

Time began: 10.30am

Time ended: 11.15am

Personnel Committee 7 January 2021

Present Councillors Hezelgrave (Chair)
 Councillors A Holmes, Testro, McCristal, Evans, Sandhu

Officers present Liz Moore – Head of Human Resources
 Tania Hay - Apprenticeship Project Manager
 Paulette Brown – Solicitor

08/20 Apologies

There were no apologies.

09/20 Late Items to be Introduced by the Chair

There were no late items.

10/20 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

11/20 Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 November 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2020 were agreed as an accurate record.

12/20 The Apprenticeship Project Update

The Committee received a report from the Head of Organisational Development. This report was presented by the Apprenticeship Project Manager.

The report provided an update on the Apprenticeship Project and the current key areas of work taking place; including an update on the Council's Levy payments and drawdown to 14 December 2020. The report also provided a comparison of expired Levy funds between Derby City Council and other Local Authorities. The report also included information on the disbanding of the Apprenticeship Board and the creation of the new Employment and Skills Board.

The Head of Human Resources reported that due to the ongoing situation with the pandemic most of the Council's training providers were continuing to

deliver their apprenticeship programmes online. It was noted that face to face sessions were only taking place where necessary with the appropriate risk assessments in place and following the current social distancing guidelines. It was noted that the Council was seeking advice over whether exams would now be taking place. It was reported that the main focus of the programme was to ensure that apprentices had all they needed to complete their programme. It was noted that Council officers were continuing to hold regular account management meetings with key providers and were supporting apprentices as required.

It was reported that there had been a downturn in number of new start apprentices for varying reasons, including the impact of Covid19 on workload and working arrangements. It was noted that the Apprenticeship Team was processing three new start apprenticeship opportunities for Business Admin level 3.

It was reported that there had been encouraging signs for the Council's workforce development programmes with several service areas wanting to enrol colleagues onto programmes starting in 2021 including:

- Social Worker Degree.
- Executive Leader MBA.
- Accountancy Level 4.
- Horticultural Operatives Level 2.
- HR Support level 3.

The Apprenticeship Project Manager informed the Committee that two managers had successfully completed their Chartered Manager Degree's, achieving distinctions for their apprenticeship programmes. It was noted that this was testament to their hard work especially in this very difficult climate. It was reported that in September, the Council had several new starters on the leadership programmes with the University of Derby:

1 Operational/Departmental Manager Degree Level 5
7 Chartered Manager Degree Level 6
4 Senior Leader Master's Degree Level 7

The Committee noted that this took the number of colleagues currently studying across all levels of the management and leadership programmes to 70. It was noted that despite the impact of COVID-19 and the Break in Learning that some colleagues had taken, the overall progression on these programmes was very positive.

The Chair asked whether letters could be sent to the two managers who had completed their Chartered Manager Degrees congratulating them. The Chair also asked whether letters could be sent to the new starters on the leadership programmes with the University of Derby wishing them good luck. The Apprenticeship Project Manager confirmed that they would do this.

It was reported that following the removal of the Business Administration Level 2 and Teaching Assistant Level 2 programmes on 31 July 2020; Council officers had been exploring options to mitigate the impact on new start apprenticeships. It was noted that this included utilising other level 2 and 3 programmes where appropriate, such as Customer Service Practitioner and Public Service Operational Delivery Officer.

It was noted that Council officers were participating in a trailblazer group working in partnership with the LGA and other public sector bodies with the aim of developing a level 2 apprenticeship, with the intention of it being a wide-reaching entry level programme that could be used across the sectors in varying administrative positions. It was reported that once the programme had been scoped out, the proposal would be put forward to the Institute for Apprenticeships for their ratification.

The Chair commented that it was disappointing that these Level 2 apprenticeships had been removed before a replacement apprenticeship was ready. The Chair stated that it was important that schools and unions were informed of the new apprenticeship once it had been approved.

A councillor questioned why the Level 2 Business Administration apprenticeship had been removed. The Apprenticeship Project Manager informed the Committee that the ESFA had deemed that the Level 2 and the Level 3 Business Administration apprenticeships were too similar, despite national lobbying against this decision.

The Committee noted that as of 14 December 2020, the Council had transferred a total of £2,681,095 into the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) Apprenticeship Levy Digital Account and had drawn down £953,552 for apprenticeship training programmes. It was noted that the Council was experiencing the expiration of funds on a monthly basis and that as of 14 December this amounted to £340,200 in total. It was reported that the total Levy drawn down including expired funds was £1,293,752 and that this equated to 48% of the Council's Levy fund.

The Committee noted that in 2020 the LGA carried out an Apprenticeships Survey of the sector nationally and part of the survey focused on Lend spend, expiry of funds and Levy Transfers.

It was reported that 150 Large Councils (Upper and Single Tier) were surveyed, 96 LAs responded (64% response rate) and that the results were released in June 2020.

The Committee noted that the response rates from each region were:

- East – 82%
- East Midlands – 67%
- London – 70%
- North East – 50%
- North West – 52%

- South East – 58%
- South West – 57%
- West Midlands – 43%
- Yorkshire & the Humber – 100%

The Committee noted that the LGAs findings were that councils had spent approximately 27.1% of their total Levy funds. It was also noted that the LGA found that £13.74m had been returned to HMT by 89 councils since May 2019, an average loss of £155k and that extrapolated across the whole sector, around £23.2m had been returned to government unspent by local government between May 2019 and March 2020, an average of £2.1m per month.

It was reported that the Council was transferring funds to two local employers, funding three apprenticeships. It was noted that Council officers were actively working with partners to raise awareness of its transfer opportunities to further utilise its transfer allowance.

It was noted that at the 2 November Apprenticeship Board meeting it was agreed by all members, that the Board in its current form was no longer necessary and that a new Employment & Skills Cabinet Member Board would be created to replace it. It was reported that the proposed Board members were Cllr Williams – Chair, Service Director for Learning, Inclusion and Skills, Head of Adult Learning Service, Head of Economic Growth and Head of Organisational Development.

It was noted that meetings would be quarterly with a view that urgent meetings could be stood up as necessary. It was also noted that the Economic Growth Service should lead on the external Apprenticeship Levy approach to enable them to build on the relationships they already have with businesses/employers and SMEs in the city.

The Committee noted that the Apprenticeship Project Manager would continue to lead on the internal new start and workforce development apprenticeship programme and would report to the Board periodically. It was reported that as the Apprenticeship Board had been stood down it was proposed that the actions from the Personnel Committee held on the 16 November be carried forward as actions for the new Employment and Skills Board when it has been convened.

It was noted that the actions to carry forward were:

- To refer to the Apprenticeship Board to investigate whether apprentices at the Council should be payed the 'living wage' as defined by the Living Wage Foundation.
- To refer to the Apprenticeship Board to investigate how local schools could be assisted in helping young people to secure apprenticeships.
- To refer to the Apprenticeship Board to investigate how the Council could help to increase the number of first-start apprenticeships in Derby.

The Committee resolved to approve the recommendations detailed below.

- 1. To note the update on the Apprenticeship Project and the current key areas of work.**
- 2. To note the Levy payments made to date, the drawdown for training programmes that we have instigated and expired funds as of 14 December 2020.**
- 3. To note the comparison of expired Levy funds between Derby City Council and other Local Authorities.**
- 4. To note the disbanding of the Apprenticeship Board and the creation of the new Employment and Skills Board.**
- 5. To refer to the Employment & Skills Cabinet Member Board the three recommendations that had been referred to the Apprenticeship Board at the last meeting.**
- 6. To send out letters congratulating managers who had completed their Chartered Manager Degrees and to also send letters to new starters on the leadership programmes with the University of Derby wishing them good luck**

13/20 Attendance Management and Wellbeing update

The Committee received a report from the Strategic Director of Corporate Resources on Attendance Management and Wellbeing.

This report was presented by the Head of Human Resources and provided an update on the Council's performance on attendance management at Quarter 2 2020/21. The report also provided an update on the usage of the Council's external Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) during Quarter 2 2020/21.

The Committee noted that the Quarter 2 2020/21 period actual of 2.73 days showed a decrease from the Quarter 2 2019/20 period actual where the result was 2.89 days lost per FTE. The Committee also noted that the Quarter 2 result of 2.73 days lost was higher than the quarterly target of 2.36 days. It was noted that this was a slight increase compared to the Quarter 1 2020/21 performance of 2.24 days lost per FTE.

It was reported that managers had continued to offer support and advice to colleagues absent due to stress/anxiety and to support their return to work. It was noted that significant effort had been made during the pandemic to provide colleagues with an extensive wellbeing offer. The Committee noted that the Council had continued to provide colleagues with information, advice and signposting to a range of internal and external wellbeing advice and support.

It was noted that the Employee Assistance Programme, or EAP, was provided by an external company, AXA, to enable Council colleagues to access confidential support and reliable information on a range of issues. It was reported that this was available 24 hours a day and 365 days a year. The Committee noted that Counsellors were available and could refer colleagues

for scheduled counselling sessions, where appropriate, either by phone, face-to-face or online. It was reported that a range of advice was also available on other matters, including health and financial matters and that the EAP also provided a suite of on-line information which colleagues could access at their convenience.

The Committee noted that at its meeting on 16 November 2020 it had asked for information about the EAP's recent usage; including whether the usage of the EAP had increased in Quarter 2 from Quarter 1.

It was reported that the following anonymised information had been provided by the EAP:

- A total of 59 counselling sessions were accessed in Quarter 2, compared to 44 in Quarter 1. These are one to one sessions, either face to face or by telephone.
- There has been a total of 264 hits/clicks on the AXA website, compared to 182 in Quarter 1.
- There was a 49% increase in hits/clicks on the mental wellbeing support page on the AXA website. This guidance is used for managing one's own wellbeing, demonstrating that colleagues are using the information available to them.
- During Quarter 2, 22 % of all hits/clicks were on the COVID support page, which includes information on how to look after yourself in the new normal.

The Committee noted that the EAP was one of several wellbeing support options the Council had made available for its colleagues and that promoting the range of wellbeing support available to Council colleagues had been, and remained, a priority during the pandemic.

It was noted that in order to assess the wellbeing of colleagues during the pandemic, the Council had carried out a couple of short surveys. It was reported that the first survey was in June 2020 and the encouraging results of that survey were shared with Personnel Committee on 16 November 2020. It was noted that a further on-line survey had taken place in November 2020, primarily aimed at those colleagues who were working some, or all, of their contracted hours on a remote basis. The Committee noted that there were 1096 on-line surveys completed, and the headline results are as follows:

- 87% of respondents knew how to access wellbeing support
- 76% felt connected to their teams/service
- 84% felt well-informed about what was happening in the council
- 90% felt safe with current working arrangements
- 64% felt valued by senior managers

It was noted that the majority of respondents knew how to access wellbeing support and felt well informed and connected to their teams. The committee noted that there was a slight (2-3%) downward trend from the responses in June and that this could be expected due to the longer-term nature of the pandemic and working from home for longer. It was reported that the results were still positive overall, and managers had been reminded to maintain all the support meetings and contact that they had in place with their teams. It was noted that senior management were also considering how they could maintain visibility with their teams.

The Chair commented that HR should look into why the figure for feeling valued by senior managers was lower than other figures. The Chair suggested that another survey should be undertaken soon. The Chair commented that the next survey should have a question on whether colleagues felt valued by their line managers along with a question on senior management.

The Committee resolved to approve the recommendations detailed below.

- 1. To note that the Council's performance on attendance management Quarter 2 for 2020/21 was 2.73 days lost for each full-time equivalent colleague (FTE) against a target of 2.36 days lost per FTE for the period.**
- 2. To note the usage of the Council's external EAP during Quarter 2.**
- 3. To recommend that senior management work with the wider management team to ensure that colleagues feel valued.**

MINUTES END.