

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 13 March 2014

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director: Children & Enterprise

PORTFOLIO: Economic Development

SUBJECT: Implementing Halton Borough Council's Apprenticeship Scheme

WARDS: All

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out options to resource a corporate apprenticeship scheme.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS: That

- 1) consideration is given to the options available to fund apprenticeships within the Council as set out in section 3.4 of the report;**
- 2) Option 3 is agreed as the preferred option;**
- 3) a target of establishing 10 additional apprentices during the next financial year is approved; and**
- 4) a future cascade briefing is used to promote and provide further information on apprenticeships.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Halton Borough Council's People Plan reinforces the need for the Council to continue to attract, develop and retain excellent people. Furthermore, there is recognition that the Council has an ageing workforce and has been developing a Talent Strategy to promote a structured approach to Succession Planning across the organisation.

3.2. The benefits of Apprenticeships have been reported previously to (Chief Officer) Management Team and the Executive Board. Briefly, apprenticeships can promote a more balanced workforce if the workforce is ageing; can often inject freshness and new ideas into the organisation; and can help the organisation to reduce skills shortages in growth areas. Apprenticeships also contribute to our wider employment and regeneration policies.

- 3.3 There are several examples where apprenticeships are working well across the organisation, but it has been difficult to allocate a specific resource to fund and support apprenticeships.
- 3.4 There are three funding options to consider

Option 1 Use existing departmental resources to fund Apprenticeships

Another approach would be to assess whether any Council vacancies could be converted into apprenticeships. An appropriate apprenticeship framework would be identified. This would have the advantage of ensuring that no new money would need to be found, as the funding of the post would already have been identified within the existing departmental budget. However, it is acknowledged that if there is any remaining resource it is likely to be identified as a future saving.

Option 2 - Use of the Council's Invest to Save Budget

One approach that Executive Board could consider, is the use of the Council's Invest to Save Budget to provide an 'apprenticeships pot', which would enable us to recruit a small number of apprentices.

With this option links can be made between the Voluntary Redundancy Expressions of Interest process, the potential to generate savings to the Council and the opportunity to reinvest some of those savings in funding an apprenticeship scheme,

Wherever possible, the Council has been seeking to reduce its staffing resources 'naturally', for example, through Voluntary Redundancy/Voluntary Early Retirement. The Council has coped well with the loss of key individuals and the skills and experience they have held, but in the long-term it is unlikely that the Council will be able to sustain this reduction in skills, knowledge and experience, without investing in its future workforce.

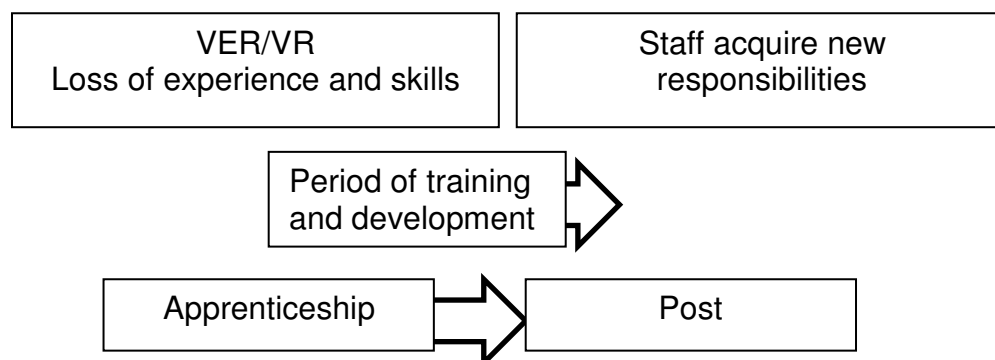
It is interesting to note that 21.6% of the Council's work force (554 people) is over 55, whilst only 2.4 % (62 people) of the Council's workforce is under 25.

Reducing the Council's workforce 'naturally' has saved the Council money. However, we are all aware that further significant savings need to be made.

Furthermore, some of our older staff may consider leaving the organisation, but many managers would be reluctant to allow staff to retire via the Voluntary Early Retirement route, unless they knew that there were other staff being trained and developed to take on these roles in the future.

Conversely, whilst staff previously on lower grades have stepped up and met the challenge of taking on additional and increased responsibilities, some have often had little or no lead in time to take on these new areas of work. In

some instances these staff would welcome a phased or transitioned route to taking on further responsibilities and duties.



Although the Invest to Save Budget is an option to consider, the correlation between savings made in supporting Voluntary Redundancy requests, and reinvesting these savings in recruiting new apprentices, is difficult to quantify.

Option 3 Explore the use of European Funding to develop a borough wide apprenticeship programme.

This option would see the continued development and support of apprentices through the Halton Employment Partnership. Here, the Council would be one of a number of apprentice providers in the borough. However, the Council would not be able to recover all its apprenticeships costs and would need to identify some matching funding. The Council has ear-marked some resources to support the development of the European programme and this may be an appropriate use of this resource. However, it should be noted that the next European Programme does not commence until September 2014. The development of this option would also explore the feasibility of supporting the Council's existing apprenticeships provision.

This option is the preferred option of the Council's Organisational Development Group.

3.5 Cascading Information on Apprenticeships

There is now an opportunity to better communicate how an Apprenticeship Scheme would work in practice, and to identify potential apprenticeship opportunities within and across the Council.

This would help to reduce any concerns and promote a working dialogue with key stakeholders including TUs, Managers, Elected Members and HR (in an advisory role).

As a starting point, it is proposed that a future cascade briefing (scheduled for early May 2014) could be used to brief Managers on Apprenticeships. The

Council's (Chief Officer) Management Team has stressed that it is essential that the benefits of an Apprenticeship Scheme are cascaded across the organisation as a whole. The briefing would set out the process for identifying, appointing, supporting and monitoring apprenticeships. It would include details on:

- Appropriate Induction outlining the respective roles and responsibilities of apprentices and managers;
- How assessments would be undertaken;
- the types of work that apprentices would undertake; and
- typical 'apprenticeship frameworks.

It is envisaged that as part of a cascade briefing a short round the table discussion would be facilitated to enable managers to ask specific questions about the apprenticeships scheme.

The cascade briefing would allow us to work together to identify areas of the Council where an apprenticeships scheme could be supported, or conversely, where the scheme could not be supported.

Were Executive Board to agree to this, a guidance booklet would be produced outlining the process.

Some of the possible Frequently Asked Questions are contained in Appendix 1.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The implementation of a Halton Borough Council Apprenticeship Scheme supports key corporate priorities. Examples include the People Plan, Halton's Sustainable Community Strategy, City Region Employment Strategy Halton's 14-19 Apprenticeship Strategy Action Plan and Halton's NEET Strategy Plan.

5.0 OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Were resources to be made available, they would be used as pump-priming money to pilot and then further develop apprenticeships within the Council for a 12-month period. There is an expectation, although no guarantee, that some resources could be recouped through other external grants funding, such as the Skills Funding Agency.

At the end of this 12 month period a number of further options would need to be considered:

- the value of continuing the scheme;
- whether existing apprentices would be offered further employment;
- whether the scheme would be delivered in a different way.

If the scheme is to be coordinated appropriately, then resources would need to be set aside to fulfil this role. Whilst it is expected that most of the resource will be provided by using existing staff i.e. through a combination of the National Apprenticeships Service, the Council's Employment Learning and Skills Division and Council's Policy Officer(s), it is expected that there will be some initial project coordination requirements. Where possible, the coordination of the scheme will be managed through existing networks and arrangements, but this will be reviewed depending on feedback received from Managers as part of the Cascade Briefing referred to in section 3.5 of the report.

Therefore, estimated costs for the scheme will be: 1 apprentice @ HBC1 plus on costs = £16,166 x 10 apprentices = £161,660

Progress reports on the scheme will be provided on a quarterly basis.

The scheme would commence in November 2014.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

There are a number of positive implications for the Council's priorities i.e.

- Strengthen links and relationships between the Council and local communities –
- Demonstration of Council's commitment to promoting inclusion and wellbeing and reducing poverty.
- A tool to tackle high local levels of Worklessness in specific groups – for example NEETS, (Not in Education, Employment and Training)
- Raise attainment and aspirations for the young people of Halton.
- Contributes towards targets, both internal and with external partners.
- If successfully implemented, could be seen as a 'job creation' scheme.
- Contributes to raising skill levels in the local labour workforce.
- Enhances reputation – research indicates that 80% consumers favour an organisation that employs apprentices.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

There are some risks associated with the implementation of an Apprenticeship Scheme for Halton Borough Council.

RISK	LIKELIHOOD	IMPACT	SCORE	MITIGATION
<i>Unable to attract potential candidates</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>10(I)</i>	<i>Work with Halton Employment Partnership to</i>

				<i>identify possible candidates</i>
<i>Difficult to sustain mentoring support for apprentices</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>8(l)</i>	<i>Successful apprenticeships already operate in the Council and this expertise would be available to support</i>
<i>Non-Completion of apprenticeships</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>15(m)</i>	<i>Existing arrangements in place to manage apprenticeships</i>
<i>Sustainability of Apprenticeships</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>20 (h)</i>	<i>Colleagues will work with funding providers at a national and city region level to continue to support the scheme</i>

Score 0-5
High 20-25
Medium 15-19
Low 0-14

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

Equality and Diversity issues have been considered. The Apprenticeships Scheme seeks to encourage equal employment opportunities for people living and working in the Borough, but care is being taken to ensure that the scheme would not discriminate against existing staff.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None under the meaning of the Act.

APPENDIX 1 – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. I am a manager – what is in it for me?
2. Apart from contributing to the Council's employment agenda, by helping local unemployed people to get ready for work, the scheme will provide you with an opportunity to obtain some additional resources to support the work of your team
3. How will managers be supported?
4. Managers will be guided through the process by the Council's Employment Learning and Skills team. Apprentices also follow a framework where support from the National Apprenticeships Service. We will establish a mentoring network where other managers who have provided apprenticeships in the past will be on hand to offer advice
5. How do I apply to recruit an apprentice?
6. First, you will be asked to complete a proforma outlining the business case for why and how you would best use an apprenticeship. You will be provided with examples of job descriptions and person specifications which you can adapt to meet your requirements. Advertisements will be made via the Council's Halton People into Jobs team
7. How much will apprentices be paid?
8. Apprentices will be paid HBC1 which complies with the minimum wage
9. Who pays for the apprentice?
10. The scheme would be funded as a pilot and further funding is yet to be determined
11. How will the performance of an apprentice be monitored and assessed? Whilst managers will be expected to supervise apprentices as they would with other staff, apprentices also have to meet targets set out in their apprenticeship framework
12. How much off- the job training will be required?
13. This will vary according to the apprenticeship, but it is likely that the apprenticeship will include day release for training/study.
14. I am an apprentice – what is in it for me?
15. You will receive an opportunity to get real and practical work experience, whilst studying for a further qualification. The Council is a large employer with a wide range of jobs and professions
16. How long will an apprenticeship last?
17. Your apprenticeship with the Council will last for up to 12 months
18. What happens when an apprenticeship finishes?

Unfortunately, there is no guarantee that you will be offered a job with the Council. However, your experience and skills gained will put you in a better position to apply for jobs within and outside the Council.

19. How and will I be paid?

You will be paid as if you were an employee of the Council i.e. monthly.