

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

**EXECUTIVE
4 JULY 2012**

APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report sets out the proposals regarding the development and implementation of an Apprenticeship Scheme for Exeter City Council and requires a decision from Executive on the funding in order to take forward the proposal.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 As part of its commitment to supporting young people in the local community the Council intends to introduce an Apprenticeship Scheme initially for 16 – 18 year olds. The Council has in the past supported similar schemes but has not actively continued with the employment of apprentices in the last 2/3 years. The government support for apprenticeships has developed within that time and there is now a much higher level of support, including some funding, for these schemes.
- 2.2 The initial scheme is targeted at school leavers as this will enable us to link with the local colleges who provide a high level of training support and also help with the recruitment process to access the best students. It is proposed to run the scheme with this age group for about 9 months. Once the administration and operation of the scheme has been tested consideration can be given to including older unemployed workers referred from other agencies (e.g. Job Centre+ etc) on to the scheme. This is a planned strategy and intended to enable the Council to test the scheme and also manage the initial cost implications which will increase significantly when including 19 – 24 year olds on the scheme. Also it is likely that older workers will require some additional support in basic literacy and numeracy skills which will present a further cost to the Council in supporting this need.
- 2.3 An important key purpose for an Apprenticeship Scheme is part of a long term strategy on workforce growth and skills development in targeted areas to meet the needs of succession planning and the overall corporate workforce strategy.

3. COMMITMENT

- 3.1 A pre-requisite for a successful apprenticeship programme is clarity about the role that apprentices play within the organisation and how they will be supported. The apprenticeship is the way to grow an engaged, committed workforce that has the right skills to deliver high quality services. This can be linked directly with succession planning in looking towards organisational need in 3 – 5 years time and is also a great way to transfer the skills of older workers who make good supervisors and mentors, to a new workforce. All this will support capacity building for the future of the Council.
- 3.2 There is requirement for a high level of commitment across the organisation to deliver a successful apprenticeship scheme. Senior management, line managers, the existing workforce and the trades unions all need to support the scheme to ensure success. This is particularly critical in the current economic and organisational climate where many staff see their own roles either at risk of redundancy or having to substantially change methods and attitudes to work. The

apprenticeships must therefore be embedded within the organisation in a way which clearly illustrates and supports the need to develop organisational capacity to deliver the skills, knowledge and attitudes required for the workforce of the future.

- 3.3 Each apprentice will require a nominated supervisor who will be responsible for ensuring that the ECC training plan is delivered, and all apprenticeships should be sponsored by a nominated senior manager. The whole scheme will be supported by the L&D officer in the HR unit and will meet on a regular basis as a group. This support is in addition to the support the apprentice will receive from their nominated college supervisor. This will amount to a considerable time commitment over up to 2 years for each participating unit and must be considered and agreed prior to participation in the scheme.

4. PROPOSAL

- 4.1 Initially it is proposed to recruit 4 – 6 apprentices to start in September. Areas for placement will be agreed on the basis of suitable courses offered by the local colleges and request within the units for inclusion in the initial roll-out of the scheme.
- 4.2 In order to establish and maintain a high quality scheme it has been decided that off site training and learning will be provided only by local colleges. This keeps the scheme within the local community and also ensures that the Council receives high quality services from the learning provider. Our own experience within the Council, together with substantial evidence has shown that many private companies offering support to apprenticeship training do not consistently provide quality services and are not consistently supportive to organisational needs.
- 4.3 For the initial roll-out of this scheme we are linking with Exeter College, Bicton College and Plymouth School of Art to provide our learning and training support.
- 4.4 Apprenticeships will be offered for a maximum of 2 years (they normally take 12 – 24 months) with no guarantee of a post at the end of the apprenticeship. However the Council does need to consider this aspect of the apprenticeship carefully as there will be a cost to supporting apprenticeships and the whole aspect of succession and workforce planning must be taken into account if the Council is to achieve real value from this scheme.
- 4.5 The apprentices will be employees of the Council and it is recommended, in line with a number of neighbouring authorities that the posts are within the HR unit. Each apprentice post will have a job description and learning and training plan, devised and agreed in conjunction with the college, to clearly determine work and learning parameters and needs.

5 COSTS

- 5.1 A central budget needs to be created to implement the initial stages of the scheme.
- 5.2 A sum of £50,000 will enable the Council to support up to 6 apprentices for one year from September 2012. This amount will cover salary cost for the individuals and as we are looking at employing younger apprentices in the first instance (16 -18 year olds) training costs will be met through government funding.

6. CONCLUSION

Executive are asked to consider the report and agree that a budget of £50,000 should be allocated to this scheme.

Mark Parkinson
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