

HUMAN RESOURCES AND COUNCIL TAX COMMITTEE

7 JULY 2021

REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (PARTNERSHIPS)

A.4 RENEWAL OF THE NEW DISABILITY CONFIDENT LEADER STATUS

(Report prepared by Pauline Lifton)

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To inform Members of the Human Resources and Council Tax Committee of the successful renewal of the Council's Disability Confident Leader Status for a further 3 years.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2016, the Government made a commitment to halve the employment gap for disabled people and to achieve this ambition; the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) worked closely with disabled people, disability organisations and other key stakeholders. From this evolved the Disability Confident Scheme which replaced the previous "Two Ticks" DWP model. At the time of introduction, based on the Council's excellent work under the previous scheme, the authority were awarded the Disability Confident Employer Status, Level 2.

In 2017, the Council was one of the first local authorities in Essex to achieve Disability Confident Leader Status, Level 3, which acknowledged the continued progressive work that had been undertaken by the Council in the positive recruitment, retention and promotion of supporting people with disabilities in the workplace and to all stakeholders and suppliers.

Three years on, the Council were required to submit a renewal application to retain its Disability Confident Leader Status.

The Council and the Human Resources Team have continued to build on the good practice throughout the organisation, working within the requirements of the recruitment, retention and support of disabled employees, as well as the support from the Economic Growth Team in their positive promotion of Disability Confident at all of their events and e-bulletin's to local businesses, taking an active leadership role in encouraging and helping other employers on their journey to becoming Disability Confident.

In addition, the Human Resources Team in partnership with the Career Track Team, worked with Jobcentre Plus in late 2020, to deliver three virtual 'Mentoring Circles' to job seekers in the local district and wider Essex. These sessions had a very good participation uptake rate and Jobcentre Plus reported that they "*were one of the most successful in the District and the feedback indicates that they were well received*", and they are keen for us to hold more in the future.

Therefore, the Council were able to evidence continued commitment, in all required areas. In line with the requirement to be validated by an independent organisation, who also held Disability Leader Status, the authority engaged the charity Shawtrust to undertake the validation exercise for the re-accreditation process.

The authority was pleased to receive extremely positive feedback from Shawtrust on our submission, with them stating that "*It is clear that Tendring DC are committed in continuing providing exceptional inclusive support for both their staff and disabled community*". Following

Shawtrust's positive validation of our renewal submission, our Disability Confident Leader Status was renewed until April 2024.

Moving forward, the Council is committed to continue to build on the good work already undertaken by running further 'Mentoring Circle' groups through Jobcentre Plus, to engage and promote to local young people and those with disabilities the positive working environment and opportunities the Council and Career Track can offer.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the contents of this report be **NOTED**.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

The Council's values as outlined in the Corporate Plan 2020/24 include "*recognising the diversity and equality of individuals*". The authority's '*Disability Confident Leader Status*' contributes towards this ambition.

FINANCE, OTHER RESOURCES AND RISK

There are no financial or other risks associated with the '*Disability Confident*' accreditation. This accreditation recognises that the Council promotes the positive recruitment, retention and support of people with disabilities in the workplace.

LEGAL

The Council must ensure compliance with Employment Legislation, including the Equalities Act 2010.

The Council also has a legal duty of care to employees to ensure their health and safety at work, as set out in the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and other related legislation.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None.

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

The Disability Confident Scheme, which replaced the "Two Ticks" accreditation has three levels:-

- Level 1: Disability Confident Committed
- Level 2: Disability Confident Employer
- Level 3: Disability Confident Leader

The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate against employees/potential employees because of a mental or physical disability.

All employers should ensure they have the necessary procedures in place to prevent disability discrimination in the following:-

- Recruitment and selection;

- Determining pay, terms and conditions;
- Sickness absence;
- Training and development;
- Promotion;
- Dismissal;
- Redundancy.

To gain the accreditation, the Council was required to demonstrate evidence of the following:-

- Inclusive and accessible recruitment;
- Interviewing all applicants with a disability who meet the minimum criteria for a job vacancy and consider them on their abilities;
- Confirm we are employing disabled people within our organisation;
- Ensuring there is a mechanism in place to discuss at any time, but at least once a year, with disabled employees, what can be done to make sure they can develop and use their abilities;
- Making every effort when employees become disabled to make sure they stay in employment;
- Taking action to ensure that all employees develop the appropriate level of disability awareness needed to make the commitments work;
- Act as a champion within our local and business communities.

In 2019, a further mandatory criteria was added to the requirement to maintain Leader Status. This was for the Council to commit to reporting on disability, mental health and wellbeing within the workplace, through the Voluntary Reporting Framework.

The framework has been developed by the Government in partnership with large employers and expert partners (*including leading charities*) to support organisations to record and voluntarily report information.

The Government advise the benefits of voluntarily reporting information on disability, mental health and wellbeing in the workplace may support an employer to:

- Improve employee engagement and retention, with consequent gains for performance and productivity; engaged employees are less likely to report workplace stress and take fewer days sickness absence;
- Better understand the experiences of disabled people and people with mental health conditions in their workforce;
- Better monitor internal progress in building a more inclusive environment for employees;
- Access a wider pool of talent and skills through promoting inclusive and disability-friendly recruitment, retention and progression policies;
- Set an industry example in driving a cultural shift towards increased transparency;
- Better serve and connect with disabled customers and communities, capitalising on spending power; and
- Engage in open and supportive conversations about disabilities and health conditions to help enable employees to remain in work and achieve their potential.

This further commitment was agreed by Management Team and the reporting arrangements will be developed within the next 12 months.

BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR THE DECISION

None.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Disability Confident Leader Certificate
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This is to certify that

**Tendring District Council
DCS002280
is a Disability Confident Leader**

Period of award: 12/04/2021 to 08/04/2024

Issue date: 12/04/2021

As a Disability Confident Leader we:

- have subjected our Disability Confident self-assessment to an external challenge and validation
- are taking an active leadership role in encouraging and helping other employers on their journey to becoming Disability Confident.

Find out more about Disability Confident at:

www.gov.uk/disability-confident

 **#DisabilityConfident**