

Committee(s): Epping Forest & Commons Committee	Dated: 19/09/2024
Subject: Update on Apprenticeships	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	Corporate Plan Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse Engaged Communities • Providing Excellent Services
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of: Katie Stewart, Executive Director of Environment	For Information
Report author: Simon Glynn, Assistant Director, Culture and Projects, Natural Environment Division, Environment Department	

Summary

This report provides information on the corporate apprenticeship programme in relation to Epping Forest and the Commons. It also details the existing apprenticeship roles within these locations and provides information on the options available for new apprenticeships and for employee development through the corporate programme.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. Apprenticeships combine working and practical training in a job, with studying, to gain skills, knowledge and a recognised qualification. Apprenticeships involve working with experienced staff, learning job-specific skills and time for study during the work week. Anyone can undertake an apprenticeship, from new employees aged 16 or over to current employees, at any level.

2. Apprenticeships deliver significant benefits to society and the economy. They are a key enabler for lifelong learning, which can ensure that people and businesses have the skills they need to thrive within the 21st century economy.
3. Since the introduction of the apprenticeship levy in May 2017, 0.5% is deducted from monthly payroll for the sole use of training apprentices. This became a pivotal aspect of the City of London's commitment to bolstering skills development and workforce enhancement. As part of this commitment, the City Corporation pledged to fund 100 apprenticeships at any given time, ensuring that individuals undertaking apprenticeship programmes receive a fair salary reflective of the living standards in the capital. Specifically, apprentices at level 2 are remunerated at the London living wage, whilst those at level 3 receive London living wage plus 2%. The initiative not only aims to cultivate a skilled workforce but also underscores the City Corporation's dedication to supporting social mobility and inclusivity.
4. The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic precipitated unforeseen challenges for apprenticeships. Lockdown measures implemented to curb the spread of the virus mandated the suspension of new apprenticeship recruitment activities, accompanied by the extension of contracts for existing apprentices. This measure aimed to provide stability and continuity for the apprentices to facilitate the successful completion of their learning. Apprenticeship numbers fell significantly across most London Councils during and after lockdown.
5. Following the Target Operating Model, the organisation introduced a new Apprenticeship Manager who was tasked with enhancing the numbers of centrally funded apprenticeship roles. Moreover, in line with broader objectives to enhance skill levels across departments, the City Corporation has actively incorporated the utilisation of the levy fund for training of existing staff at all levels. This multifaceted approach underscores the recognition of the importance of continuous learning and upskilling employees.
6. Key steps included:
 - a. Key Stakeholder engagement - Connecting Communities, Urban Synergy, The Princes Trust, including collaborative working with Children & Community Services to support care leavers.
 - b. Ring fence 15% of centrally funded apprenticeships for care leaver apprentices.
 - c. Supporting young people with Information, Advice & Guidance (IAG) sessions and CV & application writing, and interview techniques.
 - d. Promotion of apprenticeship opportunities at local school career events.
 - e. Attending departmental meetings to raise awareness of the two apprenticeship workstreams.
 - f. Promoting vacancies in National Apprenticeship Week.
7. The work undertaken dramatically increased apprenticeships numbers in both centrally funded and levy funded areas and decreased levy returns.

Date	Dec 2022	Mar 2023	August 2023	Dec 2023	July 2024
Centrally funded number	40	46	62	66	105
Levy funded numbers	7	11	106	116	185
Levy Spent	£22,975	£36,352	£78,814	£88,063	£104,676
Levy returned to HMRC	£53,188	£41,650	Nil	Nil	Nil

Current Position

8. Within the Epping Forest and The Commons staffing structure there are a number of existing apprentices in the following roles:

Current Apprenticeships	Location
Apprentice Ranger L2 (Countryside Worker)	West Wickham & Coulsdon Commons
Apprentice Ranger L2 (Countryside Worker)	Burnham Beeches Estate Office
Business Administration Apprentice L3	Epping Forest
Apprentice Ranger L2 (Countryside Worker)* <i>* Started 10th September 2024</i>	West Wickham & Coulsdon Commons

9. The Commons and Epping Forest apprentices are undertaking 18-month placements. During the first half of their apprenticeship, apprentices attend an FE college for 6 block weeks, usually between October and June. This foundation year requires the apprentice to attend lectures, site visits and training sessions designed to achieve the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSB's) required under the standard.
10. The second half of their apprenticeship is effectively an industry work placement with The Commons where the KSBs are developed along with their portfolio of evidence.
11. The apprentices at Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common and at West Wickham & Coulsdon Common are mentored by a full-time member of staff who acts as the main point of contact between the college and the awarding body. During their placement apprentices work across a range of projects with all team members, building their skills and developing their knowledge.
12. Typically, their day-to-day work will include:
- Building and repairing a variety of field boundaries including fences, walls, and hedging.

- Carrying out livestock duties such as stock checking and helping Rangers with livestock responsibilities with their associated work – including with invisible fence grazing.
- Maintaining paths and public rights of way for walkers, cyclists, and horse riders.
- Managing and improving a wide variety of habitats from heathland, woodland, wood pasture to chalk grassland - helping to keep them in good condition by using a variety of appropriate techniques, including pruning, felling, or planting so native flora and fauna (plants and animals) can thrive.
- Working with volunteers and dealing with visitors through daily interaction, events and activities.
- Surveying/monitoring habitats and flora and fauna to understand species numbers and relate this to relevant habitat management practices – for example the Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common apprentice ran a Reptile survey at the Beeches March – June 2024.

13. The Business Administration apprentice at Epping Forest started with the City of London on 21st February 2024 and joined the May 2024 cohort of apprentices on their day release to the Guildhall.

14. The role is office based and principally revolves around administration, with a focus on learning office systems such as CRM and Sharepoint, as well as answering the phone and receiving visitors into reception.

15. The Epping apprentice has also had an opportunity to visit other City of London sites such as Burnham Beeches and the City Farm as well as attending events at the Guildhall and undertaking training such as Fire Safety, Managing Challenging Conversations, Presentation Skills and Beating Burnout.

Options for New Apprentices/Employee Development

16. For new apprentices, training at Levels 2 and 3 is centrally funded by the City of London Corporation. Apprenticeship training is funded via the apprenticeship levy. The following Environmental Pathway opportunities are available:

- a. Arborist - Level 2
- b. Horticulture or Landscape Operative - Level 2
- c. Horticulture or Landscape Supervisor - Level 3
- d. Countryside Workers - Level 2
- e. Forest Craft Person - Level 3

17. Employee development is also supported via the apprenticeship levy, offering opportunities to upskill current employees in Leadership and Management. The following pathways are available:

- a. Team Leader Supervisor - Level 3
- b. Operations/Department Manager - Level 5
- c. Senior Leader - Level 6

18. The above opportunities are designed to enhance skills and knowledge, supporting career progression and leadership development within the organisation.

19. In addition to these primary apprenticeships, further opportunities are available in various fields, including:
- a. Data Reporting Level 3
 - b. Marketing Level 3
 - c. Business Administration Level 3
20. The apprenticeship programme has been successfully implemented at Epping Forest and The Commons and it is planned to continue to use apprentices to create early career pathways, support employee development and to support the respective charity's objects and as well as Divisional, Departmental and Corporate priorities.

Key Data

21. Key data on the corporate apprenticeship programme is provided in paragraph 5 of this report.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications: The employment of apprentices at Epping Forest and the Commons supports the Corporation's ambition of employing up to 100 apprentices across the organisation at a time. The use of apprentices supports the respective charity's objects and as well as Divisional, Departmental and Corporate priorities.

Financial implications: Apprenticeship salaries at Levels 2 and 3 are paid by the Corporation from a contingency fund. The apprenticeship levy funds the cost of training only.

Resource implications: Staff time continues to be required from permanent employees to support apprentices in their roles.

Legal implications: In law, apprenticeships are defined within The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 (ASCLA).

Risk implications: None

Equalities implications: The process of recruiting apprentices and their subsequent roles within Epping Forest and the Commons complies with the public Sector Equality Duty 2010.

Climate implications: None

Security implications: None

Conclusion

22. There are four apprentices in post within the Epping Forest and The Commons staffing structure, fulfilling a range of roles and responsibilities.
23. The apprenticeship programme has been successfully implemented at Epping Forest and The Commons and it is planned to continue to use apprentices to create early career pathways, support employee development and to support the

respective charity's objects and as well as Divisional, Departmental and Corporate priorities.

Appendices

- None

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