

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Jobs Regeneration and Assets Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 21 March 2016
Report of: Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Subject/Title: Apprenticeships Task and Finish Group Report
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Paul Findlow

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 This report introduces the Apprenticeships Task and Finish Group's (the Task Group) Report on its findings, conclusions and recommendations following its review.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee receive the Task Group's Report (attached).
- 2.2 That the Committee approves the Task Group's recommendations, which are contained in the attached report at page 3, section 2.1.
- 2.3 That the Committee submit the Task Group's Report to Cabinet for consideration and request a response to be received at the Committee's meeting on 18 July 2016.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 The Task Group was established to consider how the Council can become a leader and best practice example of apprenticeship provision in Cheshire East to other local organisations. The Task Group's findings and recommendations are provided to advise Cabinet and Officers in the development of future strategies and services.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 All

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 All

6.0 Policy Implications

- 6.1 The Task Group's report provides recommendations on a number of policy areas. These include: human resources (workforce development and organisational development), supporting young people, care leavers and SEND.

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 Full consideration of financial implications is not required at this stage. However the Task and Finish Group has identified a significant potential cost to the Council when the Apprenticeship Levy is fully introduced as part of the Finance Bill 2016 and the Public Sector Apprenticeships Target which forms part of the Enterprise Bill 2016. Details included within the report.

8.0 Legal implications

8.1 Full consideration of the legal implications is not required at this stage. However the Task and Finish Group has identified that the Enterprise Bill 2016 and Finance Bill 2016 will introduce new legislation which the Council will have to comply with, particularly the Apprenticeship Levy and Public Sector Apprenticeships Target.

9.0 Risk Management

9.1 The Enterprise Bill and Finance Bill will introduce new responsibilities and financial costs to the Council by April 2017. If the Council does not prepare for this then there could be significant financial implications and failure to comply with the legislation may lead to penalties.

9.2 The Council should lead the way in ensuring that there is adequate apprenticeship provision in the Borough. If this is not achieved there is a risk of skills shortages in the borough's key industries as well as our young people having fewer opportunities to have long term employability. There is a particular risk for the Council in terms of skills shortages in the future if it does not invest in employing and training young people to carry out the work of the Council. Also failure to provide opportunities for young people in challenging circumstances may mean the Council is not fulfilling its role as a Corporate Parent.

10.0 Background

10.1 The Group's original scope for the review included all apprenticeships in the Borough and how the Council supports the growth in the number, and the quality, of apprenticeships. However it was agreed at an early stage in the Group's discussions that first the Council needed to be sure it had high quality arrangements in place for its own apprenticeship schemes, before it was able to effectively promote apprenticeships and encourage other organisations to adopt the same standards.

10.2 At the same time the Enterprise Bill was developing and new requirements such as the Apprenticeship Levy and Public Sector Quotas were being realised and it was essential for the Council to ensure it prepared to comply with the new rules. Therefore the objectives of the Task and Finish Review were:

- Increase the number of apprenticeships provided by the Council to ensure the 2.3% quota set by Government is achieved
- To consider how the Council should administer the Apprenticeship Levy and how it could benefit the Council
- Make the Council a model of best practice in the employment of apprentices and achieve a high retention rate

- 10.3 The Group has held several meetings with officers to consider the Council's current arrangements for employing and supporting apprentices, what roles they were fulfilling (and in what departments) and what the outcomes have been for them. The Group also met with some of the Council's apprentices to ask them about their experience, how they had decided to do an apprenticeship, and why they chose Cheshire East as an employer. The Group met with Janice Wooley from Total People who current provide the training for most of our apprentices. The Group also visited Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC) to see their Apprenticeship Store and learn more what how they employed and supported apprentices.
- 10.4 As documented in the Section 3 of the report the Group has considered a lot of background information to this review. The Group felt that there had been a lot of research carried out by other bodies into the value of apprentices to a business/local authority and the Group did not want to replicate this. The Group's work has also been guided by the process which is currently taking place with the development of the Enterprise Bill and considering the implications for the Council.
- 10.5 The Group's report documents its findings, conclusions and recommendations.

11.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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