

**REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR – CUSTOMERS, GOVERNANCE AND
EMPLOYEES****PROGRESS REPORT REGARDING THE COUNCIL'S GRADUATE
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Personnel Committee and to seek approval to further actions concerning the continued development of the Council's in-house Graduate Development Programme.

Information**Background**

2. Personnel Committee agreed to the introduction of a new in-house Graduate Development Programme (GDP) bespoke to the County Council to replace the previous National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP) on 7 March 2018. In summary this enables the Council to:
 - develop a programme that is more flexible in meeting the changing needs of the Council's workforce
 - better attract and recruit talented, local graduates
 - better align graduate development activities to other organisational development initiatives as part of a wider talent management proposition
 - make use of the Apprenticeship Levy to fund graduate development opportunities.
3. The last update report was presented to Personnel Committee on 27 November 2019 when it was agreed that further recruitment to the programme should continue in 2020.

Update for Cohort 1 (2018) trainees

4. Six trainees were recruited in September 2018 to Cohort 1 of the programme. In January 2020 one trainee left to join the Greater London Authority. The remaining five trainees had their contracts extended until 31 December to enable them to complete their qualifications which had been delayed due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. A decision was also taken to delay the recruitment process to this year's programme (please see below). Three of the initial cohort have now left the programme – one has joined Midlands Engine as a Project Officer while two have secured permanent posts within the Council, in the Place department; one as a Developer Contributors Practitioner and another as Cultural Services Commissioner. Work to identify appropriate career opportunities within the Council to facilitate the retention of the two remaining trainees continues. Trainees have been supported to complete their level 5

apprenticeship as an Operations/Departmental Manager and in October all five passed their apprenticeship with Distinction. Additionally, all have passed their ILM level 5 diploma in Leadership and Management.

Update for Cohort 2 (2019) trainees

5. In September 2019, five further trainees were recruited to the programme as Cohort 2. Despite the impact of Covid-19, all have continued to experience different placement opportunities within the organisation as well as continued working towards their ILM qualification. Placements have often been in areas of importance within the context of re-prioritised work as a result of Covid-19. All trainees remain on the scheme and work has now started to identify appropriate career opportunities within the Council to facilitate their retention within the organisation.

Recruitment of Cohort 3 (2020) trainees

6. Applications for this year's programme were planned to open on 18 March in anticipation of selection activities taking place during June, in readiness for a late September start. However, due to the fast moving developments concerning Covid-19 in March, the launch was delayed before new timescales were identified in order to open the recruitment later in the year. Revised timescales saw applications open in late April and, as with previous years, marketing and promotional activity used social media and other digital routes to attract potential internal and external applicants to a dedicated webpage (www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/graduates). This provides more information about the programme and includes a link to the Council's job vacancy page. Social media activity was also co-ordinated with the Nottingham and Sheffield universities to promote the programme and this built on previous campus-based activities that had been initially conducted for the March launch. These included attendance at jobs and career fairs and presentations to students (including Q&A sessions). Virtual presentations were conducted for students at the University of Nottingham in June to further promote the scheme. The deadline for applications was 6 July and we were delighted to receive 444 applications. This was a 54% increase on the 288 applications received in 2019 and a 124% increase on the 198 applications received in 2018.
7. Following shortlisting, 37 candidates attended four assessment centres which were run virtually via Microsoft Teams on 14 and 15 September. As with previous years, the assessment centres were developed and run in conjunction with East Midlands Councils (EMC) and utilised a range of activities (including a group exercise and individual presentation) to test and assess candidates for the relevant skills, attributes and behaviours which indicated a good "fit" with the Council and suitability for this development programme. All candidates invited to the assessment centres were given the opportunity to attend a technical drop in sessions during week commencing 24 August, to ensure they were able to access the upcoming assessment centre. They were also provided with technical 'tip' sheets to reduce the possible barriers associated with accessing the sessions remotely. While a number of contingencies were identified to deal with potential issues, all the sessions ran smoothly and all candidates were able to participate fully.
8. Further to the assessment centres, 15 candidates were invited to final interviews, again held virtually. The standard of candidates was extremely high and six candidates have accepted provisional offers of traineeships to the programme and are expected to start in mid-January 2021

Statistics

9. Recruitment breakdown by district

District/Location	Applicants	Assessment Centre	Interviewees	Appointed
Ashfield	20	1	1	1
Bassetlaw	8	1	0	0
Broxtowe	43	4	1	0
Gedling	36	2	1	0
Mansfield	18	1	1	1
Newark and Sherwood	31	4	1	1
Rushcliffe	55	7	1	0
Nottingham City	154	14	8	3
Non-Nottinghamshire	79	3	1	0
Total	444	37	15	6

10. Recruitment breakdown by university

University	Applicants	Assessment Centre	Interviewees	Appointed
Nottingham Trent	139	5	1	1
Nottingham	112	14	7	3
Sheffield Hallam	7	0	0	0
Sheffield	15	4	2	1
Other	151	14	5	1
Unknown/Ineligible	20	0	0	0
Total	444	37	15	6

11. Work continues to encourage applications from a diverse range of candidates to the programme. Utilising feedback and learning from previous years, there appears to have been an overall increase in the diversity of applicants selected for the assessment centres (Note: where known, non-disclosures are shown in brackets. Non-disclosures are also taken into account when calculating the percentage figures).

Year	Attendees	BAME	LGBT	Gender		Disability
				Female	Male	
2018	44	4 = 9.1%	4 = 9.1%	27 = 61.4%	15 = 38.6%	2 = 4.6%
2019	41	5(3) = 13.2%	5(4) = 13.5%	24 = 58.5%	17 = 41.5%	7(2) = 18%
2020	37	6(1) = 16.7%	7(2) = 20%	22 = 59.5%	15 = 40.5%	2(1) = 5.9%

Review of the Programme Implementation

12. Due to the revised timescales to this year's recruitment, there has not been the time to conduct a full review of activities to date. However, a number of candidates have spontaneously fed back on their positive experiences of the recruitment process reflecting how much they enjoyed it and how well run the process was. This has corresponded with positive comments received from internal staff involved in helping run the assessment centres and interviews including that from colleagues at East Midlands Councils who were also involved in the assessment process.

13. Initial feedback indicates some continued positives regarding the programme, including:

- Increased levels of engagement and interest from the local graduate workforce – the number of applicants (444) saw an increase of 54% from the previous year (288 applicants) and a 124% increase from 2018 (198 applicants)
- Continued engagement and partnership working with local universities to attract local graduates
- Continued high levels of candidate satisfaction with the recruitment process to be confirmed by more detailed analysis
- Use of social media increasingly generates high levels of interest in a cost-effective way
- Continued utilisation of the Apprenticeship Levy through integration of the programme with a relevant apprenticeship standard and management qualification
- Increased diversity of applicants resulting in a more diverse cohort recruited to this year's programme.

Next steps for trainees

14. Work continues with the two remaining trainees from Cohort 1 to facilitate their retention within the organisation.

15. Cohort 2 trainees are now in their second year and continue to be supported to work towards their management qualification as well as preparing for their final End Point Assessment (EPA) for summer 2021 as part of the apprenticeship standard. There is now an increased focus on identifying appropriate job opportunities with a view to retaining the graduates within the organisation after completion of their traineeship in late September 2021.

16. The new intake of Cohort 3 trainees will start in mid-January when they will immediately commence their apprenticeship standard, ILM qualification and first placements. It is anticipated that they will initially work remotely and plans are in place to support this through their induction to starting their first placement by way of ensuring a successful introduction into the organisation.

17. The process of identifying appropriate placements for January 2021 for both Cohort 2 and Cohort 3 trainees is progressing and there has already been a very positive response from services across the Council.

Future Development of the Graduate Programme

18. The developing success of the programme demonstrates the importance of building our relationships with the local universities and early engagement with under-graduates. We are seeking to plant the notion of a career with the Council at the forefront of their minds, particularly in areas where the Council has known skills gaps, at the earliest stage of their studies. We continue to explore how this can be further developed through appropriate work placements. We are seeking Members' agreement to continue with the programme and recruit a new cohort of trainees in 2021. Despite the continued uncertainty with Covid-19, it is anticipated that the recruitment timetable will return to that of previous years, with an anticipated start date of September 2021 for Cohort 4.

Other Options Considered

19. The Council could revert to participation in the National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP). However, given the continued increased interest in our own scheme, the work that has already taken place with developing links with local universities and the continued high calibre of local graduates to the in-house scheme, this would appear to be a retrograde step. Alternatively, the Council could choose not to be part of a graduate scheme. This would also appear to be a retrograde step and would potentially lead us to miss out on a rich pipeline of graduate talent who are keen to remain living locally, and who are choosing to build their careers and in future, raise their families in Nottinghamshire.
20. It is therefore proposed to continue with the current iteration of the in-house programme subject to this Committee's approval and to once again recruit local graduates for September 2021.

Reasons for Recommendation

21. The current scheme has proved highly successful in identifying and developing new talent. It also gives us significant intelligence on the graduate market more widely and we aim to ensure every candidate has the most positive of experiences, whether successful or not. It is important that this happens to ensure that those graduates who develop their careers elsewhere, recall their positive experiences with Nottinghamshire when considering whether to apply for future roles.
22. It is also important for a large employer like the Council, to have close working relationships with our local universities so we can work together on areas of current and future skills shortages and develop programmes of work which assist and support local businesses and the overall economy.

Statutory and Policy Implications

23. 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

24. The requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations have been taken into account as part of the induction of new starters on the graduate scheme and no personnel data is available in this report.

Financial Implications

25. The costs associated with the new scheme are comparable to that of the previous national scheme. One department has funded an additional place on the programme and two places have been identified that can be funded from contingency funds. The cost per trainee for two years is £77,000 which means a total cost of £154,000 for two trainees from January 2021 to January 2023. This has allowed the Council to recruit to six posts rather than the original three. The learning provider costs are covered by the Apprenticeship Levy.

Human Resource Implications

26. The graduate trainees will continue to be managed internally under the existing resources and effective support arrangements.

Public Sector Equality Duty Implications

27. 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) Agree to the continuation of the in-house graduate scheme for 2021.
- 2) Approve the establishment of two additional graduate trainee posts to accommodate the additional two trainees identified from the assessment centre to bring the total of this year's cohort to six, to be funded from Contingency. Request Finance and Major Contracts Management Committee to approve allocations from contingency of £19,000 in 2020/21, £77,000 in 2021/22 and £58,000 in 2022/23. Receive a further update report in 12 months' time.

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Constitutional Comments (KK 26/10/20)

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

Financial Comments (RWK 09/11/20)

29. The report proposes the continuation of the in-house graduate scheme for 2021 with 6 graduates to be recruited. The costs of 3 of the graduates will be met from within the existing budget provision for the scheme, a fourth will be funded by another department from within its existing budget allocation, and a further 2 graduates will be funded from the corporate contingency. Finance and Major Contracts Committee will be requested to approve allocations from Contingency of £19,000 in 2020/21, £77,000 in 2021/22 and £58,000 in 2022/23.

Human Resources Comments (GME 19/10/2020)

30. The Graduate Trainee Programme has demonstrated significant success over the previous three years and provides a valuable source of future talent. Over time, as our relationships with the universities matures, we will continue to build on the positive work undertaken to date to assist with future workforce planning and skills analysis.

31. Our graduates report being well supported and effectively developed and their satisfaction with the programme is reflected in the retention of the graduate trainees beyond the end of the programme as they secure permanent roles with the Council.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- None

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All