

Status of Report: Public

Meeting: Corporate Governance Committee

Date: 25 July 2018

Subject: Apprenticeships

Report by: Chief Fire Officer

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For: Decision

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To update the Corporate Governance Committee on the current position regarding the Apprenticeship Strategy of LFRS and to seek approval for the revised approach.

2. Recommendations

Corporate Governance Committee is asked to:

- a) Note the content of the update;
- b) Approve the new plan set out in the report.

3. Executive Summary

- 3.1 The Government expects the public sector to lead the way in offering high quality apprenticeships, setting a target of 3 million Apprentices employed in the UK by the end of 2020. The National Apprenticeship Service has set a target for one in five young people aged 16-19 to be engaged on apprenticeships by 2019/20.

Public sector employers have been set a quota of 2.3% of the overall headcount being apprentices, registered on an approved apprenticeship scheme by 2020. This is supported by 'The Public Sector Apprenticeship Targets Regulations 2017'.

From April 2017, employers in all sectors pay an annual "levy" to the Government to support the funding of the apprenticeship scheme. Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) levy was £102,300 during 2017/18, which is based on 0.5% of the overall PAYE budget.

4. Report Detail

4.1 Previous agreement

It has previously been agreed, by the CFA, that up to 15 Firefighter Apprentices would be recruited for workforce planning purposes and to access Apprenticeship Levy funds. However, as the apprenticeship standards were not agreed until February 2018, this apprenticeship is not fully available for delivery by external providers and, as such, LFRS are not currently a registered provider. In addition, there are no registered providers of the end-point assessment at this time. Skills for Justice, who are the Sector Skills Council for the UK justice sector which includes Fire and Rescue Services, are expected to apply to join this register at some point in 2018. They would be the chosen end point assessors.

All of the above has led to a change in current planning by LFRS.

4.2 New plan

There are currently 527 approved Apprenticeship Standards / Frameworks in place, covering a wide variety of employment roles. Therefore, opportunities exist to utilise the Apprenticeship Levy to employ staff throughout LFRS, at every level.

In addition, many apprenticeships exist, up to degree level, which would enhance the development and progression of current staff and their careers. This could be of great benefit to LFRS in ensuring the talent of its workforce is both nurtured and retained, and meeting the requirements of its corporate plan and underpinning strategies.

To ensure LFRS access the Apprenticeship Levy and meet the requirements of The Public Sector Apprenticeship Targets Regulations 2017, it is planned to provide apprenticeships across both operational and support staff for the following:

- Staff Development within current role;
- Staff Development in Leadership and Management;
- All vacancies considered against relevant apprenticeship standards in the planning stage.

4.3 Long Term

The long-term plan is for LFRS to become an Employer Provider of Apprenticeships. There are numerous benefits to this, which include paying the LFRS Learning and Development (L&D) department to provide the training, which then provides the opportunity to recycle the levy. In addition, upskilling the L&D workforce will have a positive impact upon other L&D provision and ensure the quality of learning that takes place meets the needs of LFRS.

This is by no means an easy task and it will require the complete backing of the service as a whole to succeed. If this route was to be followed, it is expected that

LFRS would be an Employer Provider of Apprenticeships by 2020/21.

Apprenticeships for operational Fire Fighter roles will be considered either in collaboration with providers once they have commenced or through Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service once accreditation has been achieved.

4.4 **Monitoring of Firefighter Apprenticeship Standards.**

The Firefighter Apprenticeship pathway within LFRS will be monitored through collaboration with those Fire and Rescue Services who are currently planning to provide it during 2018/19.

5 **Report Implications / Impact**

Legal (including crime and disorder)

Covered under 'The Public Sector Apprenticeship Targets Regulations 2017'.

5.2 ***Financial (including value for money, benefits and efficiencies)***

- a (a) LFRS overall annual funding pot is £102,850; LFRS Apprenticeship Levy (£93,500) equates to 90% to which the government will then add 10% (£9,350). This is paid in to the LFRS electronic account on a monthly basis (£8,570).

The funding works on a rolling 24-month basis, any money not spent 24 months later is taken back by the Government and added to the overall apprenticeship pot. LFRS have been paying the levy since May 2017.

Once the funding in LFRS account is spent, there is an opportunity to continue to fund apprenticeships through the 10% / 90% model, with the Government paying the larger share.

- (b) The Apprenticeship Levy can only be used for the cost of training apprentices, up to the funding band limit for individual apprenticeships; any additional costs will need to be paid for by LFRS. There is a variety of extra funding opportunities for such things as employing 16-18 year olds, disadvantaged young people, those requiring additional learning support (e.g. dyslexia) or upskilling in English and Maths.
- (c) Apprentices must be employed by the Fire and Rescue Service; therefore, there will be salary costs. This will need to be considered per individual Apprentice in line with the position they fill.

Apprentices must be paid at least the minimum living wage for their age band for the first year of their apprenticeship after which they must be paid an appropriate wage for the role they perform.

5.3 ***Risk (including corporate and operational, health and safety and any impact on the continuity of service delivery)***

- (a) By not developing a scheme, LFRS will be seen negatively nationally and will be heavily criticised by Government.
- (b) Failure to employ apprentices will fall short of the Government's targets related to Apprenticeships for Public Sector Employers.
- (c) If LFRS Departmental leads fail to engage in the employment of Apprentices, the scheme will struggle and funding may be lost.

5.3 ***Staff, Service Users and Stakeholders (including the Equality Impact Assessment)***

- (a) Staff will be engaged in the development of the programme.
- (b) Existing employees will need to be employed on an Apprenticeship contract to enable funding; this will need to be explored by LFRS Human Resources to ensure compliance with the various regulations within employment law.

5.4 ***Environmental***

None.

5.6 ***Impact upon Our Plan Objectives***

The service has an aim to be representative of the communities it serves this will support this aim.

There is also a clear link between this approach and both the LFRS People and Response Strategies.

6. **Background Papers**

- Apprenticeship funding from May 2017 to March 2018 and the implications for Employers in England – Skills for Justice
<https://bit.ly/2Lqkizs>
- Apprenticeship Targets for Public Sector Bodies – Government consultation response – 20 January 2017
<https://bit.ly/2meo1oN>

7. **Appendices**

None.