

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

07 September 2009

Report of the Central Services Director

Part 1- Public

Delegated

1 TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME

This report outlines the national framework for apprenticeship schemes and provides information about the programmes already operating in neighbouring councils. It makes recommendations for a small Tonbridge & Malling Customer Service Apprenticeship Scheme.

1.1 The National Framework for Apprenticeship Schemes

1.1.1 In the context of the growing number of unemployed young people in the current economic climate, the Government aims to bring about a significant growth in the number of employers offering apprenticeships. Apprenticeship schemes have the following four components:

a qualification, usually achieved via a day release course of study for a level 2 or 3 award such as an NVQ or BTEC

work experience, usually gained via working alongside an experienced mentor,

transferable skills (such as working in a team, communication), these may be gained via courses or work experience,

knowledge of employment rights and responsibilities, usually gained during an induction period.

The time taken to complete an apprenticeship can take between 12 to 36 months, depending upon the programme and vocation.

There are currently 180 Apprenticeships across 80 different industries. This Council could potentially run programmes for Accounting, Business Administration and Customer Service.

Of our neighbouring Authorities, Medway, Maidstone, Tunbridge Wells and KCC are all running programmes. All of these Councils pay their apprentices a weekly

allowance of £105. The off the job training is currently funded by Central Government.

- 1:1:2 At the meeting of the JECC on 30 July, it was agreed that, given the continuing need for the Council to make Establishment savings, if the Council were to run an in house Apprenticeship programme, the apprenticeships would be supernumerary. Their contract would be a “fixed term training and work experience opportunity” and they would not be guaranteed a permanent position at the end of their programme. There would not be an on cost, and subsequently the cost of funding one apprentice would be £5,460 per year.
- 1:1:3 The Personnel & Development Manager has assessed the requirements of the three potential programmes that could be run in house (Business Administration, Customer Service and Accounting), and has reached the view that the most viable would be Customer Service. The skills covered in the Customer Service NVQ are generic, whereas those covered in the other two are much more prescribed. For information I attach a breakdown of the Customer Service NVQ as Annex 1 to this report.
- 1:1:4 If the Committee approves the recommendation to offer a small number of apprenticeships, as part of the Authority’s community leadership/social obligation agenda, there is insufficient in house expertise to run a stand alone scheme. However, as part of the Kent Partnership, KCC have offered to provide an umbrella co-ordinating support role. Staff from their apprenticeship programme managing agent (KEY) would give the Authority ongoing guidance and support regarding delivery of the Scheme and would deliver the off the job training and assessment. KEY have advised that an apprentice could complete a Customer Service NVQ Level 3 within a year. Both KEY and the JECC have agreed that an appropriate model for the on the job training would be to place each apprentice in 3, four month placements in various services and teams throughout the Council.

1.2 Legal Implications

- 1.2.1 The Council contract for apprentices will be carefully formulated to ensure that no employment rights are conferred to those participating in the Scheme.

1.3 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.3.1 The Council has an important role in ensuring the economic vitality of the area and the availability of a skilled workforce for the future. Participation in this scheme allows the Council to make a positive contribution to this important agenda.
- 1.3.2 The total cost of engaging 3 apprentices is approximately £16,500 per annum and it is proposed that this be met from the Council’s reserves.

1.4 Risk Assessment

- 1.4.1 Before any apprentices commence their training with the Council, a very rigorous risk assessment will be undertaken in consultation with KEY to ensure that the all relevant health and safety considerations have been taken into account and that the Council is not exposed to any future employment law complications.
- 1.4.2 Given the current employment scenario and the high levels of youth unemployment, there is a risk that there could be a shortage of skilled staff in the future to support the local economy. Participation in this scheme seeks to decrease this risk.

1.5 Recommendations

- 1.5.1 This Committee is recommended to approve a pilot 1 year Customer Service Apprenticeship Scheme for up to three apprentices, commencing in the autumn.

Background papers:

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Nil

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