

Employment Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 29 November 2022 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00pm.

Present: Councillor Redford (Chairman), Councillors Day, K Dickson, Falp, B Gifford, Kennedy, Kohler, and Tracey.

10. **Apologies and Substitutes**

- (a) Apologies were received from Councillors Hales, Mangat and Noone; and
- (b) Councillor Falp substituted for Councillor Margrave.

11. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made.

12. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings held on 6 and 7 September 2022, and the 3 October 2022 Employment Sub-Committee meeting were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record. A correction was made to the minutes of the 17 February 2022, to be sequentially numbered from Minute 13 and the page number to start at 12, and the 15 March 2022 to follow on from this.

13. **Corporate Apprenticeship Programme Update**

The Committee considered a report from the Head of People and Communications which presented an annual update in relation to the Warwick District Council Corporate Apprentice Programme.

As of October 2022, since its launch in 2018 the Corporate Apprentice Scheme had funded opportunities for 23 apprenticeships. To date, 10 secured alternative employment with the Council, including five in the last year, and five were still undertaking their apprenticeships. Eight successfully completed their apprenticeships and left for other opportunities, and the Council was in the process of recruiting five more apprentices.

It was particularly positive that some members of staff who joined as apprentices had progressed their careers and were now employed in managerial and professional roles, including Learning and Engagement Officer, Data Analyst, Licensing Technical Support Officer, Trainee Assistant Accountant and Project Officer – Office Relocation Strategy (18 months).

The Council made a payment of £71,789 in 21/22 which was a payroll deduction, processed directly from payroll each month using a percentage apportionment of Gross Pay. In order to maximise use of the Apprenticeship Levy, the Council had taken the opportunity to secure apprenticeship training for existing members of staff, also funded by the Apprenticeship Levy. To date circa £320,000 worth of Levy Funded

training had been accessed for established members of staff and £166,000 for apprentices.

This currently funded training for 16 permanent employees and a further two had completed their qualifications. The Council received £55,000 of Levy Training funding each year, but the Government topped up any excess costs by 95%. This training was largely at degree level.

Three of the Council's first intake of apprentices were now in established positions and studying at degree level.

There was currently potential to corporately fund a further five apprentices this year, in addition to the three already appointed. The Council was actively recruiting to these opportunities.

Public sector bodies with 250 or more staff in England had a target to employ an average of at least 2.3% of their staff as new apprentices within the period of 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2022. From a low starting point of 0.19%, Warwick District Council achieved an average of 1.76% in this period. That was approximately a tenfold increase from its starting point.

Official Department of Education (DfE) statistics published earlier this year showed most public sector bodies had so far failed to meet that bar over the first four years of the target. Average public sector apprenticeship started between 2017-18 and 2020-21 as a percentage of headcount, was an overall average of just 1.7 per cent between April 2017 and April 2021. The average for Local Government was 1.2%. A table showing Warwick District Council's Apprenticeship Target Progress was included at section 1.5.1 in the report.

There were challenges recruiting during the pandemic and the opportunity and capacity to attend careers fairs had been limited over the last few years. However, in line with the Employment Committee's suggestion, press releases had been published and recently there was the opportunity to attend a school's careers fair and the event was supported by two of the Council's current Project Management Apprentices, who were great representatives of the WDC Apprenticeship Programme.

It was important to recognise the success of this initiative within the Council. There had been challenges over the last few years to provide a positive learning opportunity with remote based working. This had been achieved through 'remote' apprenticeship networking events and service area initiatives.

Work would continue to support current apprentices in a changing workplace. A networking session had been arranged for recent recruits and their managers in December.

With regards to the first recommendation in the report, when working with Stratford-on-Avon District Council, policies were aligned to give a standard six-week security of employment period in instances where employment was at risk. During this period, those 'at risk' would have prior opportunity to be considered for vacancies and redeployment. This potentially limited the notice period and costs and was appropriate in instances when the work had ceased, either on grounds of redundancy or the end of a fixed

term appointment. The recommendation to vary this for apprentices reflected that the termination date was implicit from the start of the employment and aimed to maximise the opportunity to secure permanent employment with the Council.

In relation to the third recommendation, the public sector apprenticeships target came to an end on 31 March 2022. From this date there would no longer be a target set for public sector employers.

Public sector employers who were currently required to report against the public sector apprenticeships target were asked to continue to gather, and later report, the new apprenticeship starts, the total number of apprentices and the organisational headcount. The DfE would publish this data annually to support transparency and external accountability and help maintain the momentum public sector employers had built up once the current statutory target would end.

Councillor Kennedy congratulated officers for the very positive outcomes, which was valuable not only for the Council, but also for other companies where some of the apprentices obtained employment subsequently. He asked that the public would be made aware of this success story.

Councillor Gifford pointed out that ultimately, the success of the apprenticeship scheme was economically beneficial to the District, and that the Council was setting an example to businesses within the community. This was particularly important given the skills shortages.

Councillor Tracey congratulated the apprentices themselves for their achievements.

The Head of People and Communications thanked Members and congratulated the Human Resources team, who had worked hard to achieve such tremendous results.

In answer to questions from Members, the Head of People and Communications and the HR and Payroll Manager advised that:

- The Human Resources team was keen to have a physical presence at events such as job fairs, where some of the current or past apprentices could share their experience. There had recently attended an event and the HR and Payroll Manager was joined by two apprentices, who were great ambassadors for Warwick District Council. The hope had been that one of the apprentices was going to attend the Committee meeting, but she was not able to do so due to a previous commitment, but her speech was read out to Members.
- The 2.3% target was no longer in place, but the Council was hoping for a good intake of apprentices this year and that it would continue to get as close as possible to the 2.3%.
- The HR team would take the opportunity to reflect and review what areas had been really successful and highlighted that the amount of opportunities was proportionate with the budgets available.
- A number of the established officers were pursuing training to a degree level through the Government Levy Training funding, which would ordinarily cost £27,000.

- A networking event had been organised, for both apprentices and managers to attend, and the media team were also going to be present.
- In the past, work had been done with the Community Wellbeing Team Leader regarding the Armed Forces Covenant and what that represented. As part of a previous review around recruitment and retention, the HR team had looked targeting specific groups to promote vacancy advertisements to, and the Armed Forces was one of them. This was being reviewed again, looking at how successful the scheme had been in that particular area.

Councillor Day extended his congratulations to the Human Resources team as well as the apprentices. He shared about his interactions with some of the apprentices at the launch of the 123+ refuse collection scheme, when they were delivering the food caddies, and seeing them deal with real challenges was beneficial.

Councillor Kohler and Councillor Day were keen to hear in due course what else the Council was planning to do in the future in order to enhance the apprenticeship scheme.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair passed on her appreciation to the apprentices and to the Human Resources team.

It was proposed by Councillor Kohler, seconded by Councillor Kennedy and

Resolved that

- (1) the redeployment period be extended to 12 weeks prior to the end of the apprenticeship and employment;
- (2) the content of the report and the Apprenticeship Update at Appendix 1 to the report, be noted; and
- (3) although the Public Sector Apprenticeship target was discontinued with effect from 31 March 2022, Warwick District Council continues to publish progress voluntarily, be noted.

14. Amendments to Organisational Change Policies

The Committee considered a report from Human Resources which recommended amendments to the organisational policies and set out proposals to support clarity and consistency in relation to staffing matters.

Following the cessation of the merger process with Stratford-on-Avon District Council (SDC), the joint organisational policies agreed at Employment Committee in April 2021 and amended in April 2022 to remove reference to SDC, had been reviewed further. This was to ensure they provided clarity and transparency when proceeding with a redeployment or redundancy within the Council.

This had been achieved through feedback, reflections and learning points from the process used prior and throughout the integration work. Full details of the amendments were highlighted in Appendix 1 to the report.

Supporting information would be aligned to these policies, including procedures for managers; staff consultation timeline; business case proposals; health and well-being support; learning and development for skills enhancement where required and frequently asked questions.

In terms of alternative options, should the Committee choose not to approve these amendments, it would result in retaining current working practices which were agreed when working with SDC. Feedback from Unison and staff supported the proposed changes. Engagement with the Senior Leadership Team Unison, JCF and MTU had taken place prior to the proposals being presented to Employment Committee.

Councillors Falp and Gifford thanked officers for their hard work and managing the changes following the non-merger and felt this was a good example of how the Council had kept the best of both worlds.

The Head of People and Communications thanked the Human Resources team and the Unions for all the work done on the repeated amendments. The hope was staff would feel listened to, given that some of the changes came directly from feedback provided by staff.

Councillors Day and Redford also thanked the Human Resources team for the excellent work in producing the best policies for the Council.

It was proposed by Councillor Tracy, seconded by Councillor Falp and

Resolved that the amendments to the Organisational Change Statement, Redeployment Policy and Procedure and Redundancy Policy and Procedure as a combined Redundancy & Redeployment Policy be agreed with effect from 30 November 2022, as attached at Appendix 1 ((Summary of changes to amendments to joint policies) and Appendix 2 (Redundancy & Redeployment Policy).

(The meeting ended at 6.21pm)

CHAIRMAN
14 March 2023