



Effective Organisation Overview & Scrutiny Committee 24 May 2010

‘CYC Apprenticeships & Other Work Based Learning Opportunities’ Scrutiny Review – Final Report

Purpose of Report

1. This report presents the findings from the scrutiny review on City of York Council Apprenticeships and other work based learning opportunities, together with a number of recommendations to the Executive on a framework for gathering information on these, and a reporting structure for monitoring their uptake and outturn.

Background

2. At a meeting in February 2010, the Committee considered a topic registration form submitted by Cllr Gunnell which proposed carrying out a review of the existing arrangements for traineeships at the Council. The Committee recognised that some of what Cllr Gunnell was proposing fell outside of the remit for this Committee and a decision was therefore taken to receive an officer report which focussed solely on the role of the Council as an employer, rather than its role as a provider of services to all young people across the city who are looking to receive work based training.
3. That report was presented to a meeting of this Committee in March 2010, and it was agreed to carry out a review based on the following remit:

Aim

To identify improvements to the Council’s provision of apprenticeships and other work based training

Objectives:

- exploring the current arrangements
- identifying any external funding opportunities, particularly the targeting of specific vulnerable groups e.g. those with learning disabilities and NEETs
- identifying a reporting structure to measure the effectiveness and outturn of apprenticeships and other work based training

Consultation

4. The Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development was consulted throughout the review.

Information Gathered

5. Members held a number of meetings in April & May 2010 to consider information gathered in support of the objectives for this review. In addition, at a meeting on 12 May 2010, Members received a presentation on, and a copy of a draft Workforce Plan for the Council, together with information on the limited number of apprenticeships currently being undertaken across the Council.

Objective i – The Current Arrangements

6. In November 2008 City of York Council (CYC) signed the Skills pledge. It committed the council to encouraging staff to gain work based qualifications, and to raise skill levels particularly those below level 2 (GCSE level). This initiative began by promoting new funding aimed at getting our employees to gain National Vocational Qualifications, and improve literacy levels through 'Train to Gain' and 'Skills for Life'.
7. National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs)
Taking an NVQ is appropriate for members of staff who already have skills and want to improve them, or for those starting from scratch. They are designed to help staff develop their skills and knowledge to do a job effectively and provide the opportunity to learn practical, work-related tasks, leading to a 'competence-based' qualification.
8. Based on national standards for various occupations, these standards say what a competent person in a job could be expected to do. As a staff member progresses through their course, they can compare their skills and knowledge against the national standards to see what they need to do to meet them. City of York Council currently has no mechanism for recording the number of staff across directorates, who are currently undertaking an NVQ. Work is ongoing to provide a central register, by Summer 2010. York Training Centre provides information to all staff to encourage the take up of training (see paragraph 17 below). However, this does not preclude staff from accessing NVQs through other providers, such as York College.
9. Train to Gain
This national skills service encourages employers to realise the benefits that learning and skills can bring whilst recognising that different sized businesses (or businesses from different sectors) face different challenges. It is tailored to meet individual business needs, offering advice on everything from basic skills through to leadership and management training, and will help a business to:
 - get the essential skills to boost business performance
 - improve business efficiency and increase profits
 - help staff grow in motivation and confidence

10. CYC staff can access the Train to Gain service through York Training Centre, which is part of CYC. The service also offers access to skills and training advice via a number of different routes - Business Link Advisers, Colleges, or Training Providers. Whatever route taken, they will take on much of the hard work - identifying:
- the training and other skills that will drive a business forward
 - the employees who will benefit most
 - local training providers - If appropriate, they will source local providers who can work on site, minimising disruption to a business
 - provide advice on financing training e.g. if a business is eligible for partial or full funding or subsidies, a Business Link Adviser will help access the support
 - evaluate a business's training programme, making sure it will have an impact on a business's success
11. Skills for Life
'Skills for Life', are also referred to as 'Basic Skills' - the two terms mean the same thing, and refer to the same qualifications. They are designed to help develop the skills used in everyday life, such as reading, writing or maths. They can also help an individual boost their CV or move on to further study.
12. A Skills for Life qualification can be taken by someone over 16 years of age who has left compulsory full-time education without an up-to-date qualification at level 2 on the National Qualifications Framework (such as a GCSE). In some cases, schools also offer Skills for Life qualifications for 14 to 16 year olds. Skills for Life Certificates are available in:
- adult literacy
 - adult numeracy
 - information and communications technology (ICT)
 - English - for speakers of other languages (ESOL)
13. At CYC, the issue of recruitment is devolved down to departmental service level, and therefore with no central register of ongoing recruitment it is not possible to quantify the numbers of young employees accessing these qualifications, or those applying for vacancies at the council who have previously accessed these qualifications in an effort to find employment. Directorates are responsible for all recruitment and work based training, and are expected to identify suitable posts, and with support, set in place actions to recruit and train apprentices. The provision of other education-into-work opportunities such as work experience, are also left to the discretion of Directorates - working within the general guidelines laid down in CYC's HR Manual (with the exception of the graduate development programme - see paragraph 25 below).
14. CYC Workforce Plan
The council's first Workforce Plan is currently being drafted for the period 2010-12, with the aim of ensuring the right staff with the right skills are employed in the right

places, to deliver the right services to customers. The Workforce Plan has 5 strategic objectives:

- Transformation & Cultural Change
- Efficiency
- Diversity
- Partnerships
- Customers

15. The strategic objective specific to this scrutiny review is 'Diversity' - to help build an inclusive culture in which all are treated with dignity and respect. It contained a number of action plan objectives which this Committee considered in support of their work on this review. For example, the draft Workforce Plan identified that priority be given to young people, disabled and BME. The draft plan will be presented to the Executive in July 2010.
16. York Training Centre
Practical expertise in the council resides within York Training Centre (YTC) in City Strategy. City Strategy manages the operational relationship with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), which helps give the council a flexible and fast response to new opportunities and priorities. For example, City Strategy provides a practical one stop shop for managers thinking of recruiting apprentices. HR and City Strategy have also recently actioned a structured communications campaign to engage all staff called 'Skills for you'.
17. City Strategy Apprenticeship Scheme
City Strategy started an Apprenticeship Scheme in September 2008. Six young people (all 17–18 years old) were recruited as Administration Apprentices on a fixed term two year contract, as paid employees on Grade 2. The six apprentices move around six departments within City Strategy on a rotational basis, spending four months in each. Within each department they then experience a range of jobs and sections. At the end of the first year, all apprentices successfully completed the Apprenticeship programme at Level 2. Now in their second year, they are half way through the Advanced Apprenticeship at Level 3.
18. To date no other directorates have chosen to replicate the City Strategy Apprenticeship Scheme, although there has been a regular take-up of individual apprentices by some directorates over a few years, averaging about 5–8.
19. Placements for those not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs)
It has already been recognised that the demographic of the workforce is not representative of the City, with only about 337 employees under the age of 25. The Workforce Plan will therefore include supporting actions to increase the number of young people under 25 years old working for the council e.g. to develop a programme of short internships for local young people not in education, employment and training (NEET) and to increase the number of apprenticeships offered to young people.

20. Directorates have been asked to consider offering placements for young people who are NEET and currently registered under the Entry to Employment (E2E) programme with York Training Centre.
21. This programme is available to young people aged 16 - 18 years who are not participating in any form of post-16 learning, if it is an appropriate option which will enable them to progress to an apprenticeship, further learning or a job. Older young people under the Extended Guarantee can also participate in E2E at local LSC discretion, provided the young person is not eligible for New Deal and their programme of learning can be completed by their 25th birthday.
22. It is recognised that there can be no 'quick-fix' for many of the young people who will enter E2E. Therefore, it is not time-bound, but is based on the needs of each individual. Some may need a relatively short period of time to prepare for entry to an Apprenticeship, employment, or further vocational learning opportunity. If they have more complex personal and social needs they may require a much longer period before being ready to enter and sustain suitable training and employment.
23. Learners may start by attending for 16 hours a week, but must build this up to at least 30 hours as soon as possible, depending on their learning capacity, aspirations, needs and progression choices. Participants are expected to undertake learning in three interdependent core areas:
 - basic and key skills
 - vocational development
 - personal and social development
24. Since 30th June 2008 all eligible learners taking an LSC funded E2E programme are entitled to the maximum EMA (Education Maintenance Allowance) of £30 a week regardless of their household income. With no central register, it is not possible to identify the number of young people on placements across directorates.
25. National Graduate Development Programme
The council is currently providing a 2 year traineeship to three graduates from the National Graduate Development Programme. These graduates each have three placements within different directorates. The graduates compete for the programme and for a place at York. They are not necessarily local graduates.

Objective ii - External Funding Opportunities

26. York Training Centre (YTC) in City Strategy, has a contract with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). This joint contract with Adult and Community Learning, enables YTC to claim funding for 'Entry to Employment' (E2E), 'Train to Gain' and apprenticeships on behalf of the Council.
27. City Strategy manages the operational relationship with the LSC, which helps give the council a flexible and fast way of accessing new funding streams, and help staff to accessing funding for NVQs. However, with the transfer of responsibilities

from the LSC to successor organisations on 1st April 2010, YTC will be funded for 16-19 Apprenticeship delivery by the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS).

28. Most recently the focus of funding and government priorities has reverted to apprenticeships. As a result, Human Resources (HR) put in place a mechanism for accessing funding through Skills 4U. They also put in place an Apprenticeship Project Manager to provide information on available funding for specific initiatives e.g. Creative Apprenticeships in Libraries.
29. They also provided a light touch corporate framework approach to apprenticeships, offering advice and support to enable Directorates to decide for themselves where to place apprentices and an appropriate number of apprenticeships to offer. However, Directorates have struggled to set themselves these targets and HR have recognised the need for a clearer more strategic approach.

Objective iii - Identifying A Reporting Structure

30. together with proposals for a method of gathering information on CYC employees participating in an apprenticeship or other work based training, and a reporting structure for monitoring the uptake and outturn of apprenticeship or other work based training – see Annex A.

Analysis

31. In considering the information presented in support of this review, the Committee recognised there was a need to improve the age profile of the council's workforce, and that there is a need for more cohesion over the matter of apprenticeships, with only 18 apprentices currently in place across the Council. The Committee accepted that there could be more young people in work-based training within Directorates that are not included in this figure, but as Human Resources has neither the capacity or mandate to co-ordinate a corporate approach to Apprenticeships or work based learning opportunities, there is no way of identifying these young people.
32. The decision to employ or take on an apprentice lies with Managers within directorates, and there appears to be little impetus to take on more. Furthermore, there is no corporate mechanism for monitoring apprenticeships or other work based learning currently in place, making it difficult for Human Resources to co-ordinate and monitor their take-up and success rate.
33. In line with the Government drive at both regional and national level to increase the number of apprenticeships, the Council would need at least 26 apprentices to reach the top quarter. The committee acknowledged however that economically, the drive for more apprenticeships had come at a difficult time, with a recruitment freeze at City of York Council.
34. In addition, the Committee acknowledged the unbalanced age profile of the current council workforce recognising that a high proportion of employees are over 45. They agreed that the council would benefit from a central infrastructure to monitor

young people within the organisation, and to record what happens to apprentices once they have completed their apprenticeship, and whether the Council retains them. They also recognised there were issues around how the recruitment of disabled people is monitored.

35. The Committee were therefore pleased to see that a Workforce Plan had been drafted by Human Resources which addressed all of these issues e.g. it identifies the need to encourage Directorates to increase the number of apprenticeship opportunities for young people, thus helping to meet the Government targets. It will also enable Human Resources to actively support Directorates to improve their workforce profile. With this in mind, the Committee were keen to see the Executive adopt this new Workforce Plan.
36. Finally, the Committee noted the proposed framework and process detailed in Annex A, acknowledging these were aimed specifically at apprenticeships. Whilst not wanting the council to lose sight of the benefit that other work-based learning opportunities could bring to council employees and the organisation as a whole, the committee agreed to recommend that they also be adopted by the council as good working practice.
37. Once adopted, the committee agreed they would like to receive regular monitoring reports on:
 - The new framework for gathering information on CYC employees, put in place as a result of the recommendations arising from this review and the new corporate Workforce Plan - the Committee have requested bi-annual reports until such time as they are confident the system is embedded into the organisation, and;
 - the uptake, outturn and success of CYC apprenticeships and work-based training - Members have requested bi-annual reports until such time as the remit of the committee is revised
38. As scrutinising the effectiveness of Human Resources is part of the remit of this overview and scrutiny committee, the Committee noted that they were not required to make this request for monitoring reports one of their recommendations arising from the review.

Implications

39. **Equalities** - The diversity objective in the Workforce Plan will help the Council to meet its Inclusive City objectives.
40. There are no known Financial, Legal or Other implications associated with the recommendation in this report.

Corporate Priorities

41. This review supports a number of the aims within the Council's corporate strategy i.e. making York a 'learning city', 'inclusive city' and 'effective organisation'.

Risk Management

42. There are no known risks associated with the recommendations in this report.

Recommendations Arising Form the Review

43. Having considered all of the information presented as part of this review, Members agreed to make the following recommendations to the Executive:
- i. That Directorates be encouraged corporately to increase the number of apprenticeships they offer
 - ii. That the Draft Workforce Plan be adopted (due to be considered by the Executive on 6 July 2010)
 - iii. That the proposed framework as detailed in Annex A, be adopted
 - iv. That recruitment and training be identified in order to improve and maintain a more balanced workforce age profile across each Directorate.

Reason: To conclude this review in line with scrutiny procedures and protocols

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Interim Report Approved



Date

14 May 2010

Specialist Implications Officer(s) N/A

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: None

Annex A – Proposal for reporting structure & lines of accountability

Committee Members

Councillor J Watt (Chair)
Councillor D Horton (Vice-Chair)
Councillor A D'Agorne
Councillor B Boyce
Councillor J Gunnell
Councillor K Hyman
Councillor P Firth
Councillor R Watson