

**REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR - CUSTOMERS AND HUMAN
RESOURCES****PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE COUNCIL'S GRADUATE DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMME****Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek approval for a new approach to graduate traineeships to better meet organisational and departmental needs and to attract and retain young people in the workforce more effectively.

Information**Background**

2. Since 2009 the County Council has been part of the National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP), a national scheme administered by the Local Government Association (LGA) to attract graduates into local government and to develop in them broad leadership and management capabilities. During that time the Council has recruited and employed 24 graduates as National Management Trainees (NMTs) on two year fixed-term contracts of which there are currently four NMTs.
3. The recruitment of graduates into the workforce is a critical part of the Council's talent management approach and sits alongside the in house Leadership Development Programme which enables aspirant employees to seek further development to enable them to develop their career with the Council.
4. Currently trainees have a number of placements across different teams and departments and also have access to national and regional learning events with NMTs from other local authorities as part of the ILM level 7 Certificate in Leadership and Management.
5. Recent years have seen significant changes in local government and within the County Council which has impacted on the skills and competences required of the workforce. Priorities have also changed – most recently articulated in the new Council Plan and Departmental Strategies. It is therefore appropriate to review the current approach to graduate traineeships to ensure it meets the Council's needs moving forward.

Issues identified by the review

6. Feedback from managers and trainees suggest that the scheme is generally viewed in a positive way. For example, managers highlight how trainees have made positive contributions to the delivery of services while trainees have been particularly positive about the integration

of the scheme with other workforce development activities. However, the review has also highlighted a number of issues.

7. As it is a national programme administered by the LGA the Council is restricted in how flexible it can be with the scheme. For example, recruitment and selection criteria and activities, timescales, the number of trainees allocated per authority and terms of the graduates' engagement (which is limited to two years) are set by the LGA.
8. The Council has limited control over the type and quality of candidates. Trainees are recruited to the national scheme through a recruitment process administered by the LGA after which the Council is provided with a list of applicants who have indicated Nottinghamshire as a preferred authority to work for. The County Council then interviews from this list. The Council is limited by the LGA in the number of candidates it can appoint. This approach has an impact on the Council's ability to attract and recruit the number and calibre of talented graduates that it requires and restricts the Council's opportunity to target candidates suitable to areas of key skills shortages. The Council may also be missing out on some candidates it would otherwise have selected.
9. The current scheme is an externally focussed programme and as such talented internal graduates have to apply to the national scheme with the potential for rejection by the LGA even when the Council might deem them to be suitable candidates and wish to invest in them as existing employees and progress their careers within the Council.
10. The learning element of the scheme has been commissioned by the LGA as a national programme which currently is not linked to any apprenticeship standard meaning the Council is not able to draw down funding from the apprenticeship levy digital account when normally this sort of programme would qualify. Changes to the programme structure are instigated by the LGA with little input from local authorities. The programme provides generic leadership development and does not allow the opportunity to target the learning element on key skills areas. There is therefore limited opportunity for the Council to be able to flex the scheme to meet the changing demands of the organisation, its workforce or the trainees themselves.
11. Retention has also been highlighted as an issue. The current scheme confers no guarantee of a job at the end of the traineeship and because of the nature of the learning component and requirement for a range of placements, graduates on completing the scheme, do not have sufficient depth of experience or the specific qualifications required to apply for a number of roles and are mainly able to apply for roles such as those in the Programmes and Projects team. These tend, by their nature, to be time limited. Once appointed graduates have an expectation of being able to and are keen to progress their careers and appropriate opportunities have not always been available. Of the 19 trainees who have left the scheme all but one secured a position within the County Council. However, of these only six are still working for the Council (with a further person working for Via) and only one trainee has worked for the County Council for longer than five years.

Proposed New Approach

12. Having reviewed the current scheme it is therefore proposed that the Council should take a new approach in terms of a graduate development scheme linked to developing a talent pipeline as part of the wider workforce strategy to ensure better alignment with organisational

requirements and form part of a more joined up approach to talent management and career progression.

13. This approach could also support the delivery of objectives in the new Council Plan: 'Your Nottinghamshire, Your Future' with reference to Commitment 4 ("Nottinghamshire has a thriving jobs market") and Commitment 12 ("Nottinghamshire has a skilled workforce for a global economy") and help achieve the success measures articulated as part of those commitments especially "more graduates choose to stay in Nottinghamshire for work or further study".
14. It is proposed that the Council adopts a new scheme from September 2018 which builds on those elements of the current scheme that have worked well but which is tailored to meet the specific Council's requirements and is run by the County Council itself as a standalone scheme separate to the NGDP but integrated with the Council's other workforce development initiatives.
15. Critically this will result in a scheme with much more flexibility and agility to meet the changing demands of the organisation and its workforce over time. It will also enable the Council to have more control over the graduates it wants to attract, recruit and retain and areas in which they work.
16. The new approach will:
 - Allow a more localised focus on attracting, recruiting and retaining graduates both internally from the Council's existing employee cohort and externally from local universities as well as from local communities to enable preferential employment opportunities to be made available to Nottinghamshire residents and students
 - Enable closer working relationships with appropriate Higher Education Institutes (HEI's)
 - Comprise a development programme linked to a relevant apprenticeship standard that will enable funds to be drawn down from the apprenticeship digital account to fund the learning element of the scheme
 - Link with the in house Leadership Development Programme to support the Council's Talent Management Strategy
 - Focus on developing the skills, behaviours and competencies required from the Council's future workforce with a focus on placements in areas where post-scheme job opportunities will be available and where there are skills shortages
 - Have the flexibility and agility to change in line with revised organisational circumstances and workforce priorities and requirements
 - Integrate with other internal workforce initiatives as part of a holistic approach to workforce development, talent management and leadership development.
17. It is estimated that the resource requirements and level of support required to deliver a bespoke scheme with greater flexibility and improved outcomes for the Council is broadly the same as that to participate in the NGDP.

Proposed structure of scheme

18. The scheme will be open to graduates from any discipline – an approach which has been endorsed by the employer engagement team at the University of Nottingham as sensible in

attracting talented graduates who may not yet have identified a particular career path. The programme will also reflect the 'career portfolio' approach taken by many graduates as they develop a broad range of skills and experiences that enable them to access a wide variety of career opportunities. But where candidates identify a preferred area of specialism that matches the Council's priorities for key skills this could also be accommodated or graduates from particular skills areas targeted.

19. Applicants will go through a selection process with recruitment based on merit above the meeting of minimum threshold criteria. Applicants will undertake a rigorous selection process including an initial application, Assessment Centre and interview. The Council will be able to set the criteria for successful recruitment and the number of trainees it wishes to appoint at any particular point in time to meet its needs. The number does not need to be the same each year provided additional funding is available for those above the current levels if additional graduates are required in particular areas of the Council to meet key priorities.
20. The new scheme will also allow the Council to appoint trainees to positions in skills shortage areas where roles are likely to be available or to give priority consideration for appropriate jobs towards the end of the programme. In order to enable appropriate draw down of funding from the apprenticeship levy digital account, trainees will be expected to complete the full two years of the learning elements of the programme. This will ensure that appropriate placements are identified that enable trainees to both develop relevant skills and competences and also to have relevant experiences in areas with identified skills shortages. Career coaching and development conversations as part of the programme will also ensure that trainees are supported to identify their preferred career path and can then be given priority consideration for appropriate jobs at the end of their traineeships. This will ensure a closer alignment of programme activities to the changing workforce requirements of the organisation and help retain the knowledge, skills and experience which the Council has invested in developing.
21. The enhanced flexibility of the scheme will ensure that trainees are offered placements that access a wider range of opportunities and are cognisant of the following factors:
 - The future workforce requirements of the organisation
 - Corporate and departmental prioritisation of the work involved in the placement
 - The requirements of the relevant apprenticeship standard
 - Development and retention of key skills
 - CLT and departmental leadership teams will continue to be involved in determining priorities.
22. Discussions will continue with local universities with a view to the possible targeting of the scheme to local residents and graduates who have attended local universities. Discussions are also underway to identify where local universities and providers can support the delivery of the learning element of the programme. For example, Nottingham Trent University can provide an ILM level 5 management programme which is accredited against the relevant Apprenticeship Standard and would qualify to draw down levy funds and could directly replace the generic leadership programme delivered by NGDP. There are likely to be other relevant programmes from these and other local providers against other standards to meet more specific requirements.

23. There will be a review of the new scheme during its first year both to identify what has worked well and where improvements need to be made and also to ensure that it continues to meet organisational and workforce requirements.

Other Options Considered

24. Other options were considered when looking at improving the scheme including continuing to work with the LGA and be part of the NGDP but using one of three different approaches:

- Share NMTs with one or two other local authorities. This option was deemed to reduce even further the flexibility and control inherent in the current approach.
- Identify local candidates to put forward to the national scheme. While this option offers the opportunity to identify local graduates to potentially work for the County Council, those graduates still need to be assessed and accepted on the national scheme by the LGA with the risk that identified local graduates would be rejected, including those with protected characteristics.
- Access a 'grow your own' option whereby graduates already working for the organisation are selected to be put forward on to the national scheme. The disadvantages identified above would still apply to this option. The proposed approach also accommodates internal graduates.

25. Cease running or participating in a graduate scheme but clearly this would significantly restrict the Council's opportunities for recruiting, developing and retaining the key skills it needs now and for the future.

26. Developing a new scheme as described but run it over a longer time period (e.g. four years) using different apprenticeship standards. The proposals within the report allow the degree of flexibility to incorporate this into the proposed new scheme where it meets the Council's current and future workforce requirements.

27. Having considered issues such as the need for greater flexibility and control to meet the changing needs of the organisation, and a focus on attracting and retaining local graduates, the proposal set out in this paper is recommended as the preferred option.

Reasons for Recommendation

28. To seek Members approval to establish a new in house graduate development scheme as described above and to cease participation in the NGDP scheme. This new approach will be kept under review and a further report brought back to Personnel Committee in 12 months' time before the 2019 intake so that any adjustments required to the method of operation can be approved.

Statutory and Policy Implications

29. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as

required.

Data Protection and Information Governance

30. The requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations will be taken account of as part of the induction of new starters on the graduate scheme.

Financial Implications

31. It is anticipated that costs associated with the new scheme will be broadly comparable to that of the current scheme. Additional costs associated with the scheme promotion and the recruitment and selection process (including the assessment centre) will be incurred by the Council. However these will be offset by draw down of funding from the apprenticeship levy digital account to support the learning programme and can count towards the levy target. While trainees on the current scheme tend to leave the scheme during the latter stages of their second year to secure employment, those on the new scheme will be expected to complete the full two years in order to enable funding to be drawn down from the digital account and the Council will have the discretion to make arrangements to ensure their requirements are met.

Human Resource Implications

32. The graduate trainees will continue to be managed internally under the existing arrangements.

Public Sector Equality Duty Implications

33. The proposals in this report meet the Council's existing commitment to meeting, and where possible exceeding, the statutory requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Members:

- 1) Approve the establishment of a new graduate development scheme as set out in the report.
- 2) Receive a further report in 12 months' time reviewing the first year of operation of the new scheme.

Marjorie Toward
Service Director - Customers and Human Resources
Resources Department

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

Helen Richardson – Senior Business Partner WPOD on 0115 9772070
helen.richardson@nottsc.gov.uk

Constitutional Comments (KK 12/02/18)

34. The proposals in this report are within the remit of the Personnel Committee.

Financial Comments (SES 13/02/18)

35. The financial implications are set out in the report.

Human Resources Comments (CG/15/02/18)

36. The Human Resources implications are set out within the body of the report

Background Papers and Published Documents

None

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All