

TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

MEETING: 15 FEBRUARY 2016

Item 10

**SUBJECT: APPRENTICESHIPS, TRAINEESHIP AND VOLUNTEER SCHEMES
- UPDATE**

**JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND CLERK
TO THE AUTHORITY, THE FINANCE OFFICER AND THE PERSONNEL
ADVISOR TO THE AUTHORITY**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report is to provide member with an update regarding a programme of work aimed at improving the Authority's approach to the use apprenticeships, traineeships and volunteers across the Authority.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Authority has adopted a number of programmes to create opportunities for the wider community of Tyne and Wear including the offer of apprenticeship and volunteer programmes.

2.2 These opportunities have assisted individuals in developing skills, broadening experience, as well as aiding them in gaining future employment and promoting the Authority as an employer of choice.

2.3 Due the financial constraints imposed on the Authority and the subsequent reduction of the workforce, the opportunity to employ 'new talent' is limited. The use of such programmes will assist the Authority in developing workforce opportunities for the future.

3. APPRENTICESHIPS

3.1 There is currently a national drive to raise apprenticeship opportunities and within the 'Richard Review – The future of Apprenticeships in England', it was highlighted that apprenticeships are a good investment for all concerned and should be focused on where they add most value to help strengthen the workforce. The report also recommends that consideration be given to what opportunities there are within the organisation at the end of their apprenticeship.

- 3.2 On 21 August 2015 the Government made a pledge to support 3 million apprenticeships by 2020, include a requirement to take an organisation's apprenticeship offer into account when awarding large government contracts and publishing new 'industry standards' so that apprentices have the skills that organisations need.
- 3.3 In terms of the Authority, apprenticeships may be considered as a potential option to traditional recruitment paths as they are considered to be cost effective and support young people from our communities into work.
- 3.4 As a minimum all apprentices aged between 16 and 18 are entitled to be paid £3.30 per hour (effective 1 October 2015) as well as those aged 19 or over who are in their first year. Individuals over 19 will be paid at least the minimum wage rate for their age if they have completed the first year. All other standard terms and conditions would be applicable.
- 3.5 Apprentices would be usually allocated 1 day per week to work with an approved training provider to map their development and new skills.
- 3.6 Members may wish to consider expanding the traditional opportunities available so they cover all back office functions as well as technical services and firefighter roles.
- 3.7 There are currently a small number of Authorities who offer this type of scheme including Cumbria FRS, Greater Manchester FRS, Staffordshire FRS and North Wales FRS where the apprentice will gain a Level 3 BTEC or NVQ qualification over a 2-year period.
- 3.8 To assist in developing an apprenticeship scheme that covers the needs of the Authority, work has been commissioned with an approved training provider to map the scheme to ensure all areas can be appropriately accredited.
- 3.9 Members may also consider using the apprenticeship training programme to provide recognised qualifications to our current workforce. This will not only be a cost effective method of develop our employees but also assist increasing their skills.

4. TRAINEESHIPS

- 4.1 A traineeship is an education and training programme with work experience that unlocks the potential of young people and prepares them for their future careers by helping them to become 'work ready'.
- 4.2 These programmes are designed to help young people aged 16 to 24 who don't currently have the appropriate skills or experience. Traineeships provide the essential work preparation training, English, maths and work experience needed to secure an apprenticeship or employment.
- 4.3 Traineeships can last anything up to a maximum of six months depending on the needs of the individual and include:
- a meaningful, high quality, work experience placement of at least 100 hours with an employer, to provide real insight and experience into the world of work.
 - work preparation training delivered by a training organisation which can include CV writing, interview preparation, interpersonal skills and local business and sector information.
 - English and maths support from the training organisation to improve young people's literacy and numeracy skills if required.
- 4.4 In addition to these basic elements, the employer and the training organisation can add flexible additional content to meet the needs of the Authority; which could include a relevant, industry specific vocational qualification.
- 4.4 All training costs are met by government funding, although it is expected there will be some limited local administration costs incurred to set up the scheme.

5. VOLUNTEERS

- 5.1 The Authority currently operates with cohort of 60 volunteers who have been successfully utilised to assist in community based activities across Tyne and Wear.
- 5.2 More recently the activities of volunteers have been broadened to include:
- Introduction of Volunteer Supervisors;
 - Smoke Alarm "health checks";
 - Assisting in schools' education;
 - Activities supporting the Firefighters charity.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 No risk implications have been identified at this stage of the project. Full consultation would need to be undertaken with the appropriate representative bodies should wider use of apprenticeships and traineeships be deemed appropriate.

7. LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The requirements of the Working Time Regulations and other associated employment law is being considered in the design of the final scheme, in particular in relation to working time for younger workers undertaking apprenticeships and traineeships.
- 7.2 Further regulation regarding apprenticeships is expected during 2016 that will set out how the Government require larger employers to answer the challenges highlighted in the Richard Review. This legislation will be critical to the design and implementation timeline for the Authority to consider going forward.

8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Government recently announced that in 2017 they would introduce the Apprentice Levy to create a ring-fenced fund to support the introducing of the planned legislative changes. This levy will be charged to larger employers, those with a total pay bill in excess of £3m, at the rate 0.5% of that pay bill and used to fund the placement of apprentices across the country.
- 8.2 Initial estimates are that the Authority would need to plan for approx. £130,000 for 2017/18 and provision made for future years.
- 8.2 Additional work is currently being undertaken to determine the full cost of a broader reaching scheme, including an assessment of access routes to the funded training through local providers. Members are advised that should the Authority offer placements under a revised scheme it is the training provider that receives the funding to support an accredited qualification for the young person.

9 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no specific equality and fairness implications in respect of this report.
- 9.2 By undertaking these programmes it may assist in broadening the diversity of our workforce and offer opportunities to younger workers who may not be currently in education or employment.

10 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no health and safety implications associated with this report.

11 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.1 Consultation has been undertaken with both internal and external stakeholders in line with the requirements of the respective stage in this research.

12 RECOMMENDATIONS

12.1 Members are recommended to:

- a) Note the content of this report;
- b) Support undertaking additional detailed work to broaden the current apprenticeship scheme and to include the consideration of traineeships in the final scheme;
- c) Note the broader engagement of volunteers;
- d) Receive further reports as required.

