

Apprenticeship Scheme

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Purpose of Report

This report provides the Committee with an update on the progress of the Apprenticeship Scheme.

2 Recommendations

The Standards and Human Resources Committee is asked to note the contents of this report

3 Background

The Government has placed apprenticeships at the centre of its plans both to rebalance the economy and to reform the education system so that it offers more opportunities to young people. Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service supports apprenticeships and is also keen to support the local community through this initiative.

In December 2014 initial meetings were held with County Training Apprenticeship Provider and managers interested in having an apprentice were invited. It was decided to advertise for six positions in the following areas:

- Fire Safety Apprentice (2 vacancies) to join the Prevention and Protection Community Safety Team and Business Fire Safety Team
- Administrative Support Apprentice (2 vacancies) to provide administrative support to various functions and officers throughout the Service
- Web Services and Graphic Design Apprentice (1 vacancy) to be based within ICT
- ICT Apprentice (1 vacancy) to be based within ICT

The Apprenticeship Scheme runs for twelve months, during which individuals will work towards the attainment of a National Vocational Qualification Level 2. Although no guarantee can be offered for permanent employment, it is hoped the individuals will learn and understand the discipline of attending work and through their work with their teams develop knowledge and experience in their chosen field.

4 Recruitment

An intense advertising campaign took place, which included a press release to the Shropshire Star, a radio interview and through on line media (e.g. shropshirelive.com). The latter included a message from the Chief Fire Officer, announcing the apprenticeship programme, and underlining the Service's commitment to playing a positive role in the community it serves.

Further support meetings were put in place to assist line managers and their teams in preparing work for the apprentices. Discussion points and joint working enabled efficient and effective publicity, provision of uniforms, planning for interview dates and questions, an induction programme and apprentice work plans.

Interviews for all posts were held in June 2015 and appointments offered.

5 Commencement of Employment

A detailed induction week was planned for week commencing 6 July. The week's activities enabled the apprentices to join together as a cohort and activities included:

- A welcome from the Executive Team
- Tours of HQ and the Station
- Health and safety training,
- an overview of the NVQ, programme, given by County Training Apprenticeship
- Two full days of Fire Service familiarisation, held at Telford Central Fire Station
- A press photo opportunity in the aerial ladder platform and radio interviews with Radio Shropshire
- Equality and Diversity talks sessions
- Visits to Crucial Crew
- Introductory time with teams

The week concluded with a positive presentation by the apprentices to managers of what they had learnt about each other and the Service during their induction week.

Apprentices' feedback comments included:

- Abseiling was really fun and enjoyable, we learnt to trust each other.
- We enjoyed starting as a team, meeting new people our own age and being able to share the experience together.
- Some of us also enjoyed going into the heated container and being able to experience a first-hand fire developing, while using the BA kit.

- We have learnt about the crucial equipment used in the Service, such as BA.
- We learnt a lot of science behind the cause of fires, but more importantly we have learnt about each other and the strengths of each of us.

The apprentices joined their teams following this induction week.

6 Progress to Date

During the first three months County Training have set NVQ work and provided an assessor for planning and progress meetings with the apprentices and line managers. At this stage a review meeting was held for all the line managers involved. These reviews will take place quarterly and County Training will continue to provide advice and support through the programme.

Out of the six appointees, one apprentice has left on receipt of higher than expected examination results, allowing her to enter further education.

7 Financial Implications

The apprentices are paid the minimum wage for their age, rather than the minimum wage for apprentices. Shown below (with effect from 1 October 2015)

Apprenticeship rate	£3.30 per hour
National Minimum Wage for 16 to 17 year olds	£3.87 per hour
National Minimum Wage for 18 to 20 year olds	£5.30 per hour

Using the maximum pay rate the cost per apprentice is £10,225 per annum.

8 Legal Comment

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

9 Initial Impact Assessment

This report contains merely historical information and an Initial Impact Assessment is not, therefore, required.

10 Appendices

There are no appendices attached to this report.

11 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.