

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

**REGENERATION
CABINET MEMBER**

ACTION STATION NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To outline proposals for the delivery of the Council's Apprenticeship Programme from September 2015.
- 1.2 To outline proposals for the creation of an Action Station in North Lincolnshire that will enhance the Council's enabling role and provide a more coordinated approach to raising aspirations, employment and skills across North Lincolnshire.
- 1.3 To seek approval for the creation of four new posts as part of the above activity.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The proportion of the working age population of North Lincolnshire that is economically active (79.5%) remains consistently high compared to regional and national levels. Unemployment rates have reduced significantly over recent years, with a 60% decrease recorded since 2011.
- 2.2 Despite this some key challenges and barriers to employment continue to affect some sectors of the population. The council has successfully addressed some of these issues through a number of initiatives including:
 - The development of the Community Investment Partnership (CIP).
 - The Council's Apprenticeship Programme which will see another 11 apprentices start in roles across the Council in April 2015.
 - Programmes such as Springboard designed to support young people into employment or training.
 - Events such as the 40+ options event held recently aimed at addressing the needs of particular groups of people.
- 2.3 Building upon these successes, it is felt that the council's enabling role needs strengthening to fully address the issues and barriers to employment in a cohesive, coordinated way. We will aim to utilise the skills, resources and experience from a range of stakeholders and partner organisations.
- 2.4 The proposal for the delivery of this enhanced enabling role includes three specific strands.

2.4.1 **Strand 1:** The creation of an 'Action Station' intended to provide a one-stop shop for employment and skills information in North Lincolnshire. Managed under the CIP, the Action Station will serve two primary functions:

1. To enable the provision of coordinated employment and skills activity across North Lincolnshire involving all partners and ensuring seamless provision for North Lincolnshire residents. This will include assessment and signposting services to ensure residents are given the most appropriate pathway opportunities for their employment and skills needs.
2. To provide a highly visible and accessible presence located within the town centre, and through a mobile 'Action Station', delivering a range of activities, training and events. The mobile Action Station function will be delivered using the Council's existing mobile consultation vehicle. The vehicle requires some refurbishment and improvements to mobile technology to be fit for purpose.

2.4.2 It is important to note that the Action Station is not intended to replace or duplicate existing skills and training activity, but to coordinate, signpost and provide an alternative platform for this existing activity.

2.4.3 The proposal involves creating an Action Station team consisting of an Action Station Manager (anticipated Grade 8) and an Action Station Support Officer (anticipated Grade 3). The team will provide the overall management and administration for the town centre site, ensuring staffing levels are adequate and that activities and events are fully supported. They will also provide a coordinating role between different agencies and develop an online presence available to both providers and residents.

2.4.4 **Strand 2:** In line with the delivery of the Action Station, it is proposed that the council provides a new 'Grow Your Own' Apprenticeship Programme from September 2015 which will broaden the offer and address employment and skills issues within key sectors and target groups. This offer will include:

1. **Higher Apprenticeships.** Higher apprenticeships (HAs) are the best combination of on the job training and employees studying for a higher level qualification to provide the qualified and motivated workforce in key professional posts which the council has experienced difficulties recruiting. HAs could be offered in areas such as planning, social work, construction, the built environment and finance.
2. **Level 2 Apprenticeships.** This will be a continuation of the current programme and will offer apprenticeships for 16-18 year olds in areas such as Highways, IT, Sport and Leisure, Grounds Maintenance and General Administration.

3. **Traineeships.** Traineeships offer work experience opportunities for young people who may not yet be ready or able to undertake an apprenticeship. Although unpaid, Trainees are able to access a supported learning package to complement the work experience element of the scheme.
4. **Supported Internships.** Supported Internships are one type of study programme specifically aimed at young people aged 16 to 24 who have a statement of special educational needs, a Learning Difficulty Assessment, or an EHC plan, who want to move into employment and need extra support to do so. These would be delivered through John Leggott College and their Supported Internship Programme with the Council offering appropriate placements.
5. **Graduate Support.** This will take the form of Graduate Internships for which funding has already been secured from the Humber LEP to deliver 12 Internships in SMEs, and support targeted at graduates to enable them to successfully apply for existing council vacancies.

2.4.5 In addition to this, strand 2 includes the creation of an Education Regeneration Officer post (anticipated Grade 7) to oversee delivery of the suggested apprenticeship programme and provide a resource to manage the link between the Community Investment Partnership and Education in North Lincolnshire including the Education and Economic Engagement Partnership (EEEP). The proposed post replaces the existing role of the Apprenticeship Support Officer.

2.4.6 The three posts identified above will be subject to the job evaluation process.

2.4.7 **Strand 3:** The DWP Flexible Support Fund has provided funding to create a 40+ Progression Advisor post (anticipated grade 6) to support unemployed residents aged 40+ yrs into employment or training.

2.4.8 Building upon the success of the Springboard Programme and other initiatives, which supports unemployed young people, this post will provide targeted and specific support to older people who often have very specific needs.

2.4.9 A 40+ Options event, organised by the CIP was recently held at the Job Centre in Scunthorpe. The success of this event, at which hundreds of people obtained employment and training advice, highlighted the need for this post which is supported by Job Centre Plus staff.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 The recommendation is for the Cabinet Member to approve the creation of the 'Action Station North Lincolnshire' and changes to the council's apprenticeship offer. The Cabinet Member is also asked to approve the establishment of the following four posts:

- Action Station Manager (anticipated Grade 8)
- Action Station Support Officer (anticipated Grade 3)
- Education Regeneration Officer (anticipated Grade 7)
- 40+ Progression Advisor (Grade 6)

3.2 The proposal is that the posts in question will be established on a fixed term basis for two years, with the exception of the 40+ Progression Advisor post, that will be established on a fixed term basis for one year.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

4.1 At present, there is no central point of contact for residents who are looking for information and guidance on skills and employment and the range of options available to them.

4.2 Partner organisations and training providers working across all ages and sectors of the population have told us that bringing this information together into one place will not only help them in their work, but will help them deliver a much improved service and as such, better outcomes for clients.

4.3 The CIP has a proven track record of delivering coordinated partnership education and skills activity in North Lincolnshire. This includes successfully managing the Springboard and Talent Match projects, delivering a range of events and working in partnership on programmes such as Catzero. It is felt that extending this partnership approach to the creation of the Action Station will provide the best possible experience for residents looking to access employment and skills support, while enabling all partners to utilise their resources in the most effective way.

4.4 Although the proposed Action Station team will deal with the day to day management of the Action Station, it is anticipated that partners will take joint responsibility for staffing the town centre station and will offer suitably qualified staff to undertake the assessment and signposting roles that are central to this vision.

4.5 In addition, it is felt that the current council apprenticeship provision needs updating in order to provide a wider offer to meet the changing needs of both the council and applicants.

4.6 Although Level 2 apprenticeships will remain an important element of the apprenticeship programme, by offering different opportunities such as higher apprenticeships, the council will benefit from workforce development in more professional roles, and those which are harder to recruit to.

4.7 While there are a number of schemes aimed at addressing youth unemployment such as Springboard and Talent Match, there is a significant gap in provision for intensive, flexible support for older claimants. The proposal to create a 40+ Progression Advisor will provide a more sustainable and targeted approach to addressing the barriers and root causes of sustained long-term unemployment amongst this client group.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

5.1 Financial

5.1.1 Appendix one sets out full costings for the two year Apprenticeship and Action Station Programme.

5.1.2 The existing Apprenticeship Programme Budget (SRS107) will be utilised to fund the work outlined in this report. The budget for 15/16 is £297,000.

5.1.3 In addition, the DWP Flexible Support Funding Grant of £33,900 will fund the work of the 40+ Progression Advisor.

5.1.4 The report seeks permission for the establishment of the following posts:

- 1) Action Station Manager
- 2) Action Station Assistant
- 3) Education Regeneration Officer
- 4) 40+ Progression Advisor

5.1.5 The annual cost of creating the four posts in question based upon their assumed grades amounts to £115,534 at salary mid-point with on-costs of 29.5%. These costs will be met as follows:

- Contribution from the deletion of the existing post of Apprenticeship Support Officer (Grade 3): £18,265
- Contribution from the use of DWP Flexible Support Funding: £33,900
- Contribution from the People directorate of 50% of the cost of the Education Regeneration Officer post: £16,207
- Contribution from the existing Apprenticeship Programme budgets: £47,162.

5.2 Staffing

5.2.1 The proposal is for an increase to the staffing establishment of the four posts detailed in paragraph 3.1 above and shown in appendix 2 attached on a fixed term basis.

5.3 Property

5.3.1 The intention is to locate the Action Station in Scunthorpe town Centre. We will firstly explore the potential to make use of existing council owned premises for these purposes. Alternatively, we will explore sharing premises with partners. As a last resort, we may have to lease in some space from a third party. We anticipate that this might cost £8,000 per annum. Some modifications of the premises used to locate the Action Station are also likely to prove necessary and we anticipate costs of up to £40,000 for these purposes. We will bring forward a further report to confirm the position on these matters.

5.4 IT

5.4.1 IT support will be required for the additional staff, together with IT provision within the Town Centre premises.

6. **OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)**

6.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) was completed covering this initiative with no negative issues emerging. The IIA identified that the proposals will have a positive impact on some sectors of the population particularly related to age and disability as they will enable the needs of these residents to be better addressed.

7. **OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED**

7.1 Trade unions were consulted on this matter. Although a number of points of clarification were raised and answered, there were no objections made to the proposal.

8. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 That the Cabinet Member approves the creation of the Action Station for North Lincolnshire, and changes to the Council's apprenticeship programme.

8.2 That the Cabinet Member approves the establishment of the following fixed term posts:

- Action Station Manager (anticipated Grade 8) – two year fixed term
- Action Station Support Officer (anticipated Grade 3) – two year fixed term
- Education Regeneration Officer (anticipated Grade 7) – two year fixed term
- 40+ Progression Advisor (anticipated Grade 6) – one year fixed term

8.3 That the Cabinet Member authorises the Director of Places to approve the final grades of the new posts upon completion of the job evaluation process.

DIRECTOR OF PLACES

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report: None

Appendix One

Grow Your Own Apprenticeship Programme and Action Station North Lincolnshire Costings

ACTIVITY	15/16	16/17
Existing Approved Budget (SRS107)	330,900*	297,000
Current apprentices	37,070	
April 15 apprenticeship cohort committed	52,377	
Action Station		
Annual lease costs of town centre property	8,000	8,000
Refit and refurb of property and Mobile Action Station (consultation vehicle) inc IT and electronic displays	40,000	0
Action Station Manager (anticipated grade 8) – two year fixed term)	38,139	38,139
Action Station Support Officer (anticipated grade 3) – two year fixed term)	18,265	18,265
Apprenticeship Programme		
Higher Apprenticeships 4 from September 15 Additional 4 in April 16 (min 2 year programme)	30,000 (6 months costs)	120,000
Level 2 Apprenticeships 5 from September 15 10 from April 2016	11,904	47,616
Traineeships	Existing staff resource	Existing Staff Resource
Supported Internships	Existing staff resource	Existing staff resource
Graduate Support	Existing staff resource	Existing staff resource
Education Regeneration Officer; replacing grade 3 apprenticeship support officer. Grade 7, two year fixed term role. 50% costs from People's Service	16,207	16,207
DWP Flexible Support Funding		
Grade 6 40+ Progression Advisor	26,716	
Resource costs IT, Mileage Training e.t.c	7,184	
TOTAL	285,862	248,227
BUDGET REMAINING	45,038	48,773

- Includes DWP Flexible Support Fund grant of £33,900

Appendix Two

