

## Report to Cabinet

**Subject:** Encouraging employment opportunities within Gedling through the use and development of apprenticeships, work experience and internships

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### Wards Affected

Borough-wide

### Purpose

To inform Cabinet of the practical measures agreed by the Senior Leadership Team to encourage and develop opportunities for apprenticeships, internships and work experience provision within and beyond the organisation.

### Key Decision

This is not a Key Decision

### Background

- 1.1 Aware of the relatively high rate of youth unemployment within the Borough, Senior Leadership Team has considered the practical measures that might be taken by the organisation to help improve the employment prospects of this group of local people.
- 1.2 Although many of the measures agreed centred around the creation of different types of placement within the Council itself, it was acknowledged that the Council had a wider community leadership role to play, encouraging others to develop the skills, knowledge and experience of local young people in order for them to be able to compete more effectively in the wider job market, including employment in the private sector.

This paper summarises the agreed measures to be implemented.

### Proposal

2 The following measures were agreed for implementation:

Apprenticeships:

That local colleges will be supported and closer working relationships developed, particularly where this may potentially lead to an increased Further Education presence within the Borough.

In order to maximise funding and flexibility and to strengthen ties with local colleges, for the use of apprentices within the Council, a model will normally be adopted which relies on the employment of the apprentice by an agency (Apprentice Training Agency) associated with the local college.

At every opportunity when suitable vacancies occur within the Council, a challenge will be made to explore whether an arrangement to place an apprentice or intern might be appropriate. Senior Leadership Team will ensure that all Service Managers understand and apply this challenge process.

Where possible, the cost of apprentices should be met from departmental budgets, for example from vacancy savings, or through creative funding, for example through partnership with other agencies. Where it is felt that the placement of an apprentice would be of value to the business and the individual, but such funding is not available in whole or part, up to £40,000 will be set aside as a fund from which services might draw.

The value of partnerships and joint working is recognised. Corporate Directors and Service Managers should use the contacts they build with other partners, agencies and employers to identify creative ways to promote the use of apprentices within the Council and within other organisations. This may take the form, say, of the joint funding of apprentices, or of accessing funding from partners to pay for an apprentice to be placed within the Council but carrying out work of importance to that partner.

Senior Leadership Team recognised that the Council is well-placed to assist small businesses in direct and practical ways to set up and maintain their own apprentice arrangements. It is proposed that the Economic Development Officer, working with South Notts College initially will identify cases where local small businesses might be experiencing difficulties in taking on apprentices and working to ease blockages. It is proposed that £20,000 (out of the total £60,000 set aside) is used as a fund to be drawn on to help in cases where finance is one of the blockages.

In order to instil ownership of such a programme, as part of this year's service planning process, Senior Leadership Team will ensure that each of their Service Managers includes in their plan, a target for the creation of one apprenticeship. Clearly in smaller service teams this will be an ambitious target.

### Work experience:

Work experience can mean a number of different things. Primary focus will be on meaningful provision of experience for young unemployed people of working age, but shorter periods of work experience for younger school-age students will also be supported where possible. Although there are incidental expenses that may arise within departments who provide such placement opportunities, these will be small.

South Notts College has developed a framework to provide short, say four-week blocks, work experience placements to young people who may not yet be “work ready” and as such will not be eligible for placement onto apprenticeship programmes. Senior Leadership Team will ensure that such placement opportunities are identified within the Council in order to give people in this particular group the best chance of gaining a place on an apprenticeship. This measure has the potential to have high impact on a substantial number of young people and strongly evidences ways in which partnership working can be effective.

In order to instil ownership of such a programme, as part of this year’s service planning process, Senior Leadership Team will ensure that each of their Service Managers includes in their plan, a target for the creation of one work experience placement of some kind. Clearly in smaller service teams this will be an ambitious target.

### Internships:

Internships are defined in a range of ways by different organisations. Some pay a salary, some do not; for some the placement is for a number of weeks, for others up to a year or more.

Senior Leadership Team has determined that initially, one internship will be established for a period of six months within the Legal Services Team. This paid placement (pay Band 1) will be funded from the resources identified in paragraph 4.

### Summary and other issues

The above measures have been carefully considered by Senior Leadership Team and are felt to be practical, achievable within identified resources, and meaningful both to the Council and to participants.

In order to sustain such arrangements, as part of the budget planning process, Senior Leadership team will also place a bid for £20,000 to be included as an annual, ongoing fund from which to draw. This fund may be used both for internal apprentice placements and to support small private business to take on apprentices.

Finally, Senior Leadership Team asked that policy be drafted and processed through the normal consultation framework of the Council to allow, in the first instance, the advertisement of all permanent contracted posts of at least 16 hours per week (the minimum number of hours for which an apprenticeship may be established) that are graded within pay Bands 1-3, to be advertised internally in the first instance and only open to current apprentices and interns being hosted by the Council. The purpose of this policy would be to help support trainees into permanent work whilst also maximising the training investment to the Council. This policy development will be processed through the Joint Consultative and Safety, and Appointments and Conditions of Service Committees in due course and following union consultation.

## **Alternative Options**

- 3 Not developing the measures. This option would do nothing to support the creation of work experience and employment opportunities for young people in the Borough.

## **Financial implications**

- 4.1 Finance of approximately £60,000 from the Council's earmarked Community and Crime Reserve had been provisionally identified to contribute towards tackling unemployment within the Borough, particularly in the 16-24 age group. As part of the discussion, consideration was given to the most effective ways of using financial resource to greatest advantage and these are identified in the summary of measures to be implemented.
- 4.2 Subject to Cabinet approving this report funds will be drawn down from the reserve as required, up to the total sum of £60,000, and will be reported to Members through the normal quarterly performance monitoring report.

## **Appendices**

- 5 None

## **Background Papers**

- 6 None identified

## **Recommendations**

Members are **recommended** to approve this report of the Senior Leadership Team for implementation.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

- 7 To ask for Cabinet approval to encourage and develop opportunities for apprenticeships, internships and work experience provision within and beyond the organisation.