

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (SPECIAL BUDGET)</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM: 9</b>
<b>DATE OF MEETING:</b>	<b>13<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2022</b>	<b>CATEGORY: DELEGATED</b>
<b>REPORT FROM:</b>	<b>STRATEGIC DIRECTOR (CORPORATE RESOURCES)</b>	<b>OPEN</b>
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<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>ANNUAL TRAINING REPORT 2020-2021</b>	
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	<b>NONE</b>	<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE: FM05</b>

## **1.0 Recommendations**

- 1.1 To support the priority areas for training and development that have been undertaken during 2021/22, which are linked to the delivery of the key priorities of the Council's Corporate Plan.
- 1.2 That Members note the investment and outcomes made in learning and development activities during 2020/21.
- 1.3 That the Council continues to provide employment opportunities under the national Modern Apprenticeships Scheme and the Kickstart programme

## **2.0 Purpose of the Report**

- 2.1 To provide an overview of corporate training and learning events and actions undertaken in the period April 2020 to March 2021.
- 2.2 To support the training activities that have been prioritised during 2021 - 2022 and provide an overview of the national initiatives that the Council is supporting as part of the national recovery plans for employment.

## **3.0 Executive Summary**

- 3.1 COVID-19 changed the way people lived and worked from March 2020. The Council responded positively to these new requirements and throughout the year, have had different working arrangements in place for the majority of staff being asked to work from home.

- 3.2 Along with other services, this meant that a fundamental change had to be made to the way that training and development activities have been provided. During the first quarter of the year, this restricted the activities that have been provided, coupled with a new Learning and Development Officer not starting in post until the end of April 2020. However, whilst this presented challenges in the way learning activities could be provided going forward, it also accelerated the opportunity to progress different interventions that utilised technology and eLearning solutions.
- 3.3 From June 2020, a focus has been given to the provision of internal mandatory training activities alongside external personal development events (mainly delivered remotely) and investment in upskilling employees through the post entry training scheme that enables the attainment of formal qualifications.
- 3.4 The Council has also had to refresh its approach to the provision of Modern Apprenticeships placements and then early in 2021, to support a regional approach to the new Government Kickstart programme.
- 3.5 The Council is now considering future service delivery and employment models to continue to build on the lessons learned and changes that have been made in response to COVID-19. This will demand the provision of learning and development activities to support this change programme whilst continuing to ensure compliance with the internal training requirements of the current and future workforce.

#### 4.0 Detail

##### Training provision

4.1 During April 2020 to April 2021:

- 194 separate training events were provided
- 177 events were internal and 17 were external courses
- 1288 attendances were recorded
- This totalled approximately 3.83 days of training per employee based on the average number of employees – this is the highest figure since the 2013-2014 report.

##### Overview of mandatory training provided



- 4.2 COVID-19 and the subsequent requirement for the majority of employees to work from home has required learning and development activities to be provided in a different way by utilising new technologies and solutions to ensure the continuation of support for employees. Learning and development activities have, as a consequence, been delivered flexibly to meet the different needs of the workforce and courses and their content have been adapted to better reflect the 'virtual' classroom that has had to be used as the primary tool for training.
- 4.3 The Learning and Development Officer has worked closely with colleagues across the Council, to not only ensure that training needs have been met but also to increase the level of resources that are available to the workforce.
- 4.4 A key investment made by the Council during the year was the procurement of an eLearning system to support a blended learning approach. This not only provided the Council with additional learning resources it has also presented the workforce with a range of course and activities that can be accessed at any time to support their personal and professional development as well as their health and wellbeing.
- 4.5 The procurement exercise was completed on 1 March 2021, and the Council contracted Progress International Ltd to provide a Learning Management System (LMS) for all employees. The system provides short impactful learning solutions to fit around the requirements of the working day and provide an immediate solution to learning needs as they arise. The system was launched on 6 April 2021 and, as such, reports on data usage are unavailable for this report but will be included in the 2021-2022 report.
- 4.6 As noted in the chart above (section 4.1), 12 different mandatory training courses have been provided ranging from health and safety awareness to attendance management. A priority has been given to stress awareness to support employees working differently or remotely and this has also been supplemented by additional sessions focused on improving an employee's mental health and wellbeing.

### **Evaluation of training**

- 4.7 The Council requests feedback from delegates after each training activity. This provides vital information on how courses and their delivery can be improved and enhanced. This was of particular importance during 2020/21 as the majority of training completed was delivered virtually.
- 4.8 Feedback from training has been positive. Delegates are asked to rate different elements of any course provided ranging from the delivery of the training, content used and to assess the increase in their skills before and after they attend the course. All are showing a positive trend with repeated comments on the value and appropriateness of the learning being provided.

### **Post entry training**

- 4.9 In addition to internal training, eight employees were undertaking post-entry training programmes throughout this period. This is an increase on the seven employees undertaking post-entry training in the previous year. This demonstrates the Council's investment in the development of the skills and knowledge of employees and supports effective workforce planning

## **Apprenticeships**

- 4.10 COVID-19 directly impacted on the hiring of apprentices with 1.4% of the workforce in an apprenticeship role. Steps have been taken to increase this over the coming year and these are detailed in the quarterly performance reports to Committee. It includes changes to the Performance Development Review process to identify potential internal uses of apprenticeships and using leadership and management apprenticeships to upskill the existing workforce. In addition, recruitment procedures have been adapted to encourage the consideration of apprenticeships as part of the recruitment process.
- 4.11 These measures are already having a positive impact with an increased number of apprenticeships being employed in 2021/22 and is increasing the internal use of the apprenticeship levy to support employees to gain further qualifications.

## **Training for front line workers**

- 4.12 Training has continued to be provided for front line workers in controlled and safe environments to make sure that they have access to learning and development opportunities.
- 4.13 The development of skills for the Council's front-line workers promotes continuous improvement in service delivery, as well as demonstrating the Council's commitment to the workforce and the valuable work they undertake.
- 4.14 Training is provided at different times to best meet the needs of the service and is focused on mandatory courses such as health and safety and stress awareness. This training is supplemented by health and safety toolbox talks for employees in topics such as manual handling and the safe use of equipment.
- 4.15 This has been particular important during the past year to ensure that information was shared with front line workers about the measures being taken to protect the workforce, to support different working arrangements that had to be put in place and to ensure that resources were accessible and available to support their physical and mental health and wellbeing.

## **5.0 Learning and development priorities – 2021/22**

- 5.1 To support the national and local response to COVID-19 and to enable the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan the following overview provides details on the learning and development initiatives that have been and are being progressed from April 2021 – March 2022.

### Apprenticeships

- 5.1 To provide a formal approach to apprenticeships at the Council, recruiting managers have been provided with clear guidance as to how to approach hiring new apprentices and upskilling current employees through the apprenticeship scheme. This is to support the Council in achieving the public sector target of 2.3% of the workforce being enrolled on an apprenticeship programme.
- 5.2 Up to the end of October 2021, six apprentices have been appointed. This shows a positive trend in the uptake of apprenticeships across the Council.

### Kickstart

- 5.3 As part of the recovery plan following COVID-19, the Government announced that from September 2020 it would provide funding to create job placements for 16–24 year-olds on Universal Credit and deemed at risk of long-term unemployment. This funding included the national minimum wage for each participant for the duration of the six-month placement and a £1500 grant to cover associated costs including employability skills training for the participants.
- 5.4 The Council has joined a regional consortium co-ordinated by East Midlands Councils to provide placements and has been successful in securing two placements so far in 2021/22. One of these has been successful in securing further employment with the Council.

### Leadership and Management Development Programme

- 5.5 To support the future service delivery and employment models work being progressed by the Council, a training programme focused on developing a range of skills and competency for managers has been developed. This will focus on the different skills that are required to manage and improve the performance of a mixed location workforce where the importance of clear, consistent and effect communication are paramount, not only for employees but all our customers and stakeholders.
- 5.6 An external partner to support the delivery of this programme is being progressed with a decision taken to enable the first cohort of managers to commence this training early in 2022.

### Coaching

- 5.7 To support the delivery of the Leadership and Management Development programme, a coaching programme aimed at continued professional development within the Council and increasing self-sufficiency of employees within their roles will be implemented.
- 5.8 The Council has limited internal resources to support this programme and an external partnership with the established coaching resource offered by East Midlands Council or another partner will be progressed. This will not only provide additional coaches to support employees, but it will enable the Council's internal coaches to gain experience and knowledge through working with managers in other organisations.

### Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 5.9 Following the adoption of the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy and Action Plan, two additional courses have been developed and will be rolled out to employees, managers and Elected Members.
- 5.10 This will focus on embedding EDI across all the Council's services. Training on undertaking Equality Impact Assessments for Officers who are responsible for drafting or reviewing Council policies and procedures and for Elected Members, will provide the Council with more insight on their potential impact on the community and other groups.

- 5.11 An early indication of the success and value of this training is evidence through the Council being asked to deliver similar training to a partner organisation.

#### Customer Care

- 5.12 Working with the Head of Customer Services, a Council-wide training programme will be developed and rolled out early in 2022. This will be supported with a range of eLearning and other training interventions to embed and help employees support the community, residents and stakeholders to access Council services as well as focusing on the levels of service that are to be provided.

#### Induction

- 5.13 Work has been progressed to develop the Council's approach to inducting employees as part of the recruitment process. The Council's eLearning system will be used to enable new employees to access and review key documents before they start and also enable them to book on mandatory training events. This will include the use of video materials to provide details on the Council and its services along with attending a meeting with the Council's Leadership Team

#### Mandatory Training

- 5.14 As noted in 4.1, the provision of the enhanced range of mandatory training has been sustained throughout the year. This has seen a positive trend in levels of completion across the Council with an average of 70% attendance across the majority of courses. These will be continued and be enhanced with additional courses provided around mental health, stress and the range of courses available on the Council's eLearning system, Skillsbites.
- 5.15 A recent intervention has enhanced the provision of trained Mental Health First Aiders across the Council and for the first time a number of colleagues in front line roles have completed the course.
- 5.16 Additional training for Elected Members and Officers will be provided on the use of social media and related platforms.

#### Front line workers

- 5.17 Throughout the pandemic, training interventions, under controlled measures have been provided and will continue for front line workers. This has included the mandatory training referenced in 5.14 above and complemented with toolbox talks on health and safety matters such as manual handling, safe use of equipment and lone working.

#### Funded learning opportunities

- 5.18 The Learning and Development Officer has been working with different partners to provide fully funded learning opportunities for Officers. This will include management and supervisory access courses at NVQ Levels 2 and 3 and shorter courses around mental and physical health and wellbeing.

## **6.0 Financial Implications**

- 6.1 The corporate training budget, along with resources within Organisational Development and Performance will be allocated to support the priorities identified in the report.
- 6.2 The provision of Leadership and Management Development will be supported by reserves that have been accrued against the corporate training budget and will fully support the cost of engaging an external partner to provide this training.
- 6.3 It is proposed to allocate £6,000 per annum for the provision of coaching from the Corporate Training budget in the General Fund.
- 6.4 Estimated costs have been received for the Leadership and Management Development courses which total approximately £42,000. As the training can be allocated against managers across the whole Council, the General Fund proportion of approximately £35,000 is proposed to be funded from the Corporate Training Earmarked reserve with the balance to be funded by the HRA General reserve.
- 6.5 Post-entry training is funded by the Council with a learning agreement in place to recoup costs if an employee leaves within two years of their training being completed. This continues to be in place to protect Council assets and ensure both the Council and its wider community benefit from incentivising continual professional development.
- 6.6 The apprenticeship levy funds that the Council pay into are underutilised; the apprenticeship spend across the Council decreased from £9623.11 to £5154.25 from 2019-2020 to 2020-2021. COVID-19 played a significant role in this, as hiring and supporting an apprentice whilst working from home proved a barrier to most services and colleges were unable to open to support learners. Utilising National Apprenticeship Week, regular communications about apprenticeships and using the PDR process, it is anticipated, will help to elevate this spend and increase apprenticeship numbers in the period 2021-2022.

## **7.0 Corporate Implications**

### **Employment Implications**

- 7.1 The Council's most valuable resource is its people and training helps to nurture and develop that resource to improve efficiency and effectiveness in service provision. In providing clear development opportunities, employee retention will be positively impacted and the Council will maintain a reputation as a supportive employer which will assist the recruitment and retention of the current and future workforce.
- 7.2 With a formalized apprenticeship procedure it is planned that employment will be positively affected in both bringing in new starters and in upskilling existing members of staff.

## **Legal Implications**

- 7.3 None directly arising from this report. Contracts for the provision of an eLearning system and a Leadership and Management Development programme will be subject to advice provided by Legal Services.

## **Corporate Plan Implications**

- 7.4 Training relates to all aspects of the Corporate Values. Primarily, training supports Our People by ensuring colleagues have the right skills, knowledge and behaviours to support their Service areas in delivering services for internal and external customers. Through the mandatory training the topic of Our Environment is supported through ensuring colleagues' compliance with Environmental Awareness training. Our Future, therefore, follows in providing the skills necessary to support the Council and in developing its employees.

## **Risk Impact**

- 7.5 The effective investment in the current and future workforce is critical as the Council moves to new models of service delivery and employment. The provision of learning and development interventions as detailed in this report will enable the Council to provide appropriate support for the workforce during this transition period and ongoing.

## **8.0 Community Impact**

### **Consultation**

- 8.1 None directly arising from this report.

### **Equality and Diversity Impact**

- 8.2 All learning and development opportunities are made available to all Council employees and this has been extended through the provision of an eLearning system to promote personal and professional development.
- 8.3 As noted in the report, equality training is part of the mandatory training requirement for all employees and this has been extended by the provision of Equality Impact Assessment training that will provide additional insight in to the impact of the Council services on the community and other groups.

### **Social Value Impact**

- 8.4 The provision and support of Government employment initiatives such as Apprenticeships and Kickstart will have a positive impact on the social mobility of the community, especially the younger and more vulnerable.

### **Environmental Sustainability**

- 8.5 The Council's environmental commitments are being progressed with the provision of mandatory training for all employees.

## **9.0 Conclusions**

- 9.1 Training provision has increased between April 2020 to April 2021 comparative to the previous years, which has seen staff compliance rise across all mandatory training areas. This has been sustained and will be continued throughout the current year.
- 9.2 The 2021-2022 report will include usage data on the new eLearning platform to demonstrate the merits of a blended learning approach, which is expected to benefit staff training by providing timely and relevant solutions that can readily adapt around day-to-day responsibilities. Reporting can also be expected on the provision of the Council's own eLearning modules and induction as part of using the system.
- 9.3 Consideration will need to be given over the coming year to strategies around increasing apprenticeships to increase levy spending, resulting in staff upskilling or new starters being trained and retained in the organisation. This has been a priority throughout the year as part of recovering from COVID-19.
- 9.4 Most important is to continue the investment in the workforce to build new skills, knowledge and competency to support the Council as it progresses its work to the provision of new service delivery and employment models.