

**AD HOC SCRUTINY PANEL**

A meeting of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel was held on 10 October 2018.

**PRESENT:** Councillors T Mawston, J McGee, L McGloin, J Sharrocks, J A Walker and V Walkington

**OFFICERS:** S Bonner, C Kemp and C Thorpe.

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** Councillor T Higgins, J Hobson, B A Hubbard.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

None were declared at this point in the meeting.

**1 MINUTES**

The minutes of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel held on 17 July 2018 were agreed as a true record.

**2 APPRENTICESHIPS - PROGRESS UPDATE**

The Head of Community Learning Services and the Apprentice Coordinator presented a report that outlined the progress made with apprenticeships since the last time the issue was brought before Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel. From that meeting the Panel sought updates on two issues: how apprenticeships interacted with schools and the development of the apprenticeship levy.

As part of the presentation the following comments were made:

- The team, including several apprentices, had visited schools in order to promote the Apprenticeship programme. This had been a positive programme and had reached approximately 2000 children.
- Nunthorpe school was noted as a feeder school for current apprenticeship.
- It was noted that it was difficult to recruit apprentices from Outwood Academy in Ormesby despite pursuing it.
- It was noted that a number of initiatives, including dedicated staff to liaise with schools, were now being enacted.
- It was noted that the River Tees Multi Academy Trust was now on the list of schools to be approached by the team.
- With regard to schools feedback; multiple vacancies were requested by schools during July and August however this was not the way the Council worked, instead having vacancies throughout the year. Work tours were also requested, whereby young people would be shown and this has been discussed with the Chief Executive who was agreeable to that request.
- The strategy of promoting apprenticeships has changed to focus more on what opportunities were available at the Council and the Council as employer rather than simply apprenticeships as a supplier.
- With regards to apprenticeships there had been a doubling in the number of apprenticeships offered or supported although some have not yet been agreed by the government or have end point assessors.
- Managers are also approaching the Apprenticeship Coordinator knowing there were standards being produced.
- One of the main delays is getting funding from Government to start some apprenticeship schemes.
- While Community Learning provide much of the apprenticeship levy there were other providers available, especially for those at higher levels, e.g. Middlesbrough College.
- Community Learning was currently spending approximately 65% of its Levy payments. When an individual is put onto an apprenticeship the funding received amounts to 80% with 20% held back for achievement. In real terms this 20% amounts to £110,000.

- It was also noted that in cases where funds were not spent, central government take those monies back from the Council.
- The level 2 Business Admin framework will not be replaced to try and encourage more specialist roles. However the Frameworks will not be turned off until 2021.
- There were currently just over 155 apprentices both working in MBC and accessing the levy.
- One of the aims of the levy was to encourage staff to undergo training at any age.
- The institute of apprenticeships will provide an overview of apprenticeships that are being developed.
- The government had recently doubled the funding bands and were looking at 31 of the standards that were ready to see if they needed to be moved to a different funding band.
- It was noted that stability would be preferential to allow success to be measured.
- In terms of salaries; apprenticeships lasted 18 months not 12 months but the Opportunity Middlesbrough Strategy changed the apprenticeship salary to £4.20 per hour rather than £3.70.
- In terms of impact it was stated that 35% of our apprentices fell into the 16-18 age range with 65% of them left, there were some apprentices coming in after doing a degree, some returning to work meaning the impact to the Council would depend on the age range.
- The increase in apprenticeships was combined with neish apprenticeships due to the small number of people on those courses.
- Neish apprenticeships included hospitality and Safety Health and Environment which began on the 1st September.
- There were challenges in recruitment of appropriate levels of person to deliver management training and in development time.
- While there were challenges, on the whole there were more apprenticeships in the Council and more varied range of apprenticeships available.
- The public sector target has been over achieved and other results were above the national benchmark.

### 3 **DRAFT FINAL REPORT - COUNCIL TAX COLLECTION PROCESSES IN MIDDLESBROUGH**

The conclusions and recommendations of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel were outlined following a scrutiny investigation of Council Tax Collection Processes in Middlesbrough.

The Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel recommended:

1. To ensure alignment with the Council's Social Regeneration agenda, when Council Tax services return to the Council's purview it should explore ways of changing communications and interactions with residents experiencing Council Tax debt.
2. The Council should follow, and build on, work already undertaken by Kier and ensure any initiatives are multi-team in their approach.
3. Any Improvement to the collection processes should look to include key stakeholder such as the Financial Improvement Group.
4. Continue with work undertaken by Kier in terms of service restructuring to ensure service delivery is efficient and effective.

#### **ORDERED:**

1. **That the findings and recommendations of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel Panel be endorsed and referred to OSB for its consideration.**
2. **An additional recommendation be added to the final report: 'For the relevant Service Area to update the Panel on progress within 1 year of the collection processes returning to the Council.'**

