



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: 26 January 2018

Purpose of Report:

To provide an update to Members since the previous report on 20 October 2017.

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1. BACKGROUND

At its meeting on 20 October 2017, Members received a comprehensive report on the implementation of the apprenticeship levy from April 2017 and introduction of a public-sector apprenticeship target through the enactment of the Enterprise Bill 2016. This report provides an update on developments since this time.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 A new Operational Firefighter Apprenticeship has now been approved and the Service has formally applied to become a recognised employer provider on the Register of Approved Training Providers. This will mean that the Service will be able to directly deliver the apprenticeship and to draw down from the levy to support associated training costs.
- 2.2 The funding for each Firefighter Apprentice has been set at £12k per trainee over a two-year programme. This funding may be used to off-set all training costs, but not salary costs.
- 2.3 It is intended that the first cohort of operational apprentices will commence in the Autumn of 2018, following a competitive selection process. The new recruits will be paid at national fire fighter (trainee/development) rates during their training period. After a two-year programme, and having successfully passed a mandatory end-point assessment, the apprentices will be appointed to competent fire fighter roles.
- 2.4 The Service has also recently appointed to an Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) apprenticeship within the finance department and is in the process of appointing to an Infrastructure Technician apprenticeship within the ICT department.
- 2.5 Following discussions with Nottingham College, the Service will be seeking to establish other apprenticeship roles within support functions, aligned to the apprenticeship team at Nottingham College, during 2018-19.
- 2.6 In addition to new apprenticeship roles, the Service has recently agreed an ILM Level 5 Operations/Departmental Manager apprenticeship with Sheffield College which will see a cohort of 10-12 middle managers progress through a 2-year course in management and leadership. The Service will draw down £9k of funding per student during the programme.
- 2.7 Further opportunities to establish apprenticeships for Business Fire Safety Advisor and Community Safety Advisor are also currently being developed at a national level and could form part of our development programme over the next year. This would also facilitate drawing down further funding from the apprenticeship levy.
- 2.8 As the apprenticeship levy funding must be spent within 24 months, the opportunities set out above should ensure that the Service is best placed to have fully utilised its levy funding by the end of the next financial year.

PUBLIC SECTOR APPRENTICESHIP TARGET

- 2.9 As previously reported, public sector employers have been set a target of 2.3% of the workforce as new apprenticeship starters; the first report on how this target has been met is due by 1 April 2018.
- 2.10 Since the Service has not appointed to whole-time operational roles during 2017-18, and has only appointed to one apprenticeship role in Finance, the Service will not have met this target in the current financial year and will be required to report this, the reasons that the target has not been met and actions to address the situation in the future.
- 2.11 The target extends over four years, between 2017 and 2021, and it is possible to aggregate apprenticeship starts between years. This means that any failure to meet the target in one year can be addressed in future years. The appointment of whole-time firefighters in 2018-19, and new apprenticeships in support roles, means that the service will increase the number of apprentices appointed but cannot be certain at this stage whether the target will be fully met 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. The Service will pay in the region of £115,000 to the levy account in 2017-18. In the financial year to date the Service has paid £77,000 to the levy. The financial implications of an increase in apprenticeships are set out within the report.

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, and 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