

## **SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Employment & Appeals Committee

**DATE:** 12<sup>th</sup> July 2021

**CONTACT OFFICER:** Surjit Nagra, Associate Director, Customer

**AUTHORS:** Edwin Fernandes Workforce Development Manager

**WARD(S):** All

### **PART I** **FOR COMMENT AND CONSIDERATION**

#### **THE SLOUGH ACADEMY - UPDATE**

##### **1 Purpose of Report**

To update the committee on the transition of the Apprenticeship Programme from the closure of the Slough Academy Team to the new Workforce Development Team in the new Operating Model.

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

The Committee is requested to note and provide any comments on the information outlined in this report.

##### **3. Background**

Formed in March 2018, The Slough Academy Project set out to establish a career development framework for all our staff by implementing the concept of Continuous Professional Development and start with taking advantage of the introduction of the Apprenticeship Reforms and Levy.

It aimed to achieve an increase in the standard of service delivery in key areas such as Social Work through the development of the apprenticeship trailblazer. In addition, it aimed to contribute to the reduction of agency costs, provide professional development opportunities for existing staff and new apprenticeship roles for Slough residents.

A Board was formed called the Slough Academy Board with representation at Service Lead level to ensure a consistent, fair, and equal approach across SBC.

The Project had 3 phases:

Phase 1 - Apprenticeships involved transitioning SBC's existing Apprenticeship scheme to the new 'modern Apprenticeship' model being implemented nationally via the Apprenticeship Reforms. This was funded by the Apprenticeship Levy. Modern Apprenticeships have now been

embedded into SBC's workforce development and were handed over from the Project to the OD team as BAU in April 2020.

Phase 2 - Continuous Professional Development (CPD) involved the implementation of Cornerstone, a new talent management system to create a platform for structured development pathways to be linked with appraisals and performance management and to distribute online learning. This implementation was completed in January 2020 with the launch of Mandatory Training.

Cornerstone has also supported the creation of a new onboarding approach which has saved 104 business days so far by providing 6 hours of Mandatory training to 130 new starters prior to their start date. It was also through this system that other key initiatives such as the COVID-19 Skills Audit and Return to Work and Resilience Survey were conducted.

Within this system is a Professional Skills catalogue which contains 700+ titles supporting professional development which was purchased in December 2020. .

Phase 3 - Succession Planning based on the implementation of the Performance Management module in Cornerstone, this will enable the future proofing of SBC's workforce.

### 3.1 **Achievements**

**Below are highlighted key achievements from the Slough Academy Project.**

#### **Levy Spend**

| Available levy spend at March 2021 | Levy spend | %    |
|------------------------------------|------------|------|
| £429,939                           | £280,000   | 65%* |

\* £280K of Levy funding has been used to 'grow our talent' and save corporate training budget. We have not been able to use all levy fund allocation due to the significant drop in apprenticeship take up by the organisation recently. This has been a direct result of the implementation of the new operating model and the uncertainty about roles.

We have also lobbied government, with our other Berkshire Local Authority members, to use the levy to pay for salaries which would create opportunities for apprenticeship. As yet government have not confirmed the outcome of this representation.

## Apprentices Upskilled

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Apprenticeships Completed                 | 12  |
| Apprenticeships mid way through programme | 2   |
| Apprenticeships started                   | 4   |
| Total                                     | 40  |
| Apprentices upskilled by at least 50%     | 90% |

- 100% of the Apprentices who have completed their programmes have remained with SBC which will reduce future recruitment costs and retain these skills within SBC.
- 75% of all our 40 Apprenticeship programmes have been undertaken by Slough residents.

## A target of 2.3% was set as an Apprenticeship Public Sector Target

| Financial Year     | Employees | New Apprenticeship Starts | %     |
|--------------------|-----------|---------------------------|-------|
| Cumulative Average |           |                           | 1.27% |
| 2020/21            | 1370      | 11                        | 0.80  |
| 2019/20            | 1347      | 14                        | 2.08% |
| 2017/18            | 1042      | 32                        | 3.07% |

\* We have not met the cumulative target in the last financial year as a result of the significant drop in take up of apprenticeships in the last year. As mentioned before the drop in demand was caused by the imminent restructure of the organisation and the uncertainty over roles remaining. This stalled decision making and progression of apprenticeships.

## Additional Benefits

- Those teams that have experienced Apprenticeship programmes now have a much better understanding of what a continuous improvement culture feels like and how it works, particularly the effort required from all parties
- The quality of skills in key areas will continue to improve – this will be achieved with the launch of our professional skills catalogue with will map e-learning courses titles with job family competencies
- Professional development and development pathways are readily available to all staff
- Formal development programmes will enhance the personal value that SBC provides for its staff
- The apprenticeship programme will continue to demonstrate to SBC what it takes to become a Learning Organisation
- The future implementation of the Performance Module in Cornerstone will provide SBC with tools and functionality to manage and develop its workforce
- The powerful reporting and tracking features of Cornerstone will support increased compliance in the future

### 3.2 **Update on Workforce Development**

The Workforce Development team has been formed within the HR services in the new operating model. The team is responsible for liaison with all directorates in the organisation to identify training needs and manage these within the allocated Learning and Development budget. Promoting Apprenticeships, utilising the levy to help achieve the government target are also included in their remit. In addition, the team is responsible for working with directorates to provide training to upskill staff to support the 'new ways of working'.

This new team is facing some challenges as a result of the financial situation that the council is in. There are some vacancies in the team and consequently are adopting an approach of dealing with tasks/requests on a priority basis.