

Shropshire Council
Legal and Democratic Services
Shirehall
Abbey Foregate
Shrewsbury
SY2 6ND

Date: Wednesday, 29 November
2017

My Ref:

Your Ref:

Committee:
Place Overview Committee

Date: Thursday, 7 December 2017
Time: 10.00 am
Venue: Shrewsbury Room, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury,
Shropshire, SY2 6ND

You are requested to attend the above meeting.
The Agenda is attached

Claire Porter
Corporate Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer)

Members of Place Overview Committee

Gwilym Butler (Chairman)	Paul Milner
Julian Dean	Dan Morris
Rob Gittins	William Parr
Simon Harris	Harry Taylor
Jonny Keeley	Paul Wynn

Your Committee Officer is:

Julie Fildes Committee Officer
Tel: 01743 257723
Email: julie.fildes@shropshire.gov.uk

AGENDA

1 Apologies for Absence

2 Declarations of Interest

3 Minutes of the Meeting held on 14th September 2017 (Pages 1 - 6)

To consider the minutes of the Place Overview Committee meeting held on 14th September 2017.

Contact: Julie Fildes, Committee Officer, Julie.fildes@Shropshire.gov.uk

4 Public Question Time

To receive any questions or petitions from the public of which members of the public have given notice. Deadline for notification for this meeting is 5pm on Monday 4th December 2017.

5 Member Question Time

To receive any questions of which members of the Council have given notice. Deadline for notification for this meeting is 5pm on Monday 4th December 2017.

6 Apprenticeship Levy (Pages 7 - 12)

To receive a presentation and progress report on the Apprenticeship Levy from the HR Services Manager.

Contact: Sam Williams, HR Services Manager,
Sam.Williams@Shropshire.gov.uk

7 Shrewsbury Town Centre Development

To receive a verbal update on the development of Shrewsbury Town Centre and to consider possible future work on this topic.

Contact: George Candler, Director of Place and Enterprise,
George.Candler@Shropshire.gov.uk

8 Business Rate Update

To receive a verbal update on Business Rates from the Head of Economic Growth.

Contact: Gemma Davies, Head of Economic Growth,
Gemma.Davies@Shropshire.gov.uk

9 Brexit Task and Finish Group Update

To receive a verbal update on the work of the Brexit Task and Finish Group from the Head of Economic Growth.

Contact: Gemma Davies, Head of Economic Growth,
Gemma.Davies@Shropshire.gov.uk

10 Work Programme Update

To set up the future Work Programme, including Task and Finish Group work.

Contact: Tom Dodds, Scrutiny Officer, Tom.Dodds@Shropshire.gov.uk

11 Date/Time of next meeting of the Committee

The Committee is scheduled to next meet at 10am on Thursday 1st February 2018.

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Place Overview
Committee

14 September 2017

10.00 am

Item

3

Public

MINUTES OF THE PLACE OVERVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 14 SEPTEMBER 2017 10.00 AM - 12.08 PM

Responsible Officer: Julie Fildes
Email: julie.fildes@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 257723

Present

Councillor Gwilym Butler (Chairman)
Councillors Dean Carroll, Julian Dean, Rob Gittins, Paul Milner, Dan Morris, William Parr
and Harry Taylor

1 Election of Chairman

RESOLVED: That Councillor Gwilym Butler be elected as Chairman for the ensuing municipal year.

2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Simon Harris and Paul Wynn.
Councillor Dean Carroll attended as substitute for Councillor Harris.

3 Appointment of Vice-Chairman

RESOLVED: That Councillor Simon Harris be appointed Vice-Chairman for the ensuing municipal year.

4 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Butler declared an interest in relation to Agenda item 9, as he owned tenanted properties which were subject to the payment of business rates. He had no involvement with the businesses which occupied the premises and as such did not consider that he had a pecuniary interest in the item, although would leave the room if it became necessary. Members noted that this interest was entered into the Register of Interests.

5 Minutes of the Final Meeting of the Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny Committee

The minutes of the meeting held on 13th July 2017 were agreed as a correct record subject to Councillor Paul Milner being shown as in attendance.

6 Public Question Time

There were no questions from members of the public.

7 Member Questions

There were no questions from members of Council.

8 North West Relief Road

The Strategic Transport and Contracts Manager introduced Gary Dymond, a representative from WSP and consultant working on the project, distributed maps and gave a presentation to Members on the proposed Shrewsbury North West Relief Road [copy attached to signed minutes].

The Strategic Transport and Contracts Manager explained that this project had a long history and had been embedded in local plans since the 1990s, although previous attempts to deliver the highway had failed to reach fruition. The current proposal was a refreshed bid and scheme. He continued that public consultation would be undertaken to ensure that support from the public and business sector for the scheme still existed.

Members noted the number of benefits of diverting the traffic away from the centre of Shrewsbury, these included economic and health benefits. In answer to a Member's question, The Strategic Transport and Contracts Manager explained that no direct association of the road with potential increased development had been made but it was anticipated that this would be a consequence of the new road. It was also expected that the diversion of traffic away from the town centre would lead to it being a more attractive location for businesses and lead to an improved town centre for visitors.

Members discussed environmental issues and Mr Dymond explained that mitigation schemes were relatively well developed, with the next stage being to identify which schemes would be carried forward and be included in the business case. In answer to a Member's query Gary Dymond confirmed that a cycle path had been included in the road design.

Mr Dymond confirmed that traffic surveys had been conducted in Shrewsbury and that the data was being evaluated. He continued that a traffic model for Shrewsbury was being developed which included latent demand. In reply to a Member's comment, Mr Dymond agreed that historically such models had a tendency to overestimate benefits but the new model used the latest technology, which gave more accurate results.

Members considered the rights of ways and public access to green space shown on the maps distributed at the start of the meeting. It was noted that the public green spaces were important for public health but the existing areas suffered from over access, which caused environmental problems. Members noted the lack of public footpaths and public access to green space north of the town. Members discussed the possible development of a new country park as mitigation for the environmental impact of the road, although as all the land was in private ownership this would be dependent on the outcome of negotiations with landowners. Members observed that

there was no public access to the river and making this area more accessible could lead to the establishment of new businesses. The Shropshire Outdoors Partnership Manager explained that the land was presently being used for grazing and pheasant shooting and development of it would require external funding to be secured which might require a dedicated Development Officer.

Members noted the key deadlines with the proposal being considered by Cabinet in November or December and the Business Case being submitted to the Secretary of State in late December. If this application was successful, the Government would release further funds to develop the proposal. It was anticipated that if successful the scheme would be completed by 2021 although there was still much work to be undertaken.

RESOLVED:

that the report be noted and verbal observations made by the Chairman to Cabinet when the report was considered.

9 Business Rates

The Revenues and Benefits Service Manager gave a presentation on the Business Rate System [copy attached to the signed minutes]. Members noted that the majority of businesses within the Shropshire Council area fell below the threshold for the payment of business rates. The County had in excess of 12,000 businesses on its rating list with a total rateable value in excess of £230m but three quarters of these were classed as small and were exempt from payment, and although the Council received no finance from them it still had to administer them with the associated costs. Only 141 businesses were categorised as large with a rateable value of over £200k. These were mainly large factories, warehouses, supermarkets and stores. These made up of 1.1% of the tax base but provided 28.6% of the gross rateable value.

The Revenues and Benefits Service Manager continued that the Local Authority had no control over the rateable values as they were set by the Valuation Office, an Executive Agency of HMRC. The multiplier was also set by Central Government and adjusted yearly for inflation. The Rateable Values were based on property rental values with revaluation undertaken every five years. He explained that the purpose of National Revaluations was not to generate greater income but to redistribute the taxation burden more fairly. Prosperous areas had higher property rental values which impacted on the business rates levied. Members noted that there were two multipliers, the standard multiplier and the small business rate multiplier. This would give the starting point for the rates bill but there were a number of reliefs available both statutory and discretionary.

In response to a Members question, the Revenues and Benefits Service Manager explained that the small business rate relief available was based on the rateable value of the business plus specific thresholds for second properties. The maximum RV for a second property is £2,899 and the aggregate of second properties must not exceed £19,999. He gave the example of a business operating out of one location with a RV of less than £12,000 which exempted it from the payment of business rates. If the proprietors opened a second shop, which also had a RV of £12,000 both locations would be subject to Business rates even though both premises were

individually under the threshold as the company's RV had been increased to above the exemption threshold.

Members discussed the issue of Business Rate Relief following the recent revaluation of business rates and some businesses facing substantial increases in the rates payable on their premises. Members commented on the misinformation in the media about transitional relief.

The Head of Finance, Governance and Assurance confirmed that central Government had not yet passed the necessary legislation that would lead to local authorities retaining 100% of business rates received, although a number of local authorities were involved in pilot schemes. These were being extended to rural areas but the protection offered in the early schemes, where if income received was less than would have been received if the authority was not part of the scheme, was being removed which made inclusion more risky.

Members noted that the Council had a Discretionary Fund approved by Cabinet but to access funds businesses had to complete an application form which had been sent out with rate demands. Only 50-60% of eligible businesses had applied for relief.

Members discussed the issues that retailers had competing against on-line retailers who did not have to pay the same business rates and the unfair competition of charity shops who were not subject to business rates. Members suggested that communication should be improved with businesses to make them aware of how the business rates they paid were used and this would lead to a sustainable meaningful relationship.

The Director of Place and Enterprise confirmed that the Council had no control over the levying of business rates, only the discretionary relief that could be offered and how this could be used to stimulate growth in the County.

Simon McVikker, representing the Shropshire Business Board, added that the local Chamber of Commerce would be happy to assist with improving communication between the local authority and businesses.

RESOLVED:

- i. That Officers would work with Shropshire Business Board on a Business Rates model that helped attract new businesses, as well as ensure growth of existing businesses in the county.
- ii. That the Report be noted.

10 Brexit Task and Finish Group

Members noted the proposed Brexit Task and Finish Group Terms of Reference. The Scrutiny Officer explained that it was anticipated that the Government would publish a White Paper on Brexit in January 2018. It was anticipated that the work undertaken by the Task and Finish Group would enable the Council to contribute to the Government consultation in a meaningful way. Members observed that it would be useful to know how the European Union currently contributes to the economy in Shropshire and the impact Brexit was likely to have on agriculture, AONB, businesses and tourism in the county.

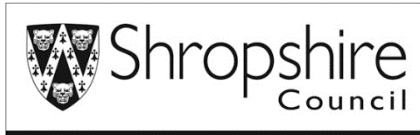
The Scrutiny Officer advised Members that the task and finish group required a clear focus and should report to Cabinet in a timely manner to enable contribution to an informed Council response to the Government White Paper.

RESOLVED:
that the Brexit Task and Finish Group be established.

Signed (Chairman)

Date:

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Committee and date

Place Overview Scrutiny
Committee – 7th December 2017

Item No

6

Responsible Officer George Candler, Director of Place & Enterprise
Email: george.candler@shropshire.gov.uk Telephone: 01743 255003

Apprenticeship Levy: “Upskill Shropshire”

Summary

This report provides an update on the work relating to the Apprenticeship Levy, which came into force from 6 April 2017 and follows on from the first report presented to the Growth and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee on 31 October 2016

Recommendations

1. Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the contents of this report and the work undertaken in response to the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy.

REPORT

1. Background

This report provides an update on the work that has been undertaken in relation to the Apprenticeship Levy, which came into effect on 6 April 2017, to ensure that the council maximises the use of the levy. The Levy is at a rate of 0.5% of the paybill and applies to organisations with a paybill of more than £3m per year. It is to be used for apprenticeship training and assessment.

“Upskill Shropshire” (the brand name) is governed by a Board with the Director of Place & Enterprise as Chair and representatives from all service areas across the council including schools.

Work commenced in the summer of 2016 to prepare for the levy which included procurement of providers to a framework, communication events, creating an application and selection process and creating a commercial offer which this report provides further detail on. It also outlines current performance, plans for the future to increase the number of apprentices within the council and work to support and collaborate with other organisations in Shropshire.

2. Progress Update

2.1 Procurement

In line with contract rules, we undertook a procurement exercise to engage Providers onto a Framework for Apprenticeship Training and have successfully engaged with 15 Providers (out of 19 that applied).

The Providers we have on our Framework are listed below:

County Training (part of Herefordshire and Ludlow College)
 Enabling Development Opportunities Ltd
 Entrust Support Services Limited
 In-Comm Business & Training Services Limited
 Lifetime Health and Fitness
 New College Telford (now Telford College)
 North Shropshire College
 PeoplePlus Ltd
 Phoenix Training Services (Midlands) Limited
 PM Training
 SBC Training Ltd
 Shrewsbury Colleges Group
 Smart Training and Recruitment Ltd
 University of Chester
 University of Wolverhampton

We have split the 600+ apprenticeship standards and frameworks available into 24 different categories listed below and have providers for each of the categories (up to a maximum of 5 providers for each category). The providers are a mix of both local and national and offer flexibility in the way they will deliver apprenticeships to meet the needs of the organisation as well as working with us to develop apprenticeships for the future:

Administration	Health and equality
Adult Social Care	Health and Safety
Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Care and Groundsmanship	Housing
Arts, Events and Production	HR
Cleaning, Estates and Facilities	IT, Media, Communications and Marketing
Coaching, Leadership, Management and Projects	Leisure
Compliance and Legal	Manufacturing and Warehousing
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	Public and Emergency Services
Customer Services	Retail and Enterprise
Driving and Vehicle Maintenance	Security
Finance	Teaching and Learning
Food and Drink (hospitality)	Youth, Children and early years

Being on the Framework does not guarantee work – when there is a requirement for an apprenticeship in a particular category there is mini-competition to determine the most appropriate provider. Mini-competition is assessed at the Upskill Board and the provider confirmed. If, following mini-competition, there is no suitable provider able to provide the required apprenticeship need then we have the ability to go direct to the National Register to find a suitable provider.

2.2 Communications

Communications and engagement with managers and staff started back in the autumn of 2016 with the formation of the Project Board and the Service Representatives cascading information back to the service areas. Staff Newsletters regularly provide information about Upskill Shropshire for staff.

In preparation for launch in April 2017, a series of events were held for staff where Providers on our Framework were invited to talk to staff about the specific apprenticeships they can offer.

Workshops were also held for Head Teachers and Business Managers in schools across the county.

Presentations have also taken place at the Chamber of Commerce Patrons Event in March and the Shropshire Business Board in July 2017.

Events are planned throughout for the remainder of 2017 and throughout 2018 to increase awareness of the benefits of undertaking an apprenticeship for individuals and the organisation.

2.3 Branding

Throughout the life of this project it became apparent that there are a lot of myths about apprenticeships for example, they are only for young, new recruits and are for low-level roles. As part of the communications we have tried to dispel some of these and focus on the fact that they can be used for the existing workforce, for any age of individual and that they can be equivalent to a Masters degree level. It was also important to emphasise that this will not only benefit Shropshire Council staff, but the community as a whole as we are able to support local organisations in using apprenticeships to upskill the workforce.

With this in mind, the brand of “Upskill Shropshire” was agreed and was felt to capture this message, deliberately not using the word ‘apprenticeships’ as this is the vehicle to get us to the outcome. All correspondence used makes reference to the fact that Upskill Shropshire is a part of Shropshire Council and not trading as a separate entity.

2.4 Application & Selection Process

All guidance for staff and information is hosted on the Intranet with guidance, eligibility criteria and additional information to support employees making decisions on whether an apprenticeship is right for them. The application process for an employee is electronic and requires a declaration that the application has support of the line manager.

Once received the applications are vetted to ensure that eligibility criteria is met and then passed to the relevant service area Directorate Management Team (via the HR Business Partner) for decision. Consideration is given to whether the apprenticeship is relevant to the role the individual is in and the benefit it will bring to the organisation. For schools, there is a Schools Selection Panel with representation from across our schools to decide on whether the application should be approved.

Once approved by the DMT or Schools Panel, the providers on the framework for the relevant category are contacted and invited to quote for delivery of the training. Once quotes are received these then go forward to the Upskill Board Selection Panel to undertake a review and final selection of provider(s).

2.5 Performance – take up of apprenticeships

Targets have been set by Directors for non-schools, in line with the government target of 2.3% by 2020, as follows:

2017/18		2018/19		2019/20	
%Target	Number	%Target	Number	%Target	Number
1.5%	51	2%	68	2.3%	79

April to September 2017 Performance:

Performance was reported to the Upskill Board in October and shows good progress against the targets set.

	Corporate	Schools
Number of Apprenticeship Applications	22	25
Levy Monies committed to date	£146,000	£39,500
Levy Monies forecast available 2017/18	£334,180	£273,010

Performance Measures also include equality information, provider performance and commercial performance.

2.6 Commercial Opportunities

We have undertaken commercial activity to generate income by offering levy and non-levy paying employers' support in using apprenticeships and how to maximise the use of the levy. The offer includes:

- **Access to Shropshire Council's Framework of Providers** – *vetted for their quality of provision, track record, flexibility in offer and interest in supporting Shropshire as a whole.*
- **Matching Service** – *similar to the council's application and selection process, offering a full matching service of need and provision from our framework of providers.*
- **upskill@shropshire.gov.uk** – *contacting us for advice/guidance on how the new rules around apprenticeships will work and signposting to useful information.*

We already have two Local Authorities signed up to using our framework and we have a number of discussions ongoing with both public and private sector organisations interested in our offer.

3.0 Strategy & Priorities for the Future

The Apprenticeship Levy is significant for the council at approximately £600k per year which will be taken out and held to draw down for training. It is important that we align this with the Workforce Strategy and identify priorities to maximise the use. Corporate objectives include providing opportunities for our Looked After Children (LAC), clients with learning difficulties (part of a national Pacesetter project) and supporting Managers and Leaders within the organisation. Directorate Management Teams have been drafting Workforce Plans which identify the future skills required of the workforce and using the apprenticeship levy to fund this where possible.

The Council has joined the national Apprenticeship Diversity Champions Network which commits to making a change to the diversity and inclusion of apprenticeships both internally and externally, improving social mobility while building a skilled, diverse workforce.

Further work is taking place with members of the Business Board to look at enhancing the reputation of apprenticeships and targeting skills development for the benefit of the county. We await further information from the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) on the ability to use 10% of our levy pot for other organisations in our supply chain from 2018, particularly if we are unable to use all of our levy pot within the allocated time.

4.0 Summary and Next Steps

A lot of work has been undertaken by the Board and Project Group since autumn 2016, which places Shropshire Council in a strong position to maximise the use of the levy pot, with performance so far showing good progress. However, information on the opportunities this presents needs to be regularly communicated in different ways if we are to engage the workforce about the benefits to them and the organisation as a whole.

List of background papers (This MUST be completed for all reports but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information) – None
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holders) Councillor Steve Charmley – Portfolio holder for Resources and Support Councillor Nic Laurens – Portfolio holder for Economic Growth
Local Member All local members

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