

Time began: 10.45am
Time ended: 11.27am

**Personnel Committee
15 April 2021**

Present Councillors Hezelgrave (Chair)
 Councillors McCristal, Sandhu

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

19/20 Apologies

Apologies were received for Cllrs A Holmes, Carr and Testro.

20/20 Late Items to be Introduced by the Chair

There were no late items.

21/20 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

**22/20 Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 February
 2021**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2021 were agreed as an accurate record.

23/20 The Apprenticeship Project Update

The Committee received a report from the Head of Organisational Development. This report was presented by the Apprenticeship Levy Project Manager and provided an update on the Apprenticeship Project.

It was reported that the Council's training providers were reviewing their training delivery models and that there had been a mixed response from the providers on what the new normal would look like. It was noted that some providers were not intending to go back to face to face delivery and would continue with virtual classes and only deliver face to face assessments and exams. It was reported that others including the University of Derby were going back to face to face or a blended approach with the appropriate risk assessments in place and following the current social distancing guidelines.

The Apprenticeship Levy Project Manager informed the Committee that the Council's management and leadership programme was continuing to be very

successful and that there had been had several new starts in January 2021. It was noted that the signs were very encouraging for some high grades for the next cohort of completers. It was reported that another positive was that colleagues who had needed to take a break in learning mainly due to the Covid19 pandemic impacting on their workload were now feeling able to return to complete their programmes.

It was noted that the council were now receiving expressions of interest for the next intake in September 2021 and were continuing to work in partnership with the University of Derby to provide these programmes.

The Apprenticeship Levy Project Manager informed the Committee that currently Council officers were working with Procurement, Legal Services, and Information Governance to put new procurement contracts and Data Sharing Agreements in place with several external training providers. It was noted that this was proving a lengthy process due to the complexities of the multifaceted negotiations between our internal services and external legal representatives.

The Committee noted that a government Spending Review in December 2020 had previously confirmed £2.5bn for apprenticeships and further improvements and had also included plans for a new online Levy Transfer matchmaking service from August 2021. It was also noted that the government had announced several new measures related to apprenticeships in the April 2021 Budget. It was reported that these included:

- **Apprenticeship Incentive Payments**
 - Increased to £3k per new apprentice – regardless of age
 - Extended through to end of September 2021
 - Will continue to be paid in addition to any other incentives the apprentice may be eligible for (e.g. 16-18)
- **New Flexi-Job Apprenticeship**
 - Apprentices can be linked to an agency instead of one employer and take on jobs with multiple businesses
 - Targeted at industries with more flexible working patterns (e.g. TV & Film / Construction)
 - Employers can bid for a share of a £7m fund to create new agencies – first ‘flexi-job’ expected in Jan ‘22
- **Expansion of Traineeships**
 - Extra £126m to expand traineeships by an extra 40,000 in 2021/22
 - Includes £22m to continue the employer incentive payments of £1,000 per trainee

The Committee noted that the Council were in dialogue with the Department for Work and Pensions over the Kickstart Scheme. It was noted that there was a backlog of around 300 potential applicants and that the Council was ready to take on some of these applicants once the DWP had processed their applications.

It was reported that employers could use the Kickstart Scheme to create 6-month job placements for young people currently on Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment. It was noted that this scheme also allowed employers to support participants to develop skills and experience needed to find work after completing the scheme.

The Apprenticeship Levy Project Manager informed the Committee that the DWP would initially prioritise young people aged between 16 and 24 supported by their Jobcentre Plus work coach, to enrol on the scheme. It was noted that funding was available for 100% of the relevant National Minimum Wage for 25 hours a week, plus associated employer National Insurance contributions and employer minimum automatic enrolment contributions. It was also noted that £1,500 per job placement was available for setup costs, support, and training.

The Committee noted that Derby Employment Hub were promoting these incentives to local employers and to the Council's external partners. It was reported that council officers were encouraging managers to take advantage of these incentives, exploring job placements, and recruiting to new start apprentices where appropriate; with the required support considering the new ways of working.

The Committee noted that as of 25 March 2021, the Council had transferred a total of £2,862,543.56 into the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) Apprenticeship Levy Digital Account and had drawn down £1,084,519.24 for apprenticeship training programmes. It was reported that the Council was now experiencing the expiration of funds monthly and that as of 25 March 2021, this amounted to £391,667.15 in total.

It was reported that the total Levy drawn down including expired funds was £1,501,357.89 and that the Council were working with 12 training providers.

The Committee noted that The Apprenticeship Board had been disbanded in November 2020 and that there had been a proposal to promote a more joined up approach across service areas and to create more inclusive Employment and Skills Board. It was noted that discussions around the new board were taking place between the Director for Learning, Inclusion and Skills and the recently appointed Head of Economic Growth. It was noted that an update would be brought to a future Personnel Committee meeting.

The Committee thanked the Apprenticeship Levy Project Manager and asked for their thanks to be passed on to the Apprenticeships Team. A councillor asked for information on the Kickstart Scheme to be sent to him. The Apprenticeship Levy Project Manager agreed to do this.

The Chair questioned how the apprenticeship incentive payment could be spent by employers. The Apprenticeship Levy Project Manager informed the Committee that employers received two payments, one after 90 days and one after a year. It was noted that these funds could be put towards apprentices' salaries or could be used to support apprentices e.g. travel expenses or uniforms.

The Chair questioned whether practical courses would be taking place face-to-face. The Apprenticeship Levy Project Manager informed the Committee that where possible, this would be the case.

The Committee resolved:

- 1. To note the update on the Apprenticeship Project and the current key areas of work.**
- 2. To note the associated Budget announcements and government incentives.**
- 3. To note the Levy payments made to date, the drawdown for training programmes that we have instigated and expired funds as of 25 March 2021.**
- 4. To note the update on the creation of the new Employment and Skills Board.**

24/20 Attendance management – Quarter 3 2020/21 update

The Committee received a report from the Strategic Director of Corporate Resources. This report was presented by the Head of Human Resources and provided an update on Attendance management for Quarter 3 2020/21.

The Head of Human Resources informed the Committee that for Quarter 3 2020/21, the top 3 absence reasons across non-schools were Stress/Anxiety which was 26.71% of all absences; Coronavirus: COVID-19 (Suspected and Confirmed) illnesses which was 14.44% and absences categorised as Other which was 5.97%.

It was noted that although the top three reasons for absence were the same in Quarter 3 as they were in Quarter 2, the ranking had changed. It was reported that Coronavirus: COVID-19 related absences had increased from 9.01% of all absences in Quarter 2 to 14.44% in Quarter 3 and had moved from the Council's third highest reason for absence to its second highest reason for absence. It was noted that whilst Stress/Anxiety remained the top reason for absence, there was a reduction from 28.66% in Quarter 2 to 26.71% in Quarter 3.

The Head of Human Resources informed the Committee that managers continued to offer support and advice to colleagues absent due to stress/anxiety and continued to support their return to work. It was reported that significant efforts 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. The Committee noted that this included the support available from the Council's external Employee Assistance Programme.

It was reported that the days lost per FTE in Quarter 3 showed an increase from 2.73 in the previous quarter to 2.84 days. The Head of Human Resources informed the Committee that the year to date figure, from April – December 2020, of 7.9 days lost per FTE meant that the Council remained above target with the year-end forecast of 10.54 days against a target for 2020/21 of 9.4 days lost. It was reported that the year to date figure of 7.9 days showed a decline in absence rate when compared to the corresponding April – December 2019 period where the figure was 8.91 days lost.

The Committee noted that the decline in the absence rate for April – December 2020 compared to the absence rate for the same period in 2019 was encouraging. It was also noted that managers continued to be accountable for managing attendance effectively in their teams. It was reported that during the period April – December 2020 the impact of the pandemic continued to be felt, and that Coronavirus: COVID-19 (Suspected and Confirmed) illnesses remained one of the Council's top three reasons for absence. The Head of Human Resources informed the Committee that excluding the Coronavirus: COVID 19 absences from the absence data showed that the year to date total for April – December 2020 would have been 7.05 FTE days lost which would be under the period target of 7.07 days. The Committee noted that the Quarter 3 outturn excluding the same absences would have been 2.43 days lost.

It was noted that a future report would be brought to Personnel Committee on the whole year 2020/21 performance when the year-end data was available.

It was noted that previous reports to Personnel Committee had detailed the wellbeing approach the Council had taken during the pandemic. It was noted that the Council continued to refresh and update the comprehensive wellbeing offer available to colleagues. The Committee noted that during Quarter 3 this had included four virtual wellbeing workshops led by an external provider which were very well attended and received positive feedback.

It was reported that colleagues were regularly reminded of the range of support and resources available to them, including at the Council's recent on-line Colleague Conference on 23 March 2020. The Head of Human Resources informed the Committee that the conference itself was another example of the opportunity for colleagues to see and hear from senior leaders in the Council, keep connected to the ambitions and plans for the Council and the city and what it meant for them, and to ask questions. It was noted that over 700 colleagues joined the live conference.

It was noted that the Council continued to offer support to colleagues through its Mental Health First Aider network, and that the Council were reviewing the impact of the network during the last year and options for the future. It was reported that promoting the health and wellbeing of colleagues was a key action in the Derby Recovery Plan Action Plan. The Head of Human Resources informed the Committee that this action supported the outcome of Empowered Colleagues.

The Chair commented that although the current strategy did appear to be working, stress and anxiety for some colleagues had been brought on by working from home during the pandemic. The Head of Human Resources informed the Committee that the Council had continued to work with management to encourage them to stay connected with colleagues working from home. It was noted that managers had been encouraged to hold regular check ins with colleagues.

The Committee resolved to note that the Council's performance on attendance management Quarter 3 for 2020/21 was 2.84 days lost for each full-time equivalent colleague (FTE) against a target of 2.36 days lost per FTE for the period.

MINUTES END.