



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority
Human Resources Committee

UPDATE ON APPRENTICESHIPS

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 20 October 2017

Purpose of Report:

To update Members on the implementation of the apprenticeship levy and public sector apprenticeship target.

CONTACT OFFICER

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 At its meeting on 27 January 2017, Members received a report which set out the implications of the apprenticeship levy, which was introduced from April 2017, and the introduction of a public sector apprenticeship target through the enactment of the Enterprise Bill 2016.
- 1.2 The apprenticeship levy is applied to both private and public sector organisations that have a total wage budget in excess of £3 Million per annum. The levy is managed through HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC).
- 1.3 A target of 2.3% of apprenticeship “starts” each year has been established for public sector bodies, which includes fire and rescue services, and progress against this target must be published annually. A failure to reach this target requires a report to the Secretary of State explaining why the target has not been attained and actions to remedy this.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 Since the original report, the apprenticeship levy has been implemented. Based on 0.5% of the pay-bill, the Service will pay in the region of £114,626 to the levy account in 2017-18.
- 2.2 Funds built up in the levy account must be used to fund recognised and registered apprenticeship training provision, and funds must be utilised within 24 months or lost. Funding can be drawn down through the Digital Apprenticeship Service.
- 2.3 Arrangements for establishing apprenticeship standards across different sectors is still on-going and many institutions previously engaged with the old apprenticeship model are still making adjustments to their delivery standards and new ‘trailblazer’ apprenticeships are being developed. It is likely to be some time before the situation is settled and fit for purpose.
- 2.4 The Service has previously engaged with Futures, a public-sector training agency which supports apprenticeships in Nottinghamshire, to recruit and train apprentices in support roles on a hosted basis, such as ICT, Human Resources, Communications and Administration. In future, due to the way that the levy will operate, the Service will need to fund apprenticeships directly, with training costs coming from the levy, and are therefore more likely to engage directly with colleges and other training providers.
- 2.5 At the current time the Service has no apprentices in place, due to the recent termination of two apprentice arrangements, but will be seeking to recruit ICT, Finance and HR roles in the near future and will draw down funding from the levy for the cost of their training. The Service will also be seeking opportunities to establish other apprentice support roles wherever it is feasible to do so.

- 2.6 The Service has not engaged with operational apprenticeships in the past, however it is the intention to progress these once standards are in place. Currently the following apprenticeships are being developed by the fire and rescue sector:
- Operational Firefighter – this was established as a trailblazer scheme, led by Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service on behalf of the sector. The standard has now been agreed and work is currently ongoing to establish an agreed end-point assessment which is approved by the Institute for Apprenticeships. It is anticipated that this may be available from autumn 2017. It is the intention to apply this apprenticeship standard to all new whole-time recruits from 2018 onwards.
 - Business Fire Safety Advisor – this is currently awaiting the end-point assessment plan.
 - Community Safety Advisor – this is currently still available under the old framework, but approval has been given for it to become a trailblazer scheme. The development of this standard to the point that it can be adopted is likely to take a number of months.
- 2.7 The apprenticeship levy can also be used to ‘purchase’ training from approved providers who are registered with the Institute of Apprenticeships and can be accessed via the digital apprenticeships service. The Service has recently tendered its Level 5 leadership programme and has appointed a provider (Sheffield College) who are registered providers of the apprenticeship standard “Operations / Departmental Manager Apprenticeship - Level 5” which is aligned to the Institute of Management. The Service will therefore be able to draw down the cost of this training from the levy during 2017-18.

APPRENTICESHIP TARGET

- 2.8 Given that the Service is unlikely to appoint to any whole-time operational apprenticeships during 2017, it will not be possible to achieve the government target of 2.3% of the workforce as new apprenticeship starters in 2017-18. Based on a headcount figure of 910 (as at 31 March 2017) this would represent appointment to 21 new apprenticeship roles during this period.
- 2.9 It should be noted that RDS appointments are not covered by the targets as they do not meet the apprenticeship employment criteria, although they are counted in the head count figure used to establish the target. This means that whilst the Service recruits up to 30 RDS firefighters per annum, it is not able to count them against the apprenticeship target.
- 2.10 The target extends over four years, between 2017 and 2021, and it is possible to aggregate apprenticeships start between years. This means that any failure to meet the target in one year can be addressed in future years. It is hoped that the appointment of whole-time firefighters in 2018-19, new apprenticeships in support roles and apprenticeship leadership and

development programmes will collectively partly or fully meet the target over the four-year period.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cost of the apprenticeship levy represents 0.5% of the National Insurance eligible pay bill, less a £15,000 annual allowance, and is paid over to the HMRC on a monthly basis. The Service has paid over £47,761 in the period April to August 2017.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

The human resources and learning and development implications are set out within the report.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken as this does not represent a change to policy or service delivery. However, the Service will be undertaking positive action with the aim of increasing the number of applicants from under-represented groups within the existing workforce.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The apprenticeship levy is a statutory payment under the Enterprise Bill 2016 and is payable by all employers with more than 250 employees.
- 7.2 The public sector apprenticeship target is established under The Public Sector Apprenticeship Target Regulations 2017.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The apprenticeship levy is paid over irrespective of usage, and must be used within 24 months or lost as a source of funding. To maximise draw down from the levy, it is therefore imperative that the Service identifies apprenticeship opportunities, by either creating apprenticeship contracts for new employees linked to registered schemes, or by purchasing training for existing employees from registered providers.

- 8.2 The Public Sector Apprenticeship Target Regulations 2017 require public sector employers to report on progress against the 2.3% apprenticeship target annually. A failure to meet the target will result in the submission of a statement to the Secretary of State explaining why the target has not been met and how this will be addressed. It is not yet clear what sanctions, if any, will result from a failure to meet the target.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

The Fire and Rescue sector is collaborating nationally on establishing apprenticeship standards for the sector, as set out in Paragraph 2.6 of this report. Work is also underway to agree a standardised apprenticeship policy.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the contents of this report.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

John Buckley
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER