffordshire County Council (attached as Appendix A).
- b. Note and support the Aims of the Apprenticeship Programme (section 5 of the Strategy) as the way forward to embed Apprenticeships within the county council's workforce, achieve maximum levy spend and work towards meeting the public-sector target.

Local Members Interest
N/A

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Recommendations of the Cabinet Member for Learning and Employability

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Approves the Apprenticeship Strategy for Staffordshire County Council (attached as Appendix A).
- b. Note and support the Aims of the Apprenticeship Programme (section 5 of the Strategy) as the way forward to embed Apprenticeships within the County Council's workforce, achieve maximum levy spend and work towards meeting the public-sector target.

Report of the Director of Economy, Infrastructure and Skills

Reasons for Recommendations:

1. Implementing the Apprenticeship Strategy will support the county council deliver its People Strategy by attracting, developing and retaining the most diverse, creative and innovative individuals with the key skills and abilities required now and to meet future challenges.
2. The introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy puts employers at the centre of identifying the skills, knowledge and behaviours that are required for the workforce of the future and to ensure that apprentices receive high quality training to meet their chosen professional standards. Public sector targets have also been introduced to achieve a greater proportion of growth in apprenticeships. There is now a public-sector duty to ensure that 2.3% of the workforce are apprenticeships by 2020.
3. To maximise the use of the Levy to develop skills within the business and to meet the proposed public-sector target, apprenticeships will need to be redefined within the council and the number of apprenticeships offered increased. If approved the strategy will enable the council to put into place an apprenticeship programme that will increase skill levels, maximise levy spend and work towards meeting the public-sector target.
4. The council's Apprenticeship Programme goes beyond meeting targets and aims to support the wider strategic commitment to sustainably improve the employment prospects and social mobility of local people, and to strengthen the skills base of our existing and future workforce by providing high quality jobs and learning opportunities with related qualifications which are embedded in career progression routes.

5. Apprenticeship growth is an important part of our aspirations for the Staffordshire economy with the aim to raise skills levels and aspirations. The challenges faced are particularly acute for young people aged 16-25, as well as for care leavers, long term unemployed people, returners to the labour market and people with disabilities, as they try to compete within the labour market. As one of the largest employers in the county we want to support apprenticeship growth and routes into apprenticeships by using an influencing role and leading by example in having an effective and quality internal programme.
6. The Apprenticeship Strategy focusses on:
 - a. Meeting Current and Future Skill Needs;
 - i. Focussing on the development of skills needed now and for the future, and the provision of opportunities for all, giving new and current employees a chance to pursue careers across the council.
 - b. Apprenticeship Programme Aims;
 - i. Section 5 of the strategy sets out the full set of aims of the programme which will ensure we deliver the strategy and embed apprenticeships within the council, key areas of focus include: reviewing our recruitment processes, use of apprenticeships to develop existing staff, apprentice ambassador network, influencing the development of national standards, and the role we play as a corporate parent.
 - c. Developing partnerships with training providers, other local authorities and public sector bodies;
 - i. Ways of working with partners including Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP, the Skills Hub and Apprenticeship Ladder for Staffordshire, training providers and other public-sector bodies to ensure joint working on apprenticeship growth and quality.
 - d. Engage with maintained schools to ensure they maximise benefits from the levy;
 - i. Local authority maintained schools are aware of the impact of the apprenticeship reforms and receive up to date information that enables them to engage with and benefit from the levy.
 - e. Future Development of the Apprenticeship Programme;
 - i. Focusses on being proactive in making apprenticeships available across a diverse range of job roles, maximising the use of the apprenticeship levy and using the apprenticeship route to give employees skills needed for the future.
 - f. Review and Monitoring;

- i. The strategy will be underpinned by an Apprenticeship Programme Delivery Plan which will be regularly reviewed and reported on at the county council's Apprenticeship Programme Board.
7. Delivering the strategy will mean that the council can recruit and embed apprenticeships into a wider range of services, develop existing employees as part of wider workforce planning, address areas of skills shortages and high turn-over such as social workers, and provide opportunities for under-represented groups and those where access to opportunities may not be equal. (see Section 5 of the Strategy for the full list of programme aims).
 8. The strategy was written as part of the Local Government Association's (LGA) Accelerated Apprenticeship Programme. Feedback from the LGA is that it is an exemplar strategy which they would like to share with the sector.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix A - Staffordshire County Council - Apprenticeship Strategy 2019 – 2022

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