



Buckinghamshire County Council Select Committee

Finance, Performance and Resources Select Committee

Report to the Finance, Performance and Resources Select Committee

Title:	Buckinghamshire County Council's Apprenticeships Programme
Committee date:	Tuesday 1 November 2016
Author:	Frances Mills
Contact officer:	Caroline High ext 2799
Cabinet Member sign-off:	John Chilver

Purpose of Agenda Item

The purpose of this report is to inform the committee of the financial impact of the government reforms to apprenticeships and of agreed strategies to address the changes within Bucks CC.

Background

Major reforms are underway to raise the number of apprenticeships on offer to achieve the government's target of 3 million by 2020; and to improve the range and quality of apprenticeship training.

We have reported to OCB earlier this year on the impact of the following changes:

- implementation of the new Apprenticeship Levy for large employers from April 2017. This is set at 0.5% of our total paybill each year;
- introduction of new digital apprenticeship accounts to enable employers to draw down levy funds towards apprenticeship training & assessment costs;
- introduction of new targets for public sector bodies to achieve apprenticeship starts set at 2.3% of headcount.

Recent reports were submitted to OCB earlier this month to update on DfE guidance published in August 2016; and to report on the progress achieved this year to address the changes in Bucks CC.



Summary

The latest Government publications clarify that maintained schools are to be included in the levy calculations and the estimated cost to Bucks CC staffing budgets are estimated at £988 K based on 0.5% of our current pay bill.

The report shows estimate targets for new apprenticeship starts to address the new public sector target and our progress this year to increase the number of apprenticeships within Bucks CC.

Key issues

An agreed delivery plan is in place to work towards the targets for non-schools staff through a combination of new Apprenticeship starts at entry level on Apprenticeship wage and enrolling existing staff on Apprenticeship programmes to develop new skills as part of career development.

There is no centrally- coordinated scheme for apprenticeships within Bucks schools; however there are currently approximately 25 apprenticeships underway in Bucks schools through a similar arrangement with the Apprenticeship Training Agency SEAC. Through the Schools Forum September 16, schools have been informed of the impact of the levy and the new public sector duty to work towards targets based on 2.3% of headcount.

Resource implications

The levy has been calculated for contributions based on 2017-18 paybill forecasts for non-schools and schools staff. New apprenticeship targets for non-schools staff are to be reported to OCB for approval in early December 2016 that are linked to business unit workforce plans.

Further government guidance on the mechanisms for levy pay bill deductions and the setting up of the digital account, is expected later this month with a further update scheduled for December 2016.

Next steps

1. Report to OCB early December 2016 on targets for non –schools staff through entry-level apprenticeship roles and upskilling of existing staff
2. Ongoing work with Bucks Schools to clarify the financial impact on staffing budgets, subject to publication of further guidance; and to develop strategies for making use of funding for apprenticeship training within the digital account.