

## CABINET

19 APRIL 2024

### REPORT OF PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR PARTNERSHIPS

#### A.5 TENDRING DISTRICT COUNCIL (CAREER TRACK) APPRENTICESHIPS

##### PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

###### PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with an update on the work of Career Track, the Council's Apprenticeship training provider. The report seeks Cabinet approval to continue its support for Career Track and to acknowledge outcome of the recent Ofsted visit.

###### 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 external employers.

The Council's sustained commitment to the Career Track apprenticeship programme 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.

Career Track directly impacts on the raising aspirations and creating opportunities theme in the Council's 2024 Corporate plan. The plan states that residents will be supported to reach their potential and realise their opportunities by working with businesses and improving access to skills, learning and training. Career Track Apprenticeships provide employment opportunities to Tendring residents and support businesses to thrive.

The total population of the Tendring district is estimated at 146,561 people. Tendring has the lowest figure for job opportunities per head of working age population in Essex. 34.3% of Tendring residents aged 16+ have no formal qualifications, this is higher than the average for England (22.5%).<sup>1</sup> The national average of school leavers achieving 5 GCSEs is 56%, East Tendring is 48.15%, West Tendring is 61.61% and South Tendring is 47.43%.<sup>2</sup> Career Track apprenticeships positively influence Post 16 employment and educational attainment.

Career Track is registered with the Department for Education (DfE) and Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) as an Independent Training Provider and is subject to inspection from Ofsted. It is able to provide apprenticeships not only for this Council but also for any other employer. Many of Career Track's clients are fellow local authorities or small businesses within Tendring, this has been the case since its founding in 1983. In providing apprenticeships to local businesses and local authorities Career Track is operating within its existing capacity. The staffing establishment for Career Track is kept to the minimum possible for it to maintain approval with Ofsted and ESFA. No additional impacts occur as a result of providing a service to other clients.

As part of its commitment to providing work and learning opportunities for those who may otherwise struggle, Career Track has always been strongly supported by the Council. It is seen as a key mechanism for young people across the District to work and have a career within Tendring.

<sup>1</sup> <https://data.essex.gov.uk/dataset/e1k1p/tendring-jsna-profile-2019> pg 28

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cvstendring.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Start-Well-CYP-CAM-deep-dive-Sep-21-final-for-publication.pdf> pg 5

Career Track does not operate to make a profit, it receives funding via the ESFA to deliver apprenticeships however, this does not cover its full costs. The shortfall is predominately as a result of increased costs since 2017, there has been no change in the fees allowable as set by government when the current apprenticeship system was created seven years ago.

The national downturn in the number of people taking up apprenticeships is reflected in Career Track facing an increased challenge with gaining the engagement of employers. To assist with mitigating the revenue shortfall Career Track provides apprenticeships predominantly for other local authorities. This creates an additional revenue stream to further support the provision of the service.

As has always been the case, there are a number of other apprenticeship providers within the area, the most notable of which are Colchester Institute and Adult Community Learning (ACL) which is part of Essex County Council. Nationally with increased regulation over recent years the overall number of independent training providers has reduced. Locally for example Catten College, which had been trading for more than 30 years, closed in 2019. However, with distance learning increasingly offered the total variety of options has increased as some providers now offer apprenticeship training throughout the country.

In order to enable other local authorities to meet their organisational apprenticeship procurement requirements it is becoming clear that there is a need to review the current operating model for Career Track. The Council will need to review these terms and conditions, responsibilities and obligations and seek Cabinet approval with an associated business case going forward.

Career Track offers an almost unique model in that its primary aim always has and always will be, to provide learning opportunities for the people of Tendring. It will always focus its capacity in the area and prioritise this over and above other provision. It provides a special talent pipeline for the organisation which is key for the recruitment and development of staff. Although the precise figure is not known, it is estimated that approximately 20% of the organisation's staff began their career at Tendring District Council as a Career Track apprentice. The staff team has a detailed understanding of local authority requirements and of the District. This is something no other training provider can match. The ongoing one to one support for apprentices and the skills of one staff member as a training Special Needs Co-ordinator enables Career Track to support learners who may not have had a positive experience in formal education, be neurodiverse or may have complex home circumstances.

If Career Track was not supported by the Council to continue there would certainly be other providers who could step in but the level of service and personalisation along with the detailed knowledge previously outlined would be lost. Consequently, it is likely that success rates and retention rates would decline from the current 80%.

As well as providing an overall update this report updates Cabinet on the Ofsted visit in November 2023 which resulted in Career Track receiving a 'Good' rating from the inspectorate. Ofsted graded Career Track as a 'requires improvement' provider in 2021; when they visited the following year they were able to identify that 'reasonable progress' had been made. The full inspection in November has completed the re-inspection cycle and leaves Career Track in a strong position going forward.

## **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

**It is recommended that Cabinet:**

- 1. continues to support the Career Track function as a mechanism to contribute to the Council meeting its corporate priorities;**
- 2. acknowledges that the long term cost of providing a 'subsidy' will need to be considered as part of developing the long term financial forecast, but noting that the Career Track Service will continue to work towards reducing the overall subsidy required where possible, with a**

- future report being presented to Cabinet on alternative solutions;
3. notes the wider update about the Career Track Service including the OneFile eportfolio system;
  4. endorses and approves the appointment of the governors to the Governance Board; and
  5. welcomes the outcome of the Ofsted visit.

#### **REASON(S) FOR THE RECOMMENDATION(S)**

The recommendations enable Career Track to maintain their 'Good' Ofsted grade and continue to contribute to the economic, health and social wellbeing of the District.

#### **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

An alternative option is to cease the Career Track Apprenticeship programme. This would result in a significant impact on the local community, including local employers, Tendring young people and their families and to those employers and young people in the wider areas as highlighted above.

### **PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION**

#### **DELIVERING PRIORITIES**

The Council's previous Corporate Plan 2021-2024 put 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:

- Develop and attract new businesses;
- support existing businesses;
- more and better jobs;
- education - for improved outcomes.

The Corporate Plan from 2024 continues the Community Leadership theme with Career Track able to make a direct contribution to

- Raising aspirations and creating opportunities in Tendring.

Career Track's vision is to be recognised as a 'Good' provider of apprenticeships; engaging learners in the development of workplace knowledge, skills and behaviours that enable them to actively contribute to the economic, health and social wellbeing of the district:

- To educate, engage and inspire;
- to inform, advise, support and mentor;
- to establish and maintain high quality standards in apprenticeship training;
- to safeguard and promote the welfare of our learners.

#### **OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT**

Communication with apprentices, supervisors, employers and other partners is key, particularly following the Ofsted visits; stakeholder briefings were held in 2022 to ensure employers are kept up to date with progress and were able to make an important contribution to the future development of Career Track. During 2023 Career Track held a Celebration of Success during National Apprenticeship week and celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> Birthday. Career Track has also supported employers on a more bespoke basis with one to one sessions, particularly on the development of the curriculum and using the OneFile software.

A survey for the academic year 2022/2023 was undertaken with learners and employers. The results show that all employers agree or strongly that their apprentice is acquiring the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need for their chosen next steps. They also agreed that Career Track works well with their organisation to review individual apprentice progress and to plan their future training needs.

Learners agreed that their apprenticeship programme meets their needs, the feedback they receive helps them to improve and they are able to give their views about things that affect them and they feel listened too.

The board of governors have recently met with a number of apprentices to carry out a consultation and engagement exercise via a series of discussions to gain feedback about their apprenticeship experience. The results from this are being taken into account for future developments of the service and for the Council's support for apprentices and supervisors.

The most recent Ofsted inspection has identified that apprentices enjoy their learning and feel valued by staff whom they respect. Apprentices are highly motivated to successfully complete their training and make good progress.

**LEGAL REQUIREMENTS (including legislation & constitutional powers)**

<b>Is the recommendation a Key Decision (see the criteria stated here)</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>If Yes, indicate which by which criteria it is a Key Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Significant effect on two or more wards</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Involves £100,000 expenditure/income</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Is otherwise significant for the service budget</b>
		<b>And when was the proposed decision published in the Notice of forthcoming decisions for the Council (must be 28 days at the latest prior to the meeting date)</b>	

The legal powers being relied upon to support the provision of a Career Track Service to external organisations was not confirmed in the previous report to Cabinet however, it is considered that Local Authorities (Goods and Services) Act 1970 power which enables local authorities to provide administrative, professional and technical services can be relied upon for services to local authorities and public bodies. Any payment terms must be set out in a written agreement. The impact of this power is that the commissioning authority may need to go through a procurement process depending upon their constitution and requirements, which could explain the use of procurement frameworks in future arrangements. The 1970 Act is the bedrock of trading within the public sector and there is a substantial experience of its operation however, it is limited in scope, for example, it does not allow trading with the private sector or the public at large.

Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003 introduced powers which enable local authorities to charge in function related activities provided the authority is not under a duty to provide the function. Under the Act, Councils can decide to charge for any discretionary services, which includes those provided on the basis of the general power of competence. The Act does not apply to services which a local authority is mandated or has a duty to provide. Also, the recipient of the discretionary service must have agreed to its provision and to pay for it.

The 2003 Act power cannot be used where charging is prohibited or where another specific charging

regime applies. Charging is limited to cost recovery. Local authorities wishing to engage in commercial activity with the private sector in their discretionary services will need to rely on other powers such as the trading powers under section 95 of the 2003 Act. It is understood that no additional fee is being charged and the payment of the services being provided is restricted to the national apprenticeship levy arrangements.

The General Power of Competence was introduced under the Localism Act 2011 and gives local councils the ability and flexibility to make decisions to do anything that an individual can do (provided it is not unlawful).

**X The Monitoring Officer confirms they have been made aware of the above and any additional comments from them are below:**

The structure and contractual arrangements required to support how the service will be delivered in the future, ensuring financial sustainability, may require future decisions at Cabinet level, however this will be determined once the review within the service is undertaken through 2024/25. It is important that the relevant legal powers being relied upon are recorded in the future arrangements.

**FINANCE AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

**Finance and other resources:** The net direct cost of the Career Track service in 2024/25 is budgeted at £26,410 as agreed by Council at its 13th February 2024 meeting. Although the Service continues to take steps to reduce this ‘subsidy’, the actual outturn for previous years have reflected the need to fund increased annual ‘subsidy’ positions. In 2023/24 a one-off budget adjustment of £25k was included to recognise that the ‘subsidy’ was estimated to be in excess of £40k in that year. Although this remains subject to the outturn position for 2023/24, the long term cost of providing a ‘subsidy’ will need to be considered as part developing the long term forecast, although it is important to repeat the earlier point that the Service continue to work towards reducing the overall subsidy required where possible.

The service benefits from the voluntary input and support of its governors, notably the three independent governors referred to within this report. They are a valuable resource for guidance, monitoring and development of the service.

**X The Section 151 Officer confirms they have been made aware of the above and any additional comments from them are below:**

The Section 151 Officer has reviewed and provided additional comments and data to enhance the contents of this report.

**USE OF RESOURCES AND VALUE FOR MONEY**

The following are submitted in respect of the indicated use of resources and value for money indicators:

A) Financial sustainability: how the body plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services;	Tendring District Council (Career Track) Apprenticeship Governance Board Terms of Reference
B) Governance: how the body ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks, including; and	Tendring District Council (Career Track) Apprenticeship Governance Board Terms of Reference. Future decisions on the use of procurement frameworks to deliver the service to other public sector organisations will be required at Cabinet level, with a supporting business case.
C) Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: how the body uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.	Tendring District Council (Career Track) Apprenticeship Governance Board Terms of Reference

<b>MILESTONES AND DELIVERY</b>	
<p>The progress of Career Track is monitored at the termly governance meetings and recorded formally with a continued yearly report to Cabinet.</p> <p>Ofsted visited Career Track in November 2023 and undertook a full inspection – the outcome of this is that Career Track is now a ‘Good’ provider and has a positive report to support this.</p>	
<b>ASSOCIATED RISKS AND MITIGATION</b>	
<p>Career Track needs to maintain its recently achieved ‘good’ grading in order to continue providing apprenticeships, and to maintain the approved provider status with the ESFA/DfE. The work identified and undertaken in the development plan, the now established governance board and the outcome of the recent inspection have shown that the areas that required improvement have been addressed and implemented.</p>	
<b>EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS</b>	
<p>Having undertaken an equalities impact assessment, the conclusion is that the proposal does not impact on the protected characteristics.</p>	
<b>SOCIAL VALUE CONSIDERATIONS</b>	
<p>Career Track offers apprenticeship opportunities to people and employers from the Tendring district, adding money back into the local economy. This in turn improves health and wellbeing, increases self-esteem, raises educational attainment and enhances employability skills and experience; providing a positive example to others.</p>	
<b>IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL’S AIM TO BE NET ZERO BY 2030</b>	
<p>No direct impact.</p>	
<b>OTHER RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS OR IMPLICATIONS</b>	
<p><b>Consideration has been given to the implications of the proposed decision in respect of the following and any significant issues are set out below.</b></p>	
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	No direct implications.
<b>Health Inequalities</b>	No direct implications.
<b>Area or Ward affected</b>	All wards

## **PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

<b>BACKGROUND</b>
<p>Career Track is the name used by Tendring District Council for its apprenticeship service.</p> <p>In the last 10 years over 500 people have taken part in a Career Track apprenticeship programme; current success rates for the end of the 2022/2023 academic year are 80%.</p> <p>Following a recent survey of all employers with Career Track apprentices, 100% said they would recommend Career Track. In addition, learners have provided positive feedback on how the apprenticeship meets their needs, that they have increased their knowledge and skills and are well informed about the career choices available to them.</p> <p>Career Track currently delivers apprenticeships in Customer Service Practitioner Level 2, Customer Service Specialist Level 3, Business Administrator Level 3, Team Leader/Supervisor Level 3 and</p>

Public Service Operational Delivery Officer at Level 3. As one of a few public sector providers of the Public Service we are receiving an increased interest in provision in this particular apprenticeship and are seeking to provide a positive response to enquiries within the capacity of the service.

Career Track had its first full inspection by Ofsted between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> November 2021 following the Education Inspection Framework. Career Track had previously had a successful Ofsted Monitoring Visit (a more 'light touch' inspection in June 2019). The full report following the November Inspection was published on 24 December 2021. The findings of the report graded Career Track as 'Requiring Improvement'. Following this grading, Tendring District Council implemented a comprehensive Development Plan to address the improvement areas identified by Ofsted.

An internal Development Group was established to monitor the progress against the actions identified within the Development Plan, the group met five times and following significant progress were able to sign off the Development Plan at in June 2022.

An online portfolio software application was introduced, called OneFile which now is the main conduit for the delivery of the curriculum for each apprenticeship standard. A number of apprentices have now completed their apprenticeship using the OneFile delivery method. A governance board was established from the Development Group, to date this group has just started its second academic year of governance meetings. (further information on the governance board is in appendix 1).

In October 2022 Career Track were visited again by Ofsted for a Monitoring Visit, following the full inspection the previous year. The inspectors concluded that Career Track had made 'reasonable progress' in the three themes that were inspected and has identified the impact of the changes made.

Career Track developed a Self Assessment Report and continued with the Development Plan to ensure quality improvement continued against the Education Inspection Framework in preparation for the next inspection. This took place in November 2023 and Career Track was graded a 'Good' provider.

In 2022 the governance board was established. Its membership is currently as follows:-

<b>Name</b>	<b>Job Role/Organisation</b>	<b>Board Function</b>
Cllr. Gina Placey	Portfolio Holder for Partnerships, Tendring District Council	Chair
Ian Davidson	Chief Executive, Tendring District Council	Representative
Anastasia Simpson	Assistant Director, Partnerships, Tendring District Council	Representative
Richard Barrett	Assistant Director, Finance and IT, Tendring District Council (deputy for Ian Davidson)	Representative
Carol Magnus	Organisational Development Manager, Tendring District Council	Representative
Debianne Messenger	Work Based Learning Manager, Tendring District Council	Representative
Robin Harbord	Acting Strategy Development Lead in Education, Essex County Council	Independent
Jess Douglas	Strategic People and Performance Manager, Colchester City Council	Independent
Hassan Shami	Commissioner for Skills, Essex County Council	Independent

The addition of the three independent governors not only ensures that Career Track is subject to external rigour they also bring a wealth of experience, knowledge and support which assists with the

leadership and effective governance of the service.

In order to provide apprenticeships the organisation has to continue to be an Approved Training Provider with the ESFA/DfE. Approximately every three years providers have to re-apply to remain on the Register, usually referred to as the RoATP (Register of Approved Training Providers). Since this requirement was introduced Career Track has been through the re-application process twice, most recently in July 2022. A successful application is essential for the continuation of Career Track.

All approved providers are subject to inspection from Ofsted. On Inspection, Ofsted grades the organisations it inspects as Excellent; Good; Requires Improvement; or Inadequate. Its Inspection Reports are published here [www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports)

An Ofsted Inspection with an 'Inadequate' rating would usually result in withdrawal of contract from the ESFA. When applying to be on the RoATP providers are asked to provide information on their Ofsted rating and details of actions to address areas identified as Requires Improvement or Inadequate. The ESFA may take this into account when deciding whether to re-approve a training provider.

Career Track were inspected by Ofsted in November 2023 and received a 'Good' outcome. The inspection recognised the work that has been undertaken and support by Cabinet over the last two years.

The report includes the following positive statements identified during the inspection

- Apprentices develop a broad range of knowledge, transferable skills and professional behaviours required to work successfully with colleagues and clients.
- Apprentices develop confidence in communicating with clients and are proud of how their social skills have improved.
- Apprentices benefit from the help and encouragement they receive from their colleagues in the workplace.
- Apprentices feel safe. They know who to contact if they feel unsafe or have any concerns.
- Apprentices' learning is well sequenced.
- Leaders have high expectations for their apprentices.
- Leaders have developed ambitious programmes that meets the needs of the employers it serves.
- Programmes provide a good route to employment and further training for local residents who have low prior-educational achievement and/or low ambition.
- Managers ensure that apprentices are prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- Assessors provide clear careers information advice and guidance to the apprentices at the start of the apprenticeship and throughout the programme.
- Governors have appropriate expertise and experience to support and challenge leaders effectively to improve the quality of education.  
Governors understand their responsibilities to enhance the effectiveness of Career Track and ensure that leaders meet their statutory responsibilities

### Numbers and clients

There are currently 37 apprentices on the programme and this is now steadily increasing. Within Tendring District Council the numbers of apprentices dipped whilst major restructures were taking place. Now that these have been concluded apprentice recruitment has become a priority. Vacancies are advertised regularly and apprentices join the programme and successfully achieve on a weekly basis.

Apprentices are placed with a number of local authorities including Maldon, Braintree and Colchester. Career Track has recently been approved as a provider for all Suffolk authorities to deliver the Public



Service Operational Delivery Officer (PSODO) Apprenticeship Standard and is working with Suffolk County Council and Babergh and Mid Suffolk.

In addition Career Track has apprentices with some local businesses and it also provides apprenticeships for care experienced young people at the Virtual School, Kent (run by Kent County Council).

The vacancies at other local authorities are taken up by people in those local areas.

#### **PREVIOUS RELEVANT DECISIONS**

In March 2022 Career Track provided an update to Audit Committee following the inspection in November 2021, further Audit Committee updates followed in June and September 2022.

In October 2022 Cabinet were updated on the activities and progress since the Ofsted Inspection visit in November 2021.

Cabinet resolved to continue its support for Career Track and their priorities, noted the implemented progress of the Career Track Apprenticeship Scheme since the Ofsted Report in December 2021 and approved the Terms of Reference of the Career Track Apprenticeship Governance Board.

#### **BACKGROUND PAPERS AND PUBLISHED REFERENCE MATERIAL**

There are none.

#### **APPENDICES**

Appendix A Governance Terms of Reference  
Appendix B Ofsted Inspection Report

#### **REPORT CONTACT OFFICER(S)**

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