



**EAST STAFFORDSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT COVER SHEET**

<b>Title of Report:</b>	Apprenticeship update – September 2022 reporting	To be marked with an 'X' by Democratic Services after report has been presented
<b>Meeting of:</b>	Corporate Management Team [17 August 2022]	
	Leader and Deputy Leaders	
	Leader's / Leader of the Opposition's Advisory Group / Independent Alliance Advisory Group –	
	Cabinet (date)/ Council n/a	
	Scrutiny Audit and Value for Money Council Services Committee n/a / Scrutiny Community Regeneration, Environment and Health and Well Being Committee n/a	



Is this an Executive Decision:	NO	Is this a Key Decision:	NO
Is this in the Forward Plan:	NO	Is the Report Confidential:	NO
If so, please state relevant paragraph from Schedule 12A LGA 1972:	n/a		

**Essential Signatories:**

**ALL REPORTS MUST BE IN THE NAME OF A HEAD OF SERVICE**

Monitoring Officer: **John Teasdale**

Date 8th August 2022      Signature .....

Chief Finance Officer: **Sal Khan**

Date 8th August 2022      Signature .....

**EAST STAFFORDSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**Report to CMT**

**Date: 17 August 2022**

**REPORT TITLE:** Apprenticeship update – September 2022 reporting

**PORTFOLIO:** Andy O'Brien

**HEAD OF SERVICE:** Andy O'Brien

**CONTACT OFFICER:** Stiliyana Stoyanova      **Ext. No. x1791**

**WARD(S) AFFECTED:** n/a

**1. Purpose of the Report**

1.1. To provide an update on ESBC progress against the apprenticeship target for public bodies.

**2. Background**

2.1. The public sector apprenticeships target was introduced by the government in April 2017 and sets a target for those public sector employers of over 250 employees (headcount) to employ an average of 2.3% of their headcount (not FTE) as new apprentice starts between 1 April 2017 and March 2021.

2.2. A new target was set for 2021/22, this remains as apprenticeship starts equivalent to 2.3% of headcount, but there is no longer a need to have achieved an average across a four year period. Headcount at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 was 265 therefore our target for 2021/22 is 6 new apprenticeship starts.

2.3. We are required to report on our progress towards meeting the target annually. The 'starts' can be newly employed apprenticeships or existing employees that have begun apprenticeships. The next return is to be submitted by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022. In this report we must show our progress in meeting our target. In reporting ESBC "should appropriately demonstrate in their returns that they have had regard to the target". This information should be published and easily accessible to the public.

- 2.4. From 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 the public sector apprenticeships target came to an end, moving forward there is no longer a target set in legislation. However, we are still required to gather and report relevant apprenticeship data and report this for the next period, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023. There is a continued expectation that the public sector will continue increasing its commitment and focus on apprenticeships.<sup>1</sup>
- 2.5 From 6<sup>th</sup> April 2017 we have been required to pay the apprenticeship levy, at 0.5% of our pay bill. This levy provides payment for tuition costs for apprenticeships, it is topped up by an additional 10% from the Government.
- 2.6 Apprenticeships must be for a duration of 12+ months; minimum of 30 hours per week; spend 20% time on learning; be studying for an appropriate qualification.
- 2.7 From 1<sup>st</sup> August 2022, the 20% off-the-job training rule has been scrapped and replaced by the requirement for apprentices to spend a consistent baseline figure of 6 hours per week, irrespective of the hours worked by the apprentice.

### 3. Contribution to Corporate Priorities

- 3.1 There is no Corporate Priority as such since this is an update on progress to achieve a legislative requirement. Our approach in working towards achieving this target has been consistent with the Corporate Priority to deliver Value for Money Council Services.

### 4. Report

- 4.1 As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 our headcount was 265, therefore our apprenticeship target for 2021-22 was 6 apprentice new starts. The previous balance of starts remaining from the period 2017-2021 is no longer required to be carried forward.

- 4.2 Progress in meeting target:

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	<b>2021-22</b>
Headcount at 31/3	354	346	270	270	<b>265</b>
Target	8	8+2cf	6+6cf	6+5cf	<b>6</b>
New apprentice starts	6 (3 new, 3 existing staff)	4 new	7 (5 new, 2 existing staff)	2 (existing staff)	3 (2 new, 1 existing staff)

- 4.3 The total new apprentice starts for 2021/22 is 3.

<sup>1</sup> Education & Skills Funding Agency correspondence 28.03.2022

- 4.4 There are no negative consequences for employers if they do not meet the target, as before, you only need to 'have regard to it' and explain why you have that regard in the return to government.
- 4.5 It is notable that if the target was based on FTE number of employees then we would have fallen outside this target requirement for 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22. FTE at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 was 240.
- 4.6 In 2021/22 we did not meet the annual target. 2021/22 continued the ongoing challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Council has responded exceptionally well in continuing to provide existing and new services to the public, but it continues to be very challenging to bring in new apprentices for the following reasons:
- Unsuitability of vacant posts to be advertised as apprenticeships
  - The homeworking requirement for all office staff brought with it difficulties in supervising and training new apprentices, whilst there has been increased office working from the latter part of 2021, this has not returned to pre-pandemic levels;
  - Additional work pressures in the post-pandemic context;
  - Alongside this, some staff dealing with additional home/work pressures including caring responsibilities; Covid illness and bereavements, etc.

Against this backdrop, it is pleasing that we were able to achieve 2 new apprentices that were not existing staff during this year.

- 4.7 In the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 the number of new apprentices was 3, (up from 2 in the previous year). These were 2 new members of staff and 1 existing member of staff returning to learning. These were for the following qualifications:
- 1 x AAT Level 3 (HR & Payments)
  - 1 x Revenues, Welfare & Benefits Practitioner Level 4 (Revenues, Benefits & Customer Contacts)
  - 1 x Team Leader or Supervisor Level 3 (Community & Civil Enforcement).
- 4.8 The majority of apprenticeships (all except level 2) are programmes lasting over 1 year. Unfortunately, when it comes to meeting the government target, it is only starts that count. During this year we continued to support 6 existing apprenticeships studying the following qualifications from previous years' new starts:
- 2 x AAT Level 3 (FMU)
  - 1 x Professional Accounting/Taxation Technician Level 4 (FMU)
  - 1 x Construction Technical Professional Building Consultancy Level 3 (Building Consultancy)
  - 1 x Revenues, Welfare & Benefits Practitioner Level 4 (Revenues, Benefits & Customer Contacts)
  - 1 x Paralegal Level 3 (Legal)

These are high quality apprenticeships and we have shown our long term commitment to these apprentices. The 5 apprentices that completed their apprenticeships during 2021/22 have continued in their careers in permanent positions in the Council, 3 of whom are taking up further study in 2022/23.

- 4.9 We have engaged with the following providers to deliver apprenticeships during 2021/22:
- Burton and South Derbyshire College
  - Derby College
  - IRRV
  - Solihull College and University
  - CILEX
- 4.10 In 2021-22 the number of new starters (all staff, not including casuals or internal movers) was 25. This is up from 12 new starters in 2020/21. Of these there were 2 new apprentice starts, plus a further 1 new apprenticeship from an existing staff member, entering an apprentice agreement with continued study. Therefore total new apprentices (3) of total new starts was 12%.
- 4.11 We actively consider apprenticeships when looking at all vacancies. At recruitment authorisation stage we ask Managers to consider the suitability of the vacancy for an apprenticeship and this is included in the Recruitment and Selection Policy and Guidance for managers. HR staff supporting recruitment are also aware of our apprenticeship target requirement when providing advice. Apart from the 2 roles that were advertised and filled by apprentices, there were no other vacancies in 2021-22 that were suitable to be apprenticeships. This was for the following reasons:
- insufficient hours;
  - duration of less than 12 months;
  - due to the nature of the job role, either require: an already qualified professional and/or senior officer;
  - manual work that does not require any qualification or lengthy training;
  - no apprenticeship qualification available.
- 4.12 In the absence of suitable vacancies arising, the other difficulty in meeting the target is the cost of salary/wages costs and other associated costs with apprenticeship courses, such as travel expenses, exam fees, and line management time, which cannot be funded from the levy.
- 4.13 The performance review process outlines annual requirements for learning and development and any needs are looked through the prism of apprenticeships. When considering new apprentice starts for existing employees as part of career development, however, we continue to be hindered by the lack of apprenticeship routes in place, particularly for professional qualifications, or the limited providers within reasonable distance. More professional qualifications are becoming available now, and we continue to explore as potential opportunities may arise, for example, degree level apprentices: Environmental Health Practitioner Level 6; Building Control Surveying Level 6 and Chartered

Town Planning Degree Level 7, as well as Town Planning Assistant Level 4 and Level 4 Arboriculturist.

Unfortunately, the Business Administration Level 2 framework is now switched off, so this is no longer available for new apprentice starts. The alternatives might be Customer Services Level 2 or going straight to Business Administration Level 3, although this may not be suitable for some placements.

- 4.14 In addition to apprenticeships, where apprentice courses are not available, we support colleagues to achieve other qualifications through the post-entry training route. This is in addition to supporting colleagues to achieve full Membership status of their professional qualifications i.e. MRTPI (Planning) and CIEH Professional Examinations (Environmental Health). In 2021/22 this included the following qualifications (some ongoing):
- MSc Planning and Urban Leadership
  - MSc Architectural Technology & Design
  - MSc Environmental Health
  - BTEC Level 3 Animal Inspection Certificate
  - Level 2 Certificate in Arboriculture
  - NEBOSH National General Certificate
- 4.15 A barrier for management and leadership apprenticeships is the capacity to provide the 20% learning time requirement<sup>2</sup> during the week. However, 1 team leader apprenticeship commenced during 2021/22, although unfortunately that colleague left the Council to join another part way through completion.
- 4.16 The information that we need to report by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022 for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 is:
- A. No. employees working on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 = 265
  - B. No. employees working on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 = 252
  - C. No. new employees (new starters) in period = 25
  - D. No. apprentices working on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 = 3
  - E. No. apprentices working on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 = 4
  - F. No. new apprentices (all new apprentice agreements) = 3
  - G. Full time equivalent employees at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 (optional) = 240
  - H. Proportion of apprentice starts as a proportion of new employee starts = 12%
  - I. Proportion of total headcount that were apprentices on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 = 1.59%
  - J. Proportion of apprentice starts between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 as a proportion of total headcount on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 = 1.13%
- 4.17 Figure J (%) is intended for the government to assess the progress a body has made towards meeting the target. We reported 0.75% last year. This is new apprentice starts, which were reduced for Covid-related reasons, some of which continue as outlined in the report above. As some apprentices have completed

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<sup>2</sup> From 1 August 2022 this requirement has changed to a minimum of 6 hours off-the-job learning per week which carries the potential to enhance the image of apprenticeships as a valuable opportunity for management and leadership development.

their training and due to a reduced number of new starts, the overall proportion of our workforce employed as apprentices at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 has reduced to 2.38% compared to the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, which was 2.64%.

- 4.18 As well as submitting these figures, Local Authorities also have the opportunity to provide a narrative to explain their performance in meeting the target. Our suggested narrative is included as Appendix 2.
- 4.19 The LGA successfully lobbied for local authorities to be able to include their organisation's FTE figures in the public-sector reporting form, this is optional rather than required. We will therefore include reporting the FTE figure, to emphasise the difference this makes, and include what our achievement against the target would be if FTE was used as the measure instead. This would make a significant difference as our FTE number falls below the public sector target requirement.

## **5. Financial Considerations**

*This section has been approved by the following member of the Financial Management Unit: Lisa Turner – Chief Accountant Officer*

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.
- 5.2 We paid £21,700 into our levy account during 2021/22, including the government 10% top up this was £23,851.35 and used £23,116.08 of our levy funds to pay for apprentice training during this period. Levy funds are available to fund courses, for this years continued apprentices and additional projected new starts. We have a credit balance of £20,052 unused levy funds available to spend at time of writing (3<sup>rd</sup> August 2022). Utilising the apprenticeship levy funding to support training and development has resulted in less demand against the Corporate Training Budget during this period and this has been reflected within the MTFS.

## **6. Risk Assessment and Management**

- 6.1 The main risks to this Report and the Council achieving its objectives are:
- 6.2 **Positive** (Opportunities/Benefits):
- 6.1.1 Provision of high quality apprenticeships and long term commitment to those apprenticeships that have started.
  - 6.1.2 Utilisation of higher level apprenticeship opportunities in support of skills development in hard to recruit areas such as financial management.
  - 6.1.3 The opportunity to use the levy funds for staff development, e.g. AAT courses.
- 6.3 **Negative** (Threats):

- 6.1.4 Lack of suitable vacancies and readiness of apprenticeship standards in order to create opportunities via post entry training, have contributed to the failure to meet government target of new apprentice starts.
- 6.1.5 Covid-19 has affected the number of vacancies arising and the ability to support new learners in the workplace with the right level of supervision and training whilst homeworking.
- 6.1.6 The removal of Business Administration Level 2 standard, which has been a useful entry level administration apprenticeship qualification at ESBC.
- 6.1.7 Our workforce profile includes a proportion of flexible part time workforce and the government target of 2.3% of workforce based on headcount, contributes to it being more difficult for us to meet the target.
- 6.1.8 The additional salary costs of employing apprentices if there are no real vacancies available.

6.4 The risks do not need to be entered in the Risk Register.

## 7. **Legal Considerations**

*This section has been approved by the following member of the Legal Team:  
John Teasdale – Borough Solicitor and Monitoring Officer.*

7.1 The main legal issues arising from this Report are as follows.

7.2 This progress Report, and the target set by Government for Apprenticeships, meets the requirements of 'The Public Sector Apprenticeship Targets Regulations 2017' and the 'Apprenticeships Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 2017'.

## 8. **Equalities and Health**

8.1 **Equality impacts:** The subject of this Report is not a policy, strategy, function or service that is new or being revised. An equality and health impact assessment is not required.

8.2 **Health impacts:** The outcome of the health screening question does not require a full Health Impact Assessment to be completed. An equality and health impact assessment is not required.

## 9. **Human Rights**

9.1 There are no Human Rights issues arising from this Report.

## 10. **Sustainability** (including climate change and change adaptation measures)

10.1 Does the proposal result in an overall positive effect in terms of sustainability (including climate change and change adaptation measures) N/A

## 11. **Recommendation(s)**

- 11.1 To include in the report a narrative to explain our apprentice starts compared to FTE employees, and proportion of suitable vacancies; our commitment to the apprentices employed in longer term apprenticeships and real jobs; the challenge of lack of suitable apprenticeship standards available in areas where we need to develop skills for future needs (Appendix 2).

**12. Appendices**

- 12.1 Appendix 1: New starters spreadsheet
- 12.2 Appendix 2: Suggested narrative for publication