

Suggested City Executive Board response to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee on Apprentices

Provided jointly by:
Board Member for Young People, Schools and Skills, and
Board Member for Customer and Corporate Services

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agreed? (Y / N / In part)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1. That consideration is given to extending the eligibility criteria for apprenticeships beyond the OX1 to OX4 postcode areas but with a preference for appointing applicants with these postcodes.	Y	The eligibility criteria is important as it gives opportunities to candidates living in the city and needing support - this will still be a priority. However given the significant increase in the number of apprenticeships being recruited and to ensure a rich pool of candidates the extension of postcodes was trialled this year with success and this will form part of future campaigns.
2. That consideration is given to making apprenticeship opportunities available to applicants aged 20-24.	Y	This will allow the Council to better target NEETs and facilitate a route into work for early career changers and women entering work for the first time (where having and managing families might have interrupted school/ college studies and reduced career opportunities).
3. That a more co-ordinated approach is taken in schools to raise awareness of apprenticeship and work experience opportunities and promote them to pupils and their parents.	Y	The Business in the Community partnership work over the past two years has enabled the Council to work with schools to deliver apprenticeship workshops, talks for specific school year groups, career workshops and a city wide apprenticeship “Earn while you Learn” awareness raising event (attended by over 100 students who had declared an interest in apprenticeships). The next stage of a more co-ordinated approach will feature a series of parents evening workshops with a presentation on local labour market information put together by our economic development team. These colleagues will also be presenting at an “Educating the Educators” BiTC event on July 13 th geared at informing careers advisors and teachers with work experience/ careers responsibilities. The Council will further develop its work experience offering in consultation with schools during the summer and early Autumn

<p>4. That a particular focus is put on encouraging Black and Minority Ethnic pupils to take up work experience placements and apprenticeships.</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>Some of our BME former apprentices have successfully acted as ambassadors to promote their experience back in schools and various events. It's encouraging that 20% of our recent apprenticeship cohort applicants are from BME backgrounds. We will continue this ambassador approach and work with schools to look for other ways to engage with young BME and other pupils as potential future apprentices.</p> <p>Work experience placements work well in tackling barriers to work, e.g. qualifications, job interviews, breaking down employer stereotypes, english as a second language or wider access to support including careers advice. We will do more with schools to ensure an appealing work experience programme is in place attracting a diverse range of candidates.</p>
<p>5. That the Council links in with social housing providers and higher education colleges in order to engage with hard to reach groups.</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>The Council has an agreement in place with Activate Learning; they promote and place our apprenticeship vacancies on the National Apprenticeship website and we signpost unsuccessful applicants to them for advice and guidance on alternative options.</p>
<p>6. That the Council considers what can be learnt from the Change 100 internship programme, including their advertising and social media campaigns.</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>Whilst the Council took the decision not to engage with the Change 100 programme on the basis it felt it didn't represent value for money, we will explore what we can learn from their advertising and media campaigns to better engage with disabled students. For this group and the wider cohort we can use social media more effectively to raise interest in work experience and apprenticeships.</p>
<p>7. That further consideration is given to defining and promoting the Council's brand and offer to prospective apprentices, including in terms of pay rates and career progression opportunities.</p>	<p>In part</p>	<p>Wage rates are informed by the national apprenticeship picture, the local economy, the cost of living in Oxford and what is affordable in order to recruit the maximum number of apprenticeships. Our recent campaign was the most successful yet with over 170 applicants so the financial offer seems reasonable. Part of the strategy is to do more workforce planning so that the apprenticeship leads to a permanent job wherever possible. Our track record is good in achieving this but in hiring more apprentices we need to manage the succession planning more effectively.</p>

		We have developed the apprentice webpages and uploaded a series of films where apprentices tell their stories (led by direct local market research into what applicants wanted) and believe that this has improved the profile of Council apprenticeships. However effective communication needs to 'speak' to potential applicants in the language they understand and through the right method so we will work with our internal communications and Youth Ambition teams to ensure we are making best use of tools such as social media and video to connect with the widest audience.
8. That the Council seeks to influence Oxfordshire Skills Board to do more to promote apprenticeship opportunities.	N	This is already being done through the input of leading Councillors, BiTC and other local business forums and we would anticipate that this leadership role would continue.
9. That the Council keeps the details of the Enterprise Bill under review and makes appropriate plans to mitigate its impacts, including the Apprenticeship Levy and the apprenticeship start targets.	Y	We are planning how to manage the Apprenticeship Levy spend in order to maximise its impact including how we can provide accredited training internally as well as work with other providers. More details are emerging regarding apprenticeship start targets which at this stage is thought to mean 28 new apprenticeship starts each year. This would need some careful workforce planning giving the length of the apprenticeships e.g. 2 – 4 years and new cohorts potentially starting each year. We will report back to Members in the Autumn as more details emerge.

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