

To: **Overview and Scrutiny Commission**
17 February 2020

Apprenticeships Overview and Scrutiny Review Report
Cllr Mrs Birch, Chair Education, Skills and Growth Panel

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission the findings of the Education, Skills and Growth Overview & Scrutiny Panel's review into Apprenticeships and ask them to endorse their recommendations.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the findings of the panel and the recommendations as set out in the report and paragraph 5.2 are endorsed.**

3 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission directed The Education, Skills and Growth panel to conduct a review into Apprenticeships following national reports of over £96m in unused Apprenticeship Levy funding expiring in 2019. Local reports also highlighted that only 6% of businesses in Berkshire had an apprentice. It was felt that if Apprenticeship Levy funding continued to expire, then young people would miss opportunities to develop their career.
- 3.2 The review aimed to examine how young people could be encouraged to undertake apprenticeships and what challenges they faced in doing so. Businesses were missing a key opportunity to develop their workforce and it was important to understand what barriers were being faced and how they could be alleviated. The more recent pandemic developments would also influence these barriers so were specifically examined as part of the review.
- 3.3 The Education, Skills and Growth Overview & Scrutiny Panel concluded their findings based on the evidence considered and speaking to several witnesses as part of the review.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 The Education, Skills and Growth Overview & Scrutiny Panel's assessed several options as part of the review.

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 The Education, Skills and Growth Overview & Scrutiny Panel was commissioned to undertake a review into Apprenticeships as part of the Overview and Scrutiny work programme. This review activity was undertaken from November 2020 until January 2021 and witnesses were consulted during this time. A survey was also sent to local business, apprentices, and schools to gain wider feedback. The methodology undertaken, findings and recommendations are set out in the attached report.

5.2 The recommendations are listed below:

- That the Executive works with Apprenticeship pathway providers to ensure our young people aged between 16-21 have the best opportunities and outcomes.
- That the Executive adopts an Apprenticeship policy which sets out expectations around pay, terms and conditions and that the Education, Skills and Growth Panel is consulted on the draft policy and for this to be completed by December 2021 to coronavirus capacity limitations.
- That the Executive promotes Apprenticeships externally and internally by producing a promotional video which highlights the benefit of becoming an apprentice, growing businesses, and supporting the economy by March 2022 to coronavirus capacity limitations.
- That the Executive reviews the current Apprenticeship webpages and updates the content to include more information, links to job vacancy websites and information about what to expect from an apprenticeship by December 2021 to coronavirus capacity limitations.
- That the Executive investigates whether it would be possible to facilitate a mentoring scheme between large businesses and small/medium businesses to encourage more apprenticeship opportunities by March 2022 to coronavirus capacity limitations.
- That the Executive develops ongoing partnerships across Berkshire to provide a united gateway of support and guidance to businesses enabling them to take better advantage of the apprenticeship levy.

6 Commentary from Education, Skills and Growth Overview & Scrutiny Panel Chair, Councillor Mrs Birch

- 6.1 This review follows directly on from the Care Leavers Review, as Post 16 apprenticeship opportunities for our Care leavers and young people in the Borough are extremely important, especially with the current challenges of the Coronavirus pandemic. In January 2020, Government data showed the number of people starting an apprenticeship in England fell to 125,800 between August and October, down 4.7%. Bracknell Forest Council employs apprentices in several departments and promotes apprenticeships but participation in Berkshire is lower than the national average. This review looks at the new government incentives, barriers to undertaking an apprenticeship, employing apprentices and the range of apprenticeship opportunities.
- 6.2 Coronavirus did not have an adverse impact on the review because witnesses made themselves available for the review and were keen to contribute their expertise and experiences. The Panel was delighted with their help and input which allowed for good recommendations to be made. Although the review could continue, Apprenticeships have been affected by the coronavirus pandemic as has been shown in the reduction of opportunities by 25%.
- 6.3 The panel acknowledges the good practise and excellent work currently being undertaken by the department with apprentices. This was particularly shown in the apprentice's survey and it is hoped the recommendations will build on this good work.

7 Response from Assistant Director: Education and Learning.

- 7.1 I am happy to support the findings and endorse the recommendations of the Apprenticeships Review.

8 Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

- 8.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Financial Advice

- 8.2 There are no significant financial implications arising from the recommendations in the report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 8.3 An Equalities Impact Assessment initial screening has been completed and is attached at Appendix B.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 8.4 Apprenticeships are an opportunity to develop technical knowledge, practical experience, and wider skills. In relation to workforce management there is a strategic risk of not effectively utilising opportunities such as the Apprenticeship Levy to develop the Council's future and existing workforce.

Background Papers

None

Contact for further information

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