

Update on Apprenticeship Levy spend 2022/23

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Executive Summary

This report provides an update on the apprenticeships funded through the levy, since the update report in 2022.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

- a) Note the contents of this report, and
- b) Approve the recommendations in this report, that
 - managers continue to consider apprenticeships as a method of development for their staff as part of the IPDR process, and
 - consideration is given to apprenticeships as a method of recruitment to fill vacant posts.

3 Background

The Service continues to pay 0.5% of its salary bill into the levy monthly since the introduction of the Government initiative in April 2017.

Up to 31 July 2022, all public sector organisations, with more than 250 employees, had a target of new apprenticeship starts of 2.3% per year. This target was removed from 1 August 2022, however public sector organisations should still be considering apprenticeships when vacancies arise and as part of existing employee career discussions.

A breakdown of new apprenticeships by financial year, since the introduction of the initiative, is shown in the following table:

Financial Year	Number of apprenticeship starts
2017/18	2
2018/19	2
2019/20	10
2020/21	4
2021/22	6
2022/23	10

4 Completed Apprenticeships

Since the last update report, two Firefighters have successfully completed the Level 3 Operational Firefighter apprenticeship in October 2022, passing their End Point Assessment (EPA) with excellent feedback. At the time of writing this report, the Service is awaiting the outcome of the EPA for five operational Firefighters who took their EPA in June 2023.

One employee has completed their Level 6 Digital and Technology Solutions Higher Apprenticeship degree through Staffordshire University.

5 Current Apprenticeships

There are currently 10 live apprenticeships across the Service, broken down as follows:

Apprenticeship Standard	Number of employees completing
Data Analyst Level 4	3
Business Administration Level 3	1
Information Communications Technician Level 3	2
Operational Firefighter Level 3	4

Apprenticeships continue to be promoted as a method of recruitment, and development for existing employees, through the IPDR and Talent Management training delivered by the Head of Human Resources and Administration and the Organisational Development Officer.

6 Planned Recruitment

Since the last update report, the Service has recruited two ICT Level 3 apprentices and one Business Administration Level 3 apprentice.

The Service has been unable to source an apprenticeship standard to meet the needs of Workshops and, due to the wider Training and Development Review, the Service has not progressed the Training, Learning and Development apprentices.

The Service will be looking to recruit in the following areas:

- **Protection**
 - Fire Engineer, Level 6
 - Fire Safety Inspector, Level 4

- **Prevention**
 - Community Safety Advisor, Level 3

- **Ops & Risk**
 - Safety, Health and Environment Technician Level 3

- **Communications**
 - Public Relations and Communications Assistant, Level 4

Through the Wholetime Recruitment Action Group, discussions are ongoing about Wholetime Firefighter recruitment in 2024. If the Operational Firefighter apprenticeship standard continues to be the preferred route, further consideration needs to be given to a request for transfer of funds from other organisations that do not make use of all their levy monies.

Initial discussions have been made with Shropshire Council, but further discussions will be required once the specific requirements are known.

7 Funding

Since April 2022, £71,040 has been spent on funding apprenticeships from the levy account. The planned spend for apprenticeships between April 2023 and March 2024 is £68,000.

At the time of writing this report (July 2023), there is currently £22,032 funds in the levy account which will increase as monthly payments are paid in.

Since July 2020, it is pleasing to see that the Service continues to spend all monies that it pays in, within a 24-month period. This means there are no 'expired funds', which are transferred back to Government to help small and medium businesses that do not pay into the levy, to pay for apprenticeships for their employees.

8 Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- a) managers continue to consider apprenticeships as a method of development for their staff as part of the IPDR process, and
- b) consideration is given to apprenticeships as a method of recruitment to fill vacant posts.

9 Financial Implications

The funding of apprenticeships through the levy reduces the financial impact on the internal Development budget.

10 Legal Comment

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

11 Equality Impact Assessment

There are no equality or diversity implications arising from this report. An EQIA is therefore not required.

12 Appendices

There are no appendices to this report.

13 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.