

Cabinet

6 April 2022

Apprenticeship Strategy 2022 – 2025

Ordinary Decision



Report of Corporate Management Team

Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources

Councillor Richard Bell, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance

Electoral division(s) affected:

None

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To adopt the council's updated Apprenticeship Strategy for the period 2022 - 2025.

Executive Summary

- 2 The council's apprenticeship strategy and programme are an integral part of the council's approach to address current and future skills needs. Apprenticeships help us to attract and retain the very best talent and to benefit from a skilled, motivated and flexible workforce to deliver high quality services to our communities.
- 3 The strategy is aligned to our council plan and specifically links to our ambition for a thriving economy with more and better jobs and fewer people suffering from the hardships of poverty and deprivation, most notably through the strategic objectives to give young people access to good quality education, training, and employment, and to help all people into rewarding work. It is also pivotal to our council ambition to create a workforce for the future.
- 4 The strategy is also aligned to our Workforce, Regeneration, Procurement, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Autism strategies together with the council's values and the council's

strategic approach to supporting and sustaining care leavers and people with disabilities in employment.

- 5 The council introduced its first Apprenticeship Strategy in April 2019, this detailed what we wanted to achieve as an employer and the positive action we would take to increase the number and range of apprenticeships and to support apprentices into sustainable employment with the council as part of our wider Workforce Strategy. The report details key achievements we have made up to 31 March 2022, as part of this strategy.
- 6 The Apprenticeship Strategy has been updated to reflect our continued commitment to progressing our apprenticeship programme as part of our Workforce Strategy, which is linked to our strategic workforce planning approach and people strategies.
- 7 The report recommends the adoption of the updated Apprenticeship Strategy for 2022 – 2025.

Recommendation

- 8 Cabinet is recommended to:
 - (i) approve the adoption of the updated Apprenticeship Strategy 2022 – 2025.

Background

- 9 It is important that the council is able to attract and retain apprentices and that we develop an apprenticeship programme that:
 - Supports our workforce skills needs
 - Supports the council's strategic ambitions and objectives
 - Creates opportunities to provide more and better jobs and improve the skills base in the County
 - Maximises the use of our apprenticeship levy
 - Has regard to the public sector apprenticeship target
- 10 The Apprenticeship Strategy has been updated to reflect our continued commitment to progressing our apprenticeship programme as part of our Workforce Strategy, which is linked to our strategic workforce planning approach and people strategies.
- 11 The strategy embeds our OPEN values of outcome focused, people focused, empowering and innovative, by investing in our employee's skills and development to equip them to deliver high quality services for our communities and to achieve the best outcomes.
- 12 The strategy is aligned to our council plan and specifically links to our ambition for a thriving economy with more and better jobs and fewer people suffering from the hardships of poverty and deprivation, most notably through the strategic objectives to give young people access to good quality education, training, and employment, and to help all people into rewarding work. It is also pivotal to our council ambition to create a workforce for the future.
- 13 The strategy is also aligned to our Workforce, Regeneration, Procurement, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Autism strategies together with the council's strategic approach to supporting and sustaining care leavers and people with disabilities in employment.
- 14 Apprenticeships present an opportunity to improve the diversity and inclusion of our workforce, by providing people from all backgrounds with a greater opportunity to progress with their careers. As a result of effective workforce planning, apprenticeships will enable the council to benefit from a skilled, motivated and flexible workforce to meet future requirements.
- 15 The People and Talent Management service work with DurhamWorks, the Looked After and Permanence service and DurhamEnable to support

young people, care leavers and people with disabilities to access apprenticeship opportunities.

- 16 The council recruits apprentices throughout the year where there is a flexible start to the training element of the apprenticeship. However, an annual recruitment campaign takes place each year to promote the range of apprenticeship opportunities at the council and to allow apprenticeships to be aligned to college/university start dates in line with Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) funding rules.
- 17 The council promotes apprenticeships through a wide range of mechanisms including attendance at career events at schools and colleges.
- 18 The council has an 'apprenticeship first' approach to upskill existing employees to support workforce and succession planning.
- 19 The apprenticeship programme also supports and complements other workforce development initiatives to support entry to employment, including work experience, traineeships and graduate programmes as part of the council's wider talent management approach.

Our Progress

- 20 The council's first apprenticeship strategy was introduced in April 2019 which covered the period up to 31 March 2022, detailed below are our key achievements during this period.
 - 627 new apprenticeships and 622 upskilling opportunities created (services and schools) – as at 10 March 2022
 - Working with 31 different training providers to deliver 93 different apprenticeship standards – as at 10 March 2022
 - Use of new apprenticeships standards e.g. Social Work, Occupational Therapy, Public Health, Environmental Health, Senior People Professional, Leisure Team Member, Community Sport and Health Officer
 - 71% of apprentices retained in employment with the council (excluding schools) – as at 10 March 2022
 - Recognised in the government's Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers List
 - Mapping of relevant apprenticeship standards to all service areas to maximise the use of apprenticeships for new and existing employees
 - 'Apprenticeship first' approach to qualifications introduced to enhance the skills, knowledge and competence in occupational areas

- Embedded apprenticeships into workforce planning to support a 'grow our own' approach especially for specialist and hard to fill posts
- Regional local authority apprenticeship group established to share best practice

The Apprenticeship Strategy – Strategic Context, Vision and Aims

21 The strategy sets out the strategic context including:

- **Meeting current and future skills needs** – with apprenticeships being a key element to support workforce planning, 'grow our own' talent, support the council's wider strategic commitment to sustainability and to improve the employment prospects/social mobility of local people;
- **Government policy** – to address the shortage in skills and investment in the UK's future workforce and the introduction of an apprenticeship levy and public sector apprenticeship target;
- **Supporting the council's strategic objectives** – including the wider regeneration approach, educational improvement priorities and social value obligations.

22 An apprenticeship levy was introduced by the government in April 2017 and the council is required to contribute 0.5% of its total payroll (for services and schools) to the levy. The council's apprenticeship levy can be used for training costs for recognised apprenticeship standards. The council has paid £9M into the apprenticeship levy, spent £4.5M and a further £3M is committed for on-going apprenticeships.

23 The vision for the apprenticeship strategy is to:

Increase skills through apprenticeship opportunities for new and existing employees across the council to provide people from all backgrounds with greater opportunities to progress their careers and enable the council to benefit from a skilled, motivated and flexible workforce.

24 The six apprenticeship strategy aims are to:

- (i) **Continue to develop the council's apprenticeship programme to increase the number of high-quality apprenticeship opportunities across the council**
 - We will work to develop an apprenticeship culture by utilising apprenticeships as a tool to support strategic workforce planning.

- We will increase the range and vocational areas in which apprenticeships are offered.

(ii) Ensure effective systems are in place to support apprentices and to monitor the quality of the apprenticeship experience

- We will make sure apprentices receive high quality training and support and feel engaged with the council and the work it does.
- We will develop and apply robust systems for monitoring the quality of the apprenticeship experience, ensuring that improvements are implemented in a timely and rigorous manner.

(iii) Widen participation in the council's apprenticeship programme, by targeting and maximising opportunities for those who face the most challenges to accessing employment

- As the corporate parent we will support care leavers to access apprenticeship opportunities, identify opportunities to engage with young people and adults including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and work with other disadvantaged groups e.g. long-term unemployed, returners to the labour market, people with a disability and people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds.

(iv) Support people to progress into employment through the apprenticeship route

- We will work with apprentices to support them to develop the skills they need to move to the next stage of their career.

(v) Work in partnership with Members, Trade Unions, training providers, suppliers, businesses and other local authorities to promote and deliver apprenticeship opportunities

- We will work in partnership to develop and promote apprenticeship opportunities.

(vi) Engage with maintained schools to ensure they maximise the benefits from the levy and promote apprenticeship opportunities

- We will continue to provide advice and information on apprenticeships that are relevant to schools such as Teachers, Teaching Assistants, School Business Managers, Early Year Practitioners to develop opportunities to address skills gaps/future workforce needs and to maximise the use of the levy.
- 25 The strategy is supported by a detailed action plan to deliver the above vision and aims.
- 26 The proposed Apprenticeship Strategy 2022 – 2025 is attached as Appendix 2.
- 27 An equality impact assessment has been completed and this is attached as Appendix 3, which shows that the proposed strategy will deliver on the council's corporate equality duty and priorities as set out within the Council Plan.

Conclusion

- 28 The updated Apprenticeship Strategy sets out the council's apprenticeship vision for apprenticeships together with six aims to further develop our apprenticeship programme.
- 29 The adoption of the update Apprenticeship Strategy provides a framework within which the vision and aims can be delivered and aligned to the ambitions of the Council Plan, whilst working in partnership with Trade Unions and the workforce to deliver and embed the various actions within the Strategy.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The initiatives set out within this report will ensure the Council are acting in accordance with ESFA funding rules.

Finance

The strategy will support the Council to maximise the apprenticeship levy. There are no additional financial implications associated with the strategy.

Staffing

The Apprenticeship Strategy will be co-ordinated by the OD/WFD Team within People and Talent Management, Resources.

Risk

The proposals set out within the Strategy will enable the Council to proactively manage any related risks.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

An equality impact assessment has been completed and this is attached as Appendix 3. The Strategy will deliver on the council's corporate equality duty and priorities as set out within the Council Plan.

Climate Change

The Strategy will support climate change by ensuring the approach is filtered through apprenticeship initiatives.

Accommodation

None

Crime and Disorder

None

Human Rights

None

Procurement

None

Disability Issues

The Strategy will support the ongoing work in relation to our responsibilities relating to equality and diversity.

Consultation

Consultation has taken place with recognised Trade Unions. Consultation on individual initiatives will take place with employee representatives and staff network groups.

Appendix 2: Apprenticeship Strategy 2022 – 2025

Attached as a separate document

Appendix 3: Equality Impact Assessment

Attached as a separate document