

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

12 SEPTEMBER 2019

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET INFORMATION ITEM

Leader of the Council – Councillor Bob Cook

2019 Apprenticeship Programme Update

SUMMARY

We are delighted to provide this update to Cabinet on the success of our 2019 Apprenticeship Programme.

In May 2019 we set out to recruit to over 40 new Apprenticeship opportunities across a range of Council services. Our approach to recruitment and selection was innovative and proved extremely successful with the appointment of 42 motivated and enthusiastic apprentices who are all looking for a rewarding career and a chance to support the people of our borough. Our new apprentices started their employment on Monday 9 September 2019 and attended a special corporate induction session today (12 September 2019).

The success of the programme would not have been achieved without the positive support received from Council Employees, Senior Managers, CMT and Councillors. It has been a very rewarding endeavour carried out in challenging times, and highlights our commitment to creating a resilient workforce and to delivering continuous improvement across services. It is proposed to replicate and build on the success of this year's programme with a further annual apprenticeship programme in 2020.

REASONS FOR PRODUCING THIS REPORT

To update Cabinet on the success of the Council's apprenticeship programme, which will not only support workforce development, but also contributes to succession planning and the overall resilience within the workforce.

DETAIL

1. In order to improve capacity, create resilience and plan for succession within our workforce, we created a program to recruit to over 40 newly created apprenticeship opportunities across the Council.

The business case for creating new apprenticeship opportunities is compelling. Apprenticeships bring opportunity to attract new talent, offer progression and develop a motivated, skilled and qualified workforce. As one of the largest employers within the borough it was also an opportunity not only to showcase ourselves as an employer of choice, to ensure we attract the right talent and highlight that we are an organisation who invest in our workforce but also to encourage other local employers to develop apprenticeship opportunities.

2. The strategy to employ over 40 different apprenticeship opportunities required an innovative approach to recruitment. In order to promote the programme and alongside our usual

recruitment methods - we published a comprehensive brochure (**Appendix 1**) outlining our opportunities, held two Apprenticeship Open Days in a town centre location, utilised Social Media and attended a careers fayre at a local College. An article was also placed in the May edition of Stockton News.



3. The Apprenticeship Programme was launched in May 2019 to link in with the end of the academic year for School, College and University Leavers. Although the timing was linked to the academic year, our apprenticeship opportunities were open to anyone aged 16 and above, and we welcomed applicants from all backgrounds with all levels of experience who were looking to build a successful career with the Council.
4. On 22nd May 2019 we launched our apprenticeship opportunities with the first Apprenticeship Open Day in a vacant shop unit on Wellington Square. The second Open Day took place the following week (Wednesday 29 May 2019) during half term.



The Open Days gave prospective candidates the opportunity to meet our managers and employees and learn more about the opportunities and apprenticeship qualifications on offer,

and what it's like to work for an award-winning Council. We also had people available from the Learning and Skills service to assist candidates with their application.

We were overwhelmed by the positive response we received at the open days and the interest in our vacancies from prospective candidates, members of the public and our employees who helped to facilitate the events.

5. The vacancies closed on 16 June 2019. In total we received 910 application forms from 599 candidates – a number of candidates applied for more than one opportunity.

The most popular apprenticeship was the vacancy for an Apprentice Electrician, which received 125 applications. The opportunities within Children's front line services were also extremely popular.

6. Due to the high volume of applications, we needed to think of a different approach to selection. Many of our apprenticeship opportunities did not require essential qualifications or experience, making them accessible for people to apply for. This would have made it difficult to shortlist to a manageable number to interview on a 1-2-1 basis (traditional selection). Assessment Centres were therefore carried out for the majority of our vacancies to enable a larger number of candidates to be considered.

The activities at the assessment centres were designed to test the candidate's suitability for the job roles, focusing on behaviours in line with the Council's culture statement and values, and key skills such as logical thinking, innovation and creativity. Managers were actively involved in the creation of activities and facilitation of the assessment centre, and they also enabled team members to play an active part in the process of recruitment. Activities such as bridge building / tower building using paper, spaghetti, marshmallows; group discussions; "Speed Interviews"; and creative Lego challenge were used to assess candidate's strengths and see how they interacted with others to ensure we selected the best talent.

7. We were successful in recruiting to 42 new apprenticeship opportunities in total as outlined below:

Directorate	Apprentice Job Title	Number Appointed
Administration & Democratic Services	Apprentice Administration Assistants	5
Adults & Health	Apprentice Adult Care Worker	3
Children's Services	Apprentice Administration Assistant (Redhill Family Hub)	1
Children's Services	Apprentice Work Experience Assistant	1
Children's Services	Apprentice Get Connected Worker	2
Children's Services	Apprentice SEN Officer	1
Children's Services	Apprentice Information Advice Worker	1
Community Services	Apprentice One Call Officer	1
Community Services	Apprentice Technical Business Support	1
Community Services	Apprentice Arborist	1
Community Services	Apprentice Electrician	1
Community Services	Apprentice Multi-skilled Trades Person	1
Community Services	Apprentice Highways Operative	2
Community Services	Apprentice Building Surveyor (Degree)	1
Community Services	Apprentice Catering Supervisor	3
Culture Leisure & Events	Apprentices Business Support Officer (Events)	1
EDGS	Apprentice Administration Assistant (Housing)	1
EDGS	Apprentice Lettings Officer	1
EDGS	Apprentice Building Design Technician	1

EDGS	Apprentice Civil Engineering Technician	1
EDGS	Apprentice Civil Engineer (Degree)	1
Finance & Business Services	Apprentice Business Support Assistant	1
Finance & Business Services	Apprentice Valuer (Degree)	1
HR, Legal & Communications	Apprentice HR Support Assistant	1
HR, Legal & Communications	Apprentice Legal Support Assistant	1
HR, Legal & Communications	Apprentice Administration Assistant (Comms)	1
Xentrall Shared Services	Apprentice Digital Printer (Pre Press)	1
Xentrall Shared Services	Apprentice ICT Service Technician	5
Xentrall Shared Services	Apprentice Payroll Assistant	1

8. All of the Apprentices began their employment on Monday 9 September 2019. We held a special corporate induction session for them this morning (12 September 2019) with the Interim Managing Director - Julie Danks, representatives from across the Council and our Employee Benefits providers.

9. To ensure we nurture our apprentices on their employment journey with the Council, all have been allocated a dedicated Mentor (in addition to their line manager) to support them with their development. The Mentors have received training on their role, to ensure they are equipped to provide the appropriate support.

Regular meetings will take place with their Line Manager and Training Provider to ensure they are on track with their college/university work and on-the-job learning, and all apprentices will be supported in gaining full time employment with the Council upon successful completion of their apprenticeship.

10. We hope to be able to replicate and build on the success of this year's apprenticeship programme next year with a further cohort of apprenticeships for 2020.

Name of Contact Officer: Beccy Brown
Post Title: Director of HR Legal & Communications
Telephone No. 01642 527003
Email Address: Beccy.brown@stockton.gov.uk