



To: Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny 1

Date: 30 March 2022

Subject: Coventry City Council Apprenticeship update

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 To provide Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board 1 with an update on Coventry City Council's internal Apprenticeship programme.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board 1 continue to support the work and the achievement of the Apprenticeship and Early Careers Team within People & Culture in continuing to deliver a successful apprenticeship programme and outcomes for the Council's apprentices in challenging circumstances throughout the pandemic.
- 2.2 That Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board 1 continue to support the aims of the Apprenticeship and Early Careers Team - in line with the Council's Apprenticeship Strategy 2020-2022, to continue to increase traditional apprentice numbers beyond pre-covid levels in 2022 whilst maintaining a focus on quality, diversity and inclusion.

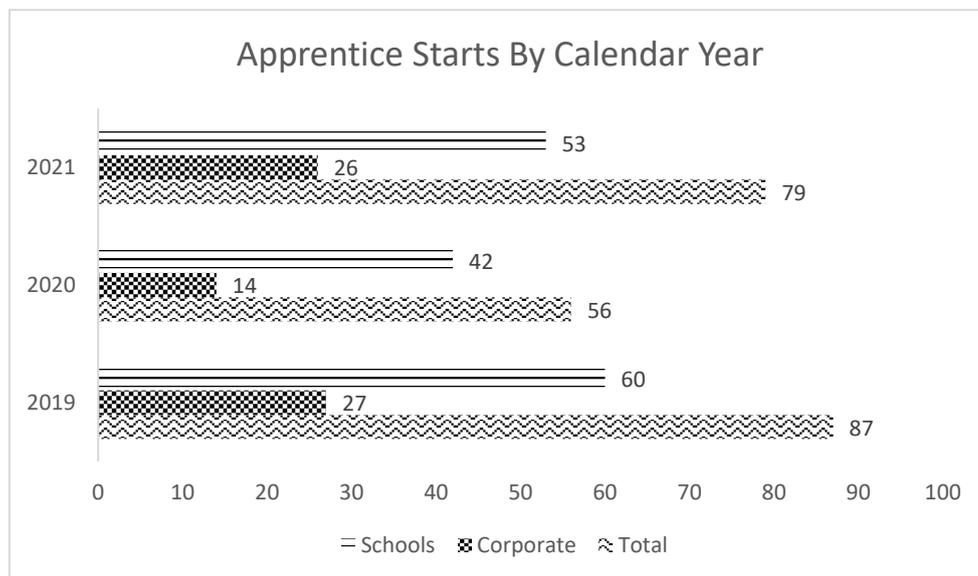
3 Background

- 3.1 The Apprenticeship and Early Careers Team within People and Culture are responsible for managing the Council's Apprenticeship Programme and delivering the actions set out in the Council's Apprenticeship Strategy (see appendix 1).
- 3.2 The team engages with managers and services across the Council to identify opportunities to create new apprenticeship roles (Traditional Apprentices) and to match appropriate apprenticeship standards to existing roles to upskill current staff (Employed Apprentices). For further information on what apprenticeships are and the difference between Traditional and Employed Apprentices, please see appendix 2 section 1.

4 Traditional Apprentices

- 4.1 The Apprenticeship and Early Careers Team actively engages with service areas across the Council to identify apprenticeship opportunities. The team works with managers to undertake workforce planning activities to identify how the recruitment of an apprentice can help with their current and future needs, including addressing skills gaps and succession planning.

- 4.2 The team ensures the most appropriate Apprenticeship Standards are mapped to the apprenticeship role and support managers throughout the recruitment process.
- 4.3 Following recruitment, the Apprenticeship and Career Pathways Officer will work with the apprentice and manager throughout the apprenticeship lifecycle to ensure they receive the required support to get the most out of their apprenticeship and move into a positive destination on completion.
- 4.4 The team also provide advice and guidance to Local Authority Maintained Schools regarding best practice in the recruitment of apprentices.
- 4.5 As of the 15/03/22 there were 92 traditional apprentices in post (32 Corporate and 60 Maintained Schools). For a further breakdown of this information, please see appendix 2, sections 1 and 2.
- 4.6 Covid-19 impacted Apprenticeship starts nationally across the board, with starts decreasing in 2020/21, compared to the same period in 2019/20. However, a recovery has been made with the starts for 2021/22 now back to 2019/20 levels.
- 4.7 Apprenticeship starts at the Council have broadly followed this trend as can be seen below:



- 4.8 Following a decrease in starts related to the response to the pandemic and a shift to home working, apprenticeship starts have made a steady recovery:

	Apr-Jun 20	Jul-Sep*	Oct-Dec 20	Jan-Mar 21	Apr-Jun 21	Jul-Sep*	Oct-Dec 21
Total	4	19	10	10	10	46	13
Corporate	0	5	3	2	5	12	7
Schools	4	14	7	8	5	34	6

* Due to schools recruiting the majority of their apprentices to start each September, starts in this quarter are always significantly higher than others.

- 4.9 The Council's Apprenticeship Strategy has a target to recruit 60 corporate apprentices between 2020 and 2022. Despite the downturn in starts due to Covid-19, we are now back on track and aiming to exceed the target before the end of this

year.

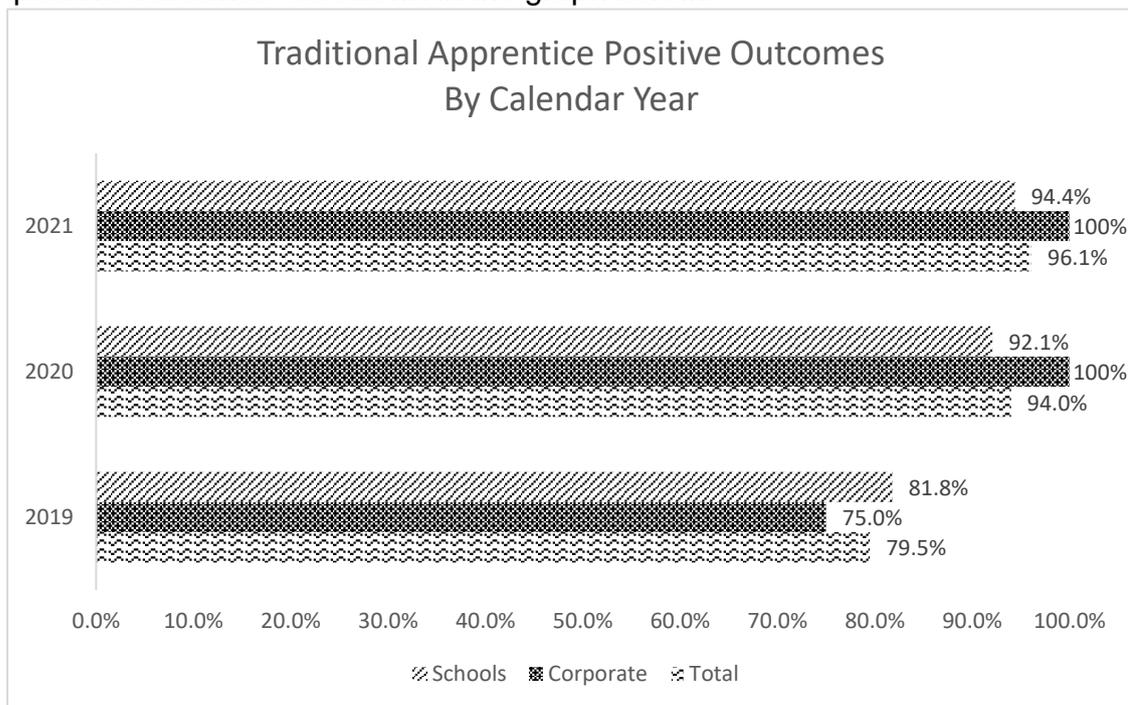
4.10 Outcomes

Whilst it is important that we set targets and monitor the number of apprenticeship starts, equal, if not more emphasis should be placed on the destinations of our apprentices.

4.11 All apprentices are recruited on fixed-term contracts that mirror the length of their apprenticeship training. Whilst workforce planning and career pathways for apprentices are discussed when first working with recruiting corporate managers, it is rarely possible to guarantee a role for the apprentice to move into at the point of recruitment.

4.12 With the majority of corporate apprenticeships being 18 months and longer (some up to 4 years) there are many factors that can change in this period. The main difficulties faced are being able to accurately predict the required needs of the service at the point the apprentice finishes, as well as holding the budget for the post-apprenticeship position for this time.

4.13 Despite not having a guaranteed role in place, our apprentices have very high positive outcomes* as shown in the graph below:



*Positive outcome defined as: Apprentice moving into either employment, further/higher education or the next level of apprenticeship upon completion.

4.14 The increase and sustainment of positive outcomes in 2020 and 2021 has been achieved by a change of approach by the Apprenticeship and Early Careers Team.

4.15 In addition to apprentices having redeployment status for the final 3 months of their apprenticeship as has been the case for many years, we ensure that whilst there are no guaranteed roles post-apprenticeship as stated previously, a workforce planning approach is taken when recruiting corporate apprentices.

4.16 This change in focus to encouraging corporate managers to take a longer-term view of the requirements of their service has resulted in a 27% increase in the

percentage of apprentices that moved into employment at the Council in 2021 compared with 2019.

- 4.17 Alongside this approach, the Apprenticeship and Career Pathways Officer meets with corporate apprentices and their managers throughout the apprenticeship to discuss the apprentice's progress and post-apprenticeship career ambitions.
- 4.18 These discussions enable actions to be taken to help meet the apprentice's career goals. This can take various forms including ensuring the apprentice is obtaining the relevant skills, knowledge and experience to enable them to achieve their post-apprenticeship goals; 1:1 coaching sessions; and support with applying for jobs and interviews.
- 4.19 As well as engaging with the apprentice, the apprentice's manager is also supported and encouraged to do all they can to explore the options available to them in keeping on their apprentice after they finish.
- 4.20 Additional support and development
In addition to advice and guidance related to the apprentice's role and post-apprenticeship ambitions, the Apprenticeship and Career Pathways Officer also provides pastoral care. This can take many forms such as general advice and guidance and signposting to other organisations.
- 4.21 Apprentice development sessions are also arranged for apprentices, with recent sessions taking place on Mental Health and Finance.

5 Employed Apprentices

- 5.1 Since the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy in April 2017 we have been able to utilise funding to upskill current employees using Apprenticeships.
- 5.2 The Apprenticeship and Early Careers Team engages with managers to identify where apprenticeships can be utilised to meet both the current and future needs of colleagues and the service.
- 5.3 We work with managers to undertake workforce planning activities to identify how apprenticeships can help to address skills gaps, aid with succession planning and to develop career pathways to aid in increasing retention and meeting current and future predicted skills gaps.
- 5.4 In addition to directly working with Heads of Service and Managers to identify service/role-specific apprenticeships, appraisal data is also utilised to identify trends in corporate learning requirements.
- 5.5 As of the 15/03/22 there were 230 employed apprentices in post, undertaking 44 different apprenticeships. For a further breakdown of this information please see appendix 2, section 3.

6 Diversity and Inclusion

- 6.1 The principles of Diversity and Inclusion are not only embedded within our Apprenticeship Strategy but are rooted in the ethos and values of the team.
- 6.2 We are always working to engage with under-represented groups to widen participation, remove barriers and increase the diversity of our apprentices so that they are reflective of the communities we serve.
- 6.3 A breakdown of the diversity information of our traditional apprentices can be found in appendix 2, section 3.
- 6.4 Looked After Children/Care Leavers
We take our responsibility as a Corporate Parent very seriously and work closely

with colleagues in Through Care and across Children's Services to promote our apprenticeships to Looked After Children and Care Leavers (LAC and CL).

- 6.5 The team attends the LAC/CL NEET panel to keep up to date with any LAC/CL that are looking for or may be suitable for apprenticeships and to bring partners up to date on forthcoming apprenticeship opportunities.
- 6.6 An apprenticeship referral process for LAC/CL is also in place and through this the Apprenticeship and Career Pathways Officer will meet with LAC/CL and help them to apply for apprenticeships as well as giving 1:1 interview support.
- 6.7 Holiday Activities & Food (HAF) Programme
Following a call to action for support at the Council's Skills Board, the Apprenticeship and Early Careers Team put themselves forward to support the new HAF Programme. HAF is a national programme for 5–16-year-olds who are eligible for Free School Meals. In addition to providing meals for the approximately 12,500 eligible children, the remit of the programme extends to providing skills and other enrichment activities. The Apprenticeship Team delivered apprenticeship information sessions to groups on the HAF to engage and build relationships with young people from disadvantaged and under-represented groups.
- 6.8 Engaging with Refugees and Migrants
We work in partnership with the Migration Team and organised to meet with the Refugee Employment Network to get an overview of the work they are doing and how we can better engage with and support refugees and migrants in applying for our apprenticeships. Following this meeting, an apprenticeship information session was delivered that resulted in two refugees/migrants securing apprenticeships at the Council.
- 6.9 Recruitment best practice
We work closely with colleagues in the Recruitment Team and colleagues leading on Diversity and Inclusion within People and Culture to ensure that we are up to date with best practice in advertising and recruitment methods.
- 6.10 We have built an extensive mailing list of all organisations and partners across the city that work with young people, particularly those from under-represented groups that we e-mail each time we advertise apprenticeship vacancies.
- 6.11 Candidates that apply for our corporate apprenticeships also have an additional stage in the application process – the 'pre-interview'. At this stage, shortlisted candidates are invited to attend a session prior to final interview where they are given an overview of what to expect from the interview as well as tools, tips and advice on how to prepare for it to give them the best possible chance of success.
- 6.12 The pre-interview stage was added as it was noticed that not all applicants were aware of expectations of the interview process and those that did not receive support (such as from parents or carers) were not performing as well due to this.

7 Marketing and event attendance

- 7.1 Due to a variety of factors, the number of people searching and applying for apprenticeships at a national and local level has declined in recent years. In response to this it is important that Coventry City Council stands out in this market as an employer of choice for people wanting to undertake an apprenticeship.
- 7.2 To do this we have updated and re-branded all of our physical and digital marketing materials with contemporary designs, featuring pictures of our diverse range of apprentices.

- 7.3 Alongside the new materials, over 20 case studies (example attached in appendix 3) of current and ex-apprentices as well as their managers have been created to give an insight into what being an apprentice at Coventry City Council is like.
- 7.4 We have also created an Instagram account where we post regularly about our vacancies, case studies and other events to engage with our target audience. Please see appendix 2, section 5 for further details.
- 7.5 Following a decline in careers fairs and other events due to Covid-19 we attended or arranged and held 19 events in 2021 including 9 events at 8 of our secondary schools. These events ranged from apprenticeship information sessions, talks at assemblies, group work with students, mock interviews and attending careers fairs. We always take current or past apprentices to these events with us to talk directly to students about their experiences.
- 7.6 We've already attended 10 events so far in 2022 and have many more already booked in, including the Support and Employments Job Fair organised by Coventry WEHM Service at Moat House Community and Leisure Centre in April.

8 Incentive payments

- 8.1 In response to Covid-19, the Government introduced Apprenticeship incentives for employers of up to £3000 per newly recruited apprentice. Over £230k has been secured by the Apprenticeship Team in total under this scheme which has gone towards funding apprenticeship vacancies.

9 Levy Transfer

- 9.1 Coventry City Council can transfer up to 25% of its yearly Apprenticeship Levy funding to non-Levy paying employers. We work in partnership with our Economic Development Service and the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to receive referrals from SMEs requiring funding.
- 9.2 To date we have pledged to transfer over £325k, supporting 21 businesses and 68 apprentices. We have prioritised Coventry businesses and residents from under-represented groups. Please see attached case studies in appendices 4 and 5.
- 9.3 As a result of the success of the Council's Levy Transfer scheme, meetings with counterparts at Solihull Council and the Corporate Responsibility Manager at Coventry Building Society have taken place to share good practice.

10 Work Experience

- 10.1 The arrangement and administration of Work Experience placements at Coventry City Council sits with the Apprenticeship and Early Careers Team. Work experience placements were put on hold due to the organisation's response to Covid-19 and the shift to remote working. Virtual work experience placements were trialled but found to be limited in what they could offer those undertaking them.
- 10.2 Now that more colleagues are starting to return to the office and the Covid-19 restrictions have eased, we are re-evaluating our approach to work experience placements.
- 10.3 As capacity to arrange and support quality placements across the Council is limited, we are piloting an approach to target students from under-represented and/or disadvantaged backgrounds at Coventry schools.
- 10.4 Arrangements for the first cohort to take place later in this academic year are currently being made with Eden Girls' School.

11 Future plans

- 11.1 The Apprenticeship and Early Careers Team will continue to adapt its work to the needs of the organisation, ensuring we align with the new People Plan and One Coventry Plan.
- 11.2 Traditional Apprentices
As mentioned in section 4.9 we plan to exceed the corporate apprenticeship recruitment target set in the Apprenticeship Strategy before the end of the year and continue to increase the number and variety of apprenticeship opportunities we offer.
- 11.3 We will continue to engage with our apprentices to monitor and evaluate their experiences to ensure they are receiving the required support and to increase the quality of apprenticeships across the board. This will also involve the increase of 'value added' activities such as bespoke training and development opportunities for apprentices and apprenticeship team-building activities.
- 11.4 Further work will be undertaken to engage with and recruit applicants from under-represented groups and facing additional barriers to employment. We will build on the changes to practice in attraction, recruitment and selection that have been implemented in corporate recruitment to ensure that the apprentices that we recruit are more reflective of the communities that we serve.
- 11.5 Employed Apprentices
Through workforce planning meetings with Heads of Service we will identify new opportunities to utilise apprenticeships to upskill our workforce.
New apprenticeship standards are being developed regularly and we will continue to utilise them where there is a recognised need for them, building these into recognised career pathways and meeting future workforce skills needs.

Andy Hyland
Workforce Planning & Apprenticeship Advisor
People and Culture
02476 972359 / Andy.Hyland@coventry.gov.uk