

27 October, 2016

LLANELLI RURAL COUNCIL

Minute Nos: 270 – 275

At a Meeting of the **LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE** of the Llanelli Rural Council held at the Council Chamber, Vauxhall Buildings, Vauxhall, Llanelli, on Thursday, 26 October, 2016 at 4.45 p.m.

Present: Cllr. M. V. Davies (Chairman)

Cllrs.

S. L. Davies R. E. Evans
T. Devichand J. S. Phillips
W. V. Thomas

270. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. S. M. Donoghue (Cllr. S. L. Davies deputising) and Cllr. C. A. Rees.

271. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

272. TRANSPORT APPRENTICESHIPS AND THE NATIONAL LOGISTICS ACADEMY

The Chairman welcomed Mrs Jessica Jones, Qualification Coordinator to the meeting and invited her to address Members. Thereupon the Qualification Coordinator outlined the requirements and content of what a Transport Apprenticeship entailed and informed Members about the three levels of Apprenticeship on offer namely Foundation (Level 2), Apprenticeship (Level 3) and Higher Apprenticeship (Level 4 or 5).

In terms of transport delivery the department only offered Foundation (Level 2) and Apprenticeship (Level 3). She then referred to Apprenticeship priorities and the funding sheet circulated with the agenda and stated that Logistics was a priority sector and funding was available to learners aged 16 to 19, and aged 20+ if employed within current role for no more than 12 months.

Members were then informed about which Transport Apprenticeship routes were available and that a learner could progress from one Apprenticeship pathway onto another, and that any prior attainment wouldn't need to be repeated.

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The Qualification Coordinator then referred to the Careers Wales Apprenticeship Matching Service and the department was currently advertising and managing apprenticeship vacancies on this system on behalf of three employers.

Members were informed that LRC Training was now a member of the National Logistics Academy. As a Member the Council had exclusive territory for delivering Transport Apprenticeships in South Wales. Furthermore, the department had been approached to deliver a presentation on Logistics Apprenticeships and Management Apprenticeships at the United Road Transport Union Event in November. This was good news.

Following the report there was a question and answer session, where Members suggested that the Training Department could look at branching out into providing an apprenticeship framework to cater for patient transport drivers. The Qualification Coordinator agreed to look into this possibility.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

273. APPRENTICESHIPS IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

The Chairman welcomed Mrs Julie O'Connell, Senior Assessor to the meeting and invited her to address Members. Thereupon, the Senior Assessor reiterated there were three strands to the Apprenticeship programme, namely Foundation Apprenticeship (Level 2), Apprenticeship (Level 3) and Higher Apprenticeship (Level 4).

The Business Administration qualification was offered at all three levels i.e. levels 2, 3 & 4; Customer Service was offered at levels 2 & 3 only. Those undertaking a level 2 qualification had 12 months to achieve a full framework of learning activities; at level 3 a period of 16 months was given; whereas level 4 learners were given up to 24 months to complete the framework of activities.

Members were informed the Apprenticeship frameworks consisted of the following:

- NVQ Diploma (combined knowledge and competence qualification) at the appropriate level
- Essential Skills qualifications in Application of Number, Communication and Digital literacy at the appropriate level
- Employment Rights and Responsibilities (ERR) workbook

Furthermore the Higher Apprenticeship in Business Administration also required learners to undertake:

- Level 4 Diploma in Business Administration (knowledge-based qualification in addition to the NVQ).

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The Senior Assessor then referred to the apprenticeship priorities. Learners aged 16-19 years old were eligible for all apprenticeships. However, only 10% of the contract could be used to support learners aged 20+ within non-priority sectors which currently included Business Administration and Customer Service although there were no restrictions to the Higher Apprenticeships which were available to all age groups and all sectors.

The maximum funding available for the Higher Apprenticeship in Business Administration equated to £3,701, this compared to £3,887 for a Foundation Apprenticeship in the same occupational route giving a difference of £186. This was not much of an incentive to deliver the higher level qualification.

However, there was an even greater difference of £209 between the Level 4 Higher Apprenticeship in Business Administration and the Level 3 Apprenticeship, which was worth £3,910 despite the difference in the minimum required Guided Learning Hours (GLH), which was far greater.

A business case had been put forward through Skills Academy Wales to the Welsh Government to review the funding based on delivery costs and timeframe (to which Minute No. 274 below refers).

Given that Business Administration and Customer Service fell within the non-priority sectors, it was highly likely that the Welsh Government would cease funding these apprenticeships in the near future. To remain a sustainable training organisation, there was a need to look at diversifying training provision by looking at other occupational areas that could be delivered based on the knowledge and expertise of existing staff. Suggested qualifications that could be offered include:

- Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools (centre approval already in place)
- Social Media & Digital Marketing
- Management and Leadership

The Senior Assessor then referred to the Apprenticeship Levy on larger employers to be introduced in April 2017. It would put control of apprenticeship funding in the hands of employers and would encourage employers to invest in apprentices. This was good news.

The levy would be set at a rate of 0.5% of an employer's pay bill. Each employer would receive an allowance of £15,000 to offset against their levy payment, meaning the levy would only be paid on any bill in excess of £3 million and less than 2% of UK employers would pay it based on a business case analysis of the additional time commitment needed to deliver the qualification. All employers who do not pay the levy would be able to access the government support for Apprenticeships.

Following the report there was a general question and answer session during which the issues of Welsh Government funding and charges were raised.

RESOLVED that the information be noted and to await further news and developments over the future funding implications for the priority and non-priority sectors.

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274. APPLICATION FOR INCREASED FUNDING FOR THE BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION LEVEL 4 APPRENTICESHIP FRAMEWORK

Further to Minute No. 273 above, the Training Manager reported that the Training Department had applied to Welsh Government to increase funding for Business Administration Level 4 Apprenticeship Framework. Members were guided through the business case document following which it was

RESOLVED that the information be noted and to await a response from Welsh Government.

275. WORK BASED LEARNING PROGRAMMES

(1) Prior Information Notice of the New Employability and Apprenticeship Framework

Members were informed that the Welsh Government Skills, Higher Education and Lifelong Learning (SHELL) Group wanted to provide advance notice of their intention to provide a Framework to deliver Employability and Apprenticeship programmes for the period April 2018-March 2022.

The Training Manager stated the reason for the prior notification was to secure market engagement in the future development of the programme prior to the issue of a contract notice. It was intended that the Framework would be split into four Lots:

Lot 1 – Apprenticeship Programme

Lot 2 – All-Age Employability Programme

Lot 3 – An assessment, brokerage referral and advice service or function

Lot 4 – Innovative Lot

The Training Manager then commented on each of the Lots of interest to the Council. For Lot 1 the current apprenticeship provider network consisted of 19 providers including consortia. Welsh Government believed that the current size of the network was appropriate to deliver this service and would be seeking a network of a similar size going forward. He stated the Council could take confidence from this as a current provider. In so far as Lot 2 was concerned it was a concern to discover that engagement type activity aimed at young people through the current Traineeship programme would not be provided through the All-age employability programme and that it was envisaged that the successful bidders for this particular Lot would be offered on a regional basis with only two providers per region. This was something to watch. Following discussion it was

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

(2) Regional Employment and Skills Plan – South West and Mid Wales

Members were informed about the Employment and Skills Plan for the South West and Mid Wales region. The Plan had been developed in collaboration with employers from across the region and sets out the priorities required to address the skills deficit and improve employment in the area. It was hoped that the Plan would transform the future economic success of the region through the delivery of key transformation projects. This would be achieved through:

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- Improved employer engagement;
- Improving educational attainment;
- Increasing skills in line with the aspirational projects.

The Training Manager stated that the Training Department was now in a position to respond to Welsh Government about the Skills Plan.

Arising out of discussion, Members suggested that perhaps some successful learners who obtained diplomas could come to a future Committee meeting to share their success and that the Training Department should review its general publicity arrangements about its success rates in helping people into employment.

Following discussion it was

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

FURTHER RESOLVED that a review of the Training Department's publicity arrangements surrounding success stories and employment opportunities be conducted as soon as practicable.

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The Meeting concluded at 5.35 p.m.
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The afore-mentioned Minutes were declared to be a true record of the proceedings and signed by the Chairman presiding thereat and were, on 8 November, 2016, adopted by the Council.