

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

**CORPORATE SERVICES
CABINET MEMBER**

HIGHWAYS AND PLANNING APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To consider a training scheme for Civil Engineering Apprentices in the Highways and Planning Service.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 An apprenticeship scheme was adopted by the Highways Alliance in 2008. A decision for funding was approved by the council at the Corporate Services Cabinet member meeting on 31 December 2008 (Minute 213 (80)).
- 2.2 This scheme, which is a partnership between Clugston Construction, Pell Frischmann, the council and North Lindsey College, has been very successful, recognised nationally and two of the apprentices have achieved awards for excellence.
- 2.3 The scheme currently has six apprentices, three of whom will complete the programme this summer.
- 2.4 Offers of employment are being considered by Clugston Construction and Pell Frischmann, but the council is unable to recruit as no vacancy exists in the current establishment. This would mean one of the Apprentices would be unsuccessful in securing any long term career opportunity.
- 2.5 In order to support and develop young people in Civil Engineering, it is proposed to adopt an apprenticeship scheme to continue the work of the Alliance and provide additional training and academic opportunity for one apprentice per year as they 'fall out' of the Alliance arrangement.
- 2.6 The scheme would entail an agreed programme covering a number of engineering disciplines across the service area to suit the apprentice's skills and career aspirations.

- 2.7 Each apprentice would be on the scheme for a maximum of three years, which would enable them to achieve a higher academic qualification (HNC) and develop more experience.
- 2.8 At the end of the period, the apprentice would need to explore permanent employment with the council or other suitable organisations.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 To put in place an apprenticeship scheme to provide continued training for the Highways Alliance apprentices following their initial two year period.
- 3.2 Not to put in place any arrangements for the current apprentices as they complete the Highways Alliance Scheme.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

4.1 Approving the Highways and Planning Apprenticeship Scheme will enable young people to continue their training and qualifications in the civil engineering discipline and provide valuable succession planning for the profession. In addition the scheme will provide a valuable resource to help with new service pressures and legislation such as flooding.

4.2 The cost of establishing the apprentice scheme will increase over the next few years until a maximum of 3 apprentice posts are established within the service by 2013/14. It is anticipated that the apprentice posts will be on or around grade 5. If this is the case then the approximate costs (including on costs) will be:

2010/11	£11,500
2011/12	£ 34,500
2012/13	£ 57,500
2013/14 +	£ 69,000

4.3 To fund these costs the service is proposing to utilise savings from flexible retirement agreements. Already in 2010/11 the service has entered into four such arrangements that will result in salary savings of £29,600. Enough to fund nearly the first two years of the apprenticeship scheme. The likely prospect of similar arrangements being entered into in future years allows the service to be confident in meeting the full cost of the scheme by 2013/14.

4.4 The service is keen to demonstrate that the savings that are made through flexible retirement, once backfilling arrangements have been taken into account, are channelled into developing the workforce. By funding the apprentice scheme in this way very clear links between flexible retirement and staff investment are established, and recommended as good practise to other services and organisations.

- 4.5 Not approving the scheme would mean that the investment in the Alliance apprentices will cease when they complete the scheme and would mean that no employment is available for them.

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

5.1 Finance

5.1.1 The scheme is estimated at £11.5k for the first year 2010/11, £34.5k for 2011/12 and eventually when fully established in 2013/14 £69k.

5.1.2 It is acknowledged that flexible retirement arrangements are possibly not quite as permanent as other posts as eventually there will be a need consider these arrangements on the eventual full retirement of the member of staff involved, with perhaps cost implications. The same however can be suggested for apprentice posts as the apprentices will eventually leave and move into non-apprentice positions, thereby generating savings.

5.1.3 Through careful management we believe the apprenticeship scheme can be funded and will introduce more resources into our workforce, as well as help with other workforce pressures around succession planning and staff development.

5.1.4 However, continuation of the scheme beyond year one will be dependant on the future availability of funding and this will be reviewed as part of each year's budget setting process.

5.2 Staffing

5.2.1 An additional three posts will be added to the establishment, one per year over the next three years. This resource will help relieve current pressures within the service due to the extra workload imposed by new legislation etc.

5.2.2 The posts will enable better succession planning in the future.

6. **OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY, SECTION 17 - CRIME AND DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER)**

6.1 There are no other implications associated with this report.

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The proposal has been discussed internally with the Service Director of Human Resources and Head of Organisational Development, who fully support the initiative and consider this could be a model for broader development within the council.
- 7.2 The full-time officials of the relevant trade unions have been sent a copy of the report and no responses have been received from them.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That the proposal to adopt the Apprenticeship Scheme in Highways and Planning be approved.

SERVICE DIRECTOR HIGHWAYS AND PLANNING

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report: Nil