

Key Decision Required:	No	In the Forward Plan:	No
-------------------------------	-----------	-----------------------------	-----------

CABINET

21 MAY 2021

REPORT OF PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CORPORATE FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

A.5 UPDATE ON APPRENTICESHIP PROVISION OF CAREER TRACK

(Report prepared by Carol Magnus and Debiannne Messenger)

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This report is provided to Cabinet as part of the Career Track governance process as required by Ofsted. It will provide Cabinet with an update on its activities and seek its agreement for the priorities for the next 18 month period.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Career Track was established within Tendring District Council in 1983. Since then it has continuously provided apprenticeship opportunities within the organisation and for other employers. Over the years the nature of the apprenticeships and indeed the very definition of ‘what is an apprentice’ has changed when government priorities and focus have been amended as part of both education and employment policy.

The Council’s sustained commitment to the Career Track apprentice scheme has been a central plank of its work to develop a more skilled workforce and to “grow our own” employees of the future within Tendring.

In the last 10 years over 500 people have taken part in a Career Track apprenticeship programme; expected success rates for the end of the 2020/2021 year is 94%.

The Council’s Back to Business Agenda will add value to the Career Track Programme by improving opportunities and the quality of apprenticeship schemes for young people. This agenda will include providing small/medium employer wage incentives to encourage the engagement of 10 new employers and fund 25% of the apprentice’s wages.

Following the Government’s simultaneous overhaul of apprenticeship delivery rules with the introduction of the national Register of Approved Training Providers alongside the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy May 2017, Career Track has maintained its accreditation and has successfully increased its offer both in terms of qualifications available and the range of employers it supports.

This report sets out the nature of that change and the current position of Career Track. It will also outline the key priorities for the service over the coming 18 months.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended –

That Cabinet resolves to continue its support for Career Track and to support its priorities for the next 18 months, including an increased emphasis on supporting local firms as part of the Council’s Back to Business priority.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES
<p>The Council's Corporate Plan 2021-2024 puts Community Leadership through Partnerships and A Growing and Inclusive Economy at the heart of everything we do, and within that it has a focus on education through the following priorities:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop and attract new businesses• Support existing businesses• More and better jobs• Education - for improved outcomes
FINANCE, OTHER RESOURCES AND RISK
<p>Finance and other resources</p> <p>Risk</p> <p>There is a limited risk that projects may fail. However, robust project management and good partnership working help to mitigate this.</p>
LEGAL
<p>It is recognised that Tendring District Council does not have statutory duties or powers in relation to education, health and wellbeing but through its Community Leadership role it engages with partners in supporting improvements in relation to both these areas.</p>
OTHER IMPLICATIONS
<p>Consideration has been given to the implications of the proposed decision in respect of the following and any significant issues are set out below.</p> <p>Crime and Disorder / Equality and Diversity / Health Inequalities / Area or Ward affected / Consultation/Public Engagement.</p> <p>The work of Career Track positively addresses disadvantage by providing employment opportunities for young people and raising educational attainment within the District and beyond. Having gainful employment is known to positively improve mental health, engagement and self-esteem. This report applies to all Wards.</p>

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND AND CURRENT POSITION
<p><u>BACKGROUND</u></p> <p><u>Career Track</u></p> <p>Career Track was established within Tendring District Council in 1983. Since then it has continuously and successfully provided apprenticeship opportunities within the organisation and for other employers. In the last ten years over 500 people have achieved an apprenticeship and nearly 100 employers have engaged with the service. Over the years the nature of the apprenticeships and indeed the very definition of 'what is an apprentice' have changed when Government priorities and focus have been amended as part of both education and employment policy.</p> <p>Following the Government's simultaneous overhaul of apprenticeship delivery rules with the introduction of the national Register of Approved Training Providers alongside the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy, Career Track has maintained its accreditation and has successfully increased its offer both in terms of qualifications available and the range of employers it supports.</p>

The team consists of five staff; Work Based Learning Manager (full time), Training Assessment Team Leader (part time), two Training Assessment Officers (one part time and one full time) and a Work Based Learning Support Assistant (part time). It is managed by the Work Based Learning Manager.

Career Track is part of the Partnerships Directorate and is managed by the Organisational Development Manager.

The team provide apprenticeship standards in Business Administration, Customer Service, Team Leading, Supervision, Management and more recently the Public Services Operational Delivery Officer Standard. There are limited providers offering this apprenticeship and Career Track is in a unique position with the subject matter expertise of its assessment team

The majority of apprentices study Customer Service at Level 2 and Business Administration and Customer Service at Level 3.

In broad terms level 2 is roughly equivalent to a good pass at GCSE and level 3 is roughly equivalent to A Level. It takes between 12 and 15 months to complete a level 2 and 18 months to complete a Level 3. During this time the learner gains experience in the job, demonstrates they can perform consistently and competently with an understanding of their role. The learner works towards gaining an NVQ/BTEC qualification. At the end of the 'apprenticeship' they undertake an End Point Assessment by an external organisation, this usually adds a further three months onto the programme.

Apprentices and Apprenticeships

Traditionally an apprentice was a young person who would spend up to five years apprenticed to a business, often in a 'trade' such as carpentry, engineering, plumbing. Over the past 30 years this definition has changed. An apprentice is still often a young person aged between 16 and 19. The Government's priority is still to ensure that all young people in this age group continue learning in either a work or more traditional education setting.

More recently, the Government changed its definition so that anyone of any age could undertake an apprenticeship providing they could show they were gaining new skills and/or knowledge. This opened up the opportunity for staff who were already employed and older than 19 to also become an apprentice. Most apprenticeship qualifications were set at levels 2 to 5. **51% of all apprentices are in the 16-18 range, 36% are 19-23, 13% 24 and above.**

In 2017 the government changed this again and introduced apprenticeships up to and including degrees in skills shortage areas and even up to MBA. Now, a senior manager or Chief Executive in an organisation can also be an apprentice. From August 2020 all apprenticeships are now 'standards' which incorporate a period of time addressing knowledge, skills and behaviours (and often a formal qualification) and then an externally assessed end point assessment.

Funding

In 2017 funding rules changed. The Apprenticeship Levy was introduced. All employers with a payroll in excess of £3m pa have to pay 0.5% pcm into their Digital Apprenticeship Account via HMRC. Organisations then have up to 24 months to spend the money on apprenticeship fees prior to it 'expiring' and being claimed back by the government.

Employers with a payroll less than £3m do not have to contribute to the levy. If they have an apprentice aged 19 or over they pay just 10% of the course fee and the government pays the rest; if the apprentice is aged 16 to 18 the apprenticeship fees are fully funded by the government.

Organisations and companies are therefore referred to as either 'levy paying' or 'non levy paying' employers.

Providers

Companies that provide apprenticeship training, such as Tendring District Council under the name of Career Track are referred to as 'Providers'.

In the previous report to Cabinet (May 2019) it was explained that Career Track had been unable to continue providing its service to non-levy paying employers due to the regulation requirements at that time. This was a bitter blow and meant that some opportunities were lost. In January 2020 the regulations changed and Career Track was once again able to work with employers of any size. This has been welcomed and despite the challenges of 2020, Career Track has still managed to re-establish some previous relationships and attract new employers from within the District.

As an Approved Provider, Career Track is audited by ESFA (Education and Skills Funding Agency) and is inspected by Ofsted.

In June 2019 Career Track successfully re-applied to continue their approved provider status with the ESFA.

In the same month Career Track received an Ofsted Monitoring visit; some of the Ofsted judgements include

Leaders and managers

- have an extremely good strategy for their apprenticeship provision
- work successfully with employers to recruit suitable apprentices
- have extremely good oversight of their apprentices' progress
- have a good understanding of what makes for a good apprenticeship programme
- manage staff performance skillfully
- place a high priority on safeguarding apprentices.

Covid-19

Career Track moved their apprenticeship delivery online in March 2020 and have been able to continue to work successfully with all their apprentices. Contact increased to weekly to monitor and support the mental health and wellbeing of all our apprentices and to ensure they continued to make progress. As a result, all apprentices were able to continue their learning and complete their apprenticeships within the required timeframe

Learners can continue to undertake exams and other essential education focussed face to face activities with enhanced Covid risk assessments in place.

CURRENT POSITION

The loss of opportunity to support non levy paying employers with apprenticeships within Tendring between 2017 and the start of 2020 had a negative impact on Career Track which resulted in an estimated total loss of £60,000 revenue. It sadly meant that many long

standing working relationships with small local businesses were impacted however throughout 2020 significant work has taken place and those relationships are being re-established. We are now working with a number of smaller employers.

The Council's Back to Business Agenda, to support the District's recovery from the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, will add value to the Council's Career Track Programme by improving opportunities and the quality of apprenticeship schemes for young people. Working closely with our Economic Growth Team this agenda will include providing small/medium employer wage incentives to encourage the engagement of 10 new employers and fund 25% of the apprentice's wages.

Career Track also has an officer dedicated to support additional learning and support needs and mental health and wellness.

Employers can already access a £1,000 incentive payment for employing a 16-18 year old apprentice and now the government have introduced a further £3,000 incentive which means local employers can access £4,000 to encourage them to engage in an apprenticeship programme.

The financial aim for the career Track service is to ensure it operates at a break-even level each year. The financial arrangements for receipt of funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) can be complex and the able support from accountancy is much appreciated.

As well as supporting Tendring District Council, Career Track also supports Colchester Borough Council, Maldon District Council, Braintree District Council, Epping Forest District Council, Kent County Council, East Suffolk Council and Silverton Aggregates, The Letting Link, Harwich Town Council and UK Construction Parts Ltd. Negotiations are ongoing with other new employers.

At the time of writing Career track is supporting **14 apprentices within the organisation. 56% of all the apprentices in the Council are with Career Track.** It is also supporting **25 apprentices in other organisations.** A further **nine apprentices** are expected to start within the coming two months as advertised apprentice vacancies are filled.

For Tendring District Council, the annual levy payment of around £48K pa is spent on apprenticeship fees with Career Track so no levy is unspent.

Career Track worked with Human Resources and the DWP in delivering a mentoring circles programme to claimants which will support the Council's position as a Disability Confident Leader.

Expected success rates for the end of the 2020/2021 year is 94%.

96% of all apprentices who completed their programme achieved their qualifications and achieved a meaningful outcome, which includes employment, education and training.

In the last seven years 22 Career Track apprentices have gone onto University following their achievement of an apprenticeship.

One Tier 3 Manager and three Tier 4 managers currently employed in Tendring started their career as a Career Track apprentice.

Sixteen Tendring staff have undertaken Foundation Degree Apprenticeships with Career Track in the last three years.

13% of Tendring's current staff were once an apprentice.

The following are extracts of feedback from apprentices with Career Track.

"100% amazing programme to get you on your working career! Wouldn't change my choice to do an apprenticeship. It has got me to where I am today. I am now a Sales Coordinator for a technology company and have recently completed my level 4."

"After completing my A levels and being unsure about university, I decided to apply for an apprenticeship. I am now completing a level three NVQ in Business Administration, after completing my level two. All while earning and having a full time job in a field that I am interested in. The support from Career Track has been fantastic and now I'm looking into completing a master's degree through work." Bradley Tendring District Council

"Wow, can't believe you're still going! I started in Career Track working for Tendring District Council back when I was just 16! I'm now almost 33. Career Track gave me lots of great careers advice and training and I'm now a Border Force Officer and have been for 13 years now. I will be sending my daughters your way when they reach that age! Highly recommend!"

PROJECTS AND PRIORITIES

The following sets out details of specific priorities over the next 18 months:

- Engage with increased number of local employers to increase apprenticeship opportunities with the District as part of the Back To Business priority
- Increase the number of apprentices to a total of 60 by August 2022.
- Prepare for Ofsted inspection, target to gain 'Good' grading by August 2022.

Conclusion

This report provides an overview of the work of Career Track. The projects identified above will continue to form the subject of regular updates to the Senior Management Team and Members.

BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR THE DECISION

None

APPENDICES

None