

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD

11 September 2013

Report of the Director of Central Services

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME

This report updates the Board on the progress to date of the Council's Customer Service Apprenticeship Scheme and advises on the plans to recruit up to three apprentices in 2013/14.

1.1 Introduction and progress to date

- 1.1.1 The Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council Apprenticeship Scheme in Customer Services has been running since 2009. The Scheme is structured to provide the work experience required to enable up to three apprentices a year to gain an NVQ Level 2 in Customer Service. The off the job NVQ assessment process is managed and funded separately by an accredited training provider – currently K College.
- 1.1.2 To date three cohorts of apprentices have completed the Scheme. Of the first cohort, one individual was employed for approximately 18 months on a fixed term contract in Financial Services and re-located to Ashford at the expiry of her contract. Another individual from this cohort was employed for approximately 2 years as a Benefits Assessor and has only just recently resigned to take up employment with Southern Water. The third is employed on a full time permanent basis as a Scanning Clerk in the Development Control Administrative Team.
- 1.1.3 Of the three second cohort apprentices, one has been employed on a fixed term contract in the Administrative Team in Central Services for approximately 18 months, one is now employed on a part time basis by Southern Water and still undertakes reception duties at Kings Hill from time to time on a casual basis, and the third resigned after approximately 6 months on the Scheme to follow a career as a rugby coach.
- 1.1.4 The two apprentices on the third cohort have just completed their NVQ assessments and are currently employed on fixed term contracts, in the Benefits and Building Control Teams.

- 1.1.5 Of the eight apprentices to date, all bar the individual who left early to become a rugby coach have completed their apprenticeships with the Council and have successfully been awarded an NVQ Level 2 in Customer Service.

1.2 The future of the Scheme

- 1.2.1 In conjunction with K College the Council will offer three further apprenticeships in 2013/14 and will initiate the recruitment process for this in September 2013.
- 1.2.2 It remains to be seen how many applicants there will be for these placements. It is widely understood that Local Government is not currently an apprenticeship of choice for young people due to the widely publicised ongoing reduction in staffing levels and pay freezes that have characterised the sector in recent years. This is exacerbated locally by the difficulties and relative expense of travelling to the Kings Hill site. I understand that any apprenticeships on Kings Hill are notoriously difficult to fill.
- 1.2.3 This Board will be updated on the progress of apprentices on cohort four in due course.

1.3 Legal Implications

- 1.3.1 N/A

1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.4.1 The minimum payment rate for apprentices is set nationally in accordance with Minimum Wage legislation, and is currently £2.60 per hour (increasing to £2.68 in October). The annual allowance paid to each apprentice when they first join the Scheme is £5475 which slightly exceeds the minimum rate. This annual budgeted cost of £16425 is funded from the Council's reserves.
- 1.4.2 If apprentices secure an initial fixed term contract of employment their rate of pay increase to £13236 per annum. This is funded from the Revenue budget as such posts have been created by "stripping out" more complex tasks from existing posts within the Council's Establishment in order to provide "entry level" jobs for those on the Council's apprenticeship scheme whenever the opportunity arises.
- 1.4.3 Members may have heard of the KCC facilitated project "Kent jobs for Kent young people" that provides a grant to businesses of £2000 if they take on a young person aged 18 – 24 currently in receipt of benefits. This funding is not available to Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council as one of the eligibility criteria is that the "employer" must not have taken on an apprentice within the last 12 months.

1.5 Risk Assessment

- 1.5.1 N/A

1.6 Equality Impact Assessment

1.6.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report

Background papers:

contact: Delia Gordon

Nil

Adrian Stanfield

Director of Central Services

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	The apprenticeship scheme provides training opportunities for young people that would not otherwise be available.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	Yes	“
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		N/A

In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.