

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Employment & Appeals Committee **DATE:** 6th April 2021

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WARD(S): ALL

PART I **FOR DECISION**

APPRENTICESHIP POLICY

1. **Purpose of Report**

To review the proposed Slough Borough Apprenticeship policy.

2. **Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

The Committee is requested to review the Apprenticeship policy and approve for publication once content has been agreed.

3. **The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan**

3a. **Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities**

The Apprenticeship policy is not related to the outcomes set out in the SJWS priorities, though the policy does create opportunities for applications from our vulnerable young people and adults, with additional support provided to successful candidates.

3b. **Five Year Plan Outcomes**

The Apprenticeship policy supports the Five Year Plan as follows.

- Outcome 1: Slough children will grow up to be happy, healthy and successful
- Outcome 3: Slough will be an attractive place where people choose to live, work and stay.

The policy offers apprenticeships opportunities to SBC employees and the wider Slough community, as appropriate. By creating development opportunities we will both, attract new talent, grow our own and increase retention.

4. **Other Implications**

(a) **Financial**

There are no financial cost implications.

Savings will be achieved as a result of training costs drawn from the Apprenticeship Levy rather than the council training budget.

(b) Risk Management

This report is for review and approval – no risks associated.

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

This purpose of this report is to review policy and meets the government Apprenticeship funding rules and regulations. In addition it is aligned with our existing recruitment policy and process – no human rights or legal implications associated.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

This report is for review and approval of the Apprenticeship policy. The policy includes an equalities impact assessment twice a year to ensure that we not only meet requirements but also improve opportunities for access on an ongoing basis.

5. **Supporting Information**

5.1 The journey from the previous apprenticeship approach.

From the end of 2018 the Council had two apprenticeship schemes in place which were Business and Administration apprenticeships targeting school leavers aged 16-18 and Youth Work Apprentices targeting young people 18-25.

There was an emphasis on supporting young people to apply and secure the apprenticeship opportunities.

In the summer of 2018 the Council changed its approach to apprenticeships in line with the newly introduced Apprenticeship Levy. It was felt that the above approach to apprenticeships whilst being good and admirable things to do, were not designed to meet business needs and were not compliant with the new levy requirements.

In order to meet the requirements of the Apprenticeship Levy and meet the business needs of the Council, the Slough Academy was established.

The Slough Academy was created to deliver the council's new approach to Apprenticeships, growing and developing our staff to help build a stable and successful workforce that will serve our residents in the best possible way. It provides targeted learning and developing skills and capabilities to meet our business needs and creates opportunities for continuous professional development that not only increases capacity but also helps retain talent.

It is fully embedded in our five year plan and will ensure we have the right skills in our workforce for the future.

Government apprenticeship reforms means there is money available to us to offer new apprenticeship opportunities to our existing staff and attract new talent to the organisation.

Apprenticeships have been broadened and are now available to a wider age group. Our current Apprentice ages range from 17 – 58 and we run over 25 different apprenticeship programmes across 4 directorates.

The Slough Academy works with our business stakeholders to identify career paths and link these to Apprenticeship standards. Together they create viable opportunities which will add value to the service and organisation.

A business case for the Apprenticeship is developed and was previously approved by the Slough Academy Board (a representative group made up of Service Leads and presided over by the Director of Finance and Resources) before we recruited.

Apprenticeship Achievements:-

- Completed successfully = 11
- In Flight = 28
- Pending = 18

Apprenticeship Statistics:-

- Apprenticeships vs Government Target – 2.4% vs 2.3%
- Apprentices who are Slough residents = 75%
- BAME Apprentices = 51%
- Apprentices (with disclosed learning disability) = 3%
- CLA/LA = 0% (2 applications – unsuccessful as a result of entry requirements and DBS check)
- Apprentice Gender Split = 70 Female / 30 Male
- 100% retention ration of Apprentices

Evaluation of apprenticeships in Slough show:-

- 75% of learners are more likely to stay with SBC
- 88% of learners more confident to apply for promotion or new position
- 100% of learners develop transferable skills
- Learners demonstrate improved decision making and compliance
- Significant cost savings on training budget

6. **Comments of Other Committees**

The policy has already been reviewed by the Employment Engagement Forum, Corporate Consultative Forum and the People Service Senior Management Team.

Feedback/comments as follows.

- Branding colour to be changed to purple to reflect branding for People Service
- The scope has been altered to confirm that casual 'as and when' staff are not eligible for apprenticeships.
- Objectives - to be amended to specify that these are SBC objectives not 'our'
- Should the government target be included? The government target should be referred to in our objectives as it is a target that is applied by the government to all Local Authorities and that we are measured against.
- Bullet point 6 to be amended to read - To upskill existing staff, creating a career pathway, encouraging retention and a talent pipeline for the future.
- Delete heading 'Introduction'.

- Should we include reference to functional skill requirements? Reference to Functional Skills – to be retained as they are essential to qualification. All candidates, new and existing staff are impacted by this. Wherever possible we recommend that candidates meet entry criteria. Candidates that do not have the requisite entry qualifications can still be offered an apprenticeship and study for their functional skills qualifications simultaneously with their Apprenticeship qualification. Ultimately this is a decision that the stakeholder makes, however functional passes are still a requirement of attaining the qualification (page 5).
- Updates on page 6 to reflect the changes to the name of the team and roles after 1st of April accepted, as this is the likely 'live' date of the policy.
- Page 6, approval by the Slough Academy Board to be changed to Business Services Associate Director.
- Page 6, reference to managing the induction process to change to more specifically managing the induction day with the Training Provider.
- Page 7, references to Slough Academy and Slough Academy Board to be updated to reflect changes in the restructure.
- All documents in appendices to be converted to links to documents on the intranet.

All of the above have been addressed satisfactorily in the revised draft.

7. **Conclusion**

The Apprenticeship policy sets out how we can continue to develop and offer business driven apprenticeship opportunities within the council and recruit new talent into the organisation where appropriate.

The policy provides structure, control, consistency, fairness and reasonableness in the organisation. It also ensures compliance with employment legislation and government regulation and informs employees of their responsibilities and the organisation's expectations.

Accordingly we would ask the Employee Appeals Committee to approve the policy.

8. **Appendices Attached**

Appendix A – Apprenticeship Policy and Procedure

9. **Background Papers**

None.