

**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 members of Personnel Committee, to celebrate the successes of the programme to date and to seek approval to further actions concerning the continuing 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 and deliver 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 18 November 2020 when it was agreed that further recruitment to the programme should continue in 2021. A number of the current cohort of graduate trainees have been invited to today's meeting to share their experiences of the programme to date with Members.

**Update for Cohort 1 (2018) trainees**

4. Six trainees were recruited in September 2018 to Cohort 1 of the programme and completed their traineeships during 2020. Four of the former trainees continue to work for the County Council – two within the Place department and a further two within Public Health. Another trainee continues to work within the Midlands Engine based at Trent Bridge House. All continue to support the scheme where appropriate for example through peer support. Further details of the type of role our graduate trainees have been successful in securing with the Council can

be found below. Our trainees enter on Grade 5 so Members can see that after their two year development programme, all have been appointed to roles at a higher level.

### **Update for Cohort 2 (2019) trainees**

5. In September 2019, five further trainees were recruited to Cohort 2 of the programme. One trainee had previously secured a position within the Midlands Engine based at Trent Bridge House while three of the cohort have recently secured positions within Public Health. The other trainee is now working in a role within Service Improvement in the Adult Social Care department. The trainees have been supported to complete their level 5 apprenticeship as an Operations/Departmental Manager and in September all four who remained in the Council have passed their apprenticeship with Distinction. Full details of the roles secured by the first two in-house cohorts can be found below:

### **Cohort 1 – recruited in 2018 and completed traineeship in 2020**

6. Graduate 1 – secured role as Public Health Commissioning Manager at Band D in November 2020  
Graduate 2 – secured role as Public Health Commissioning Manager at Band D in November 2020 and is now focused on Covid Response  
Graduate 3 – secured role as Developer Contributions Practitioner in Place at Band B in June 2020  
Graduate 4 – secured role as Cultural Services Commissioning Manager in Place at Band B in October 2020  
Graduate 5 – secured role as Programme Officer within the Midlands Engine based at Trent Bridge House in November 2020  
Graduate 6 – secured role in the Greater London Authority in January 2020.
7. Graduate 6 is the only trainee from this cohort to have left the Council or one of its partner organisations such as the Midlands Engine. The remaining former graduate trainees remain in the roles they successfully secured.

### **Cohort 2 – recruited in 2019 and completed traineeships in 2021**

8. Graduate A – secured role as Covid Response Manager in Public Health at Band C in October 2021  
Graduate B – secured role as Public Health Support Officer at Band B in October 2021  
Graduate C – secured role as Covid Outbreak Investigator in Public Health at Band A in October 2021  
Graduate D – secured role as Service Improvement Officer at Band A in Adult Social Care in October 2021  
Graduate E – secured role as Project Officer at Band A within the Midlands Engine based at Trent Bridge House in June 2021

### **Update for Cohort 3 (2020) trainees**

9. Despite the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions throughout 2020 and the first few months of 2021, six new trainees were recruited to the scheme and started their traineeships on 18 January 2021. All are progressing well with their apprenticeship including the ILM qualification and their placement experiences, with each trainee having completed at least one placement to date.

## Recruitment of Cohort 4 (2021) trainees

10. Recruitment for Cohort 4 reverted to the usual timescales for 2021. Applications for this year's programme opened on 17 March. As with previous years, marketing and promotional activity including the use of social media and other digital routes were utilised to attract potential internal and external applicants to a dedicated webpage ([www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/graduates](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/graduates)). This page provided more information about the programme and included a link to the Council's job vacancy page. Social media activity was also co-ordinated with local universities to promote the programme. Continued Covid-19 restrictions earlier in the year meant that campus-based activities could not be undertaken. However, promotion of the scheme continued through virtual job fairs as well as remote presentations to students at both Nottingham universities. The deadline for applications was 20 April with 225 applications received. This was a decrease on the 444 applications received in 2020. The impact of Covid-19 may have inflated the figures for 2020 while conversely suppressing them during 2021. For example, a greater number of students may not have been living locally during the application process having not been on campus for a number of months. Evidence also suggests there were a greater number of students accessing courses at Masters level and therefore deferring applying for jobs.
11. Following shortlisting, 35 candidates attended four assessment centres which were again run virtually via Microsoft Teams on 15 and 16 June. 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. Whilst several contingencies were identified to deal with potential issues, all the sessions ran smoothly, and all candidates were able to participate fully.
12. Following the assessment centres, 15 candidates were invited to final interviews, again held virtually. The standard of candidates was extremely high and eight candidates were offered and accepted positions on the programme. This is the largest cohort so far recruited. The Cohort 4 trainees started on 30 September and are now in their first placements and have commenced their apprenticeship including ILM activities. All have now been allocated a mentor and are also benefiting from the peer support of the previous graduate trainee cohorts.

## Statistics

### 13. Recruitment breakdown by district

District/Location	Applicants	Assessment Centre	Interviewees	Appointed
Ashfield	13	3	2	1
Bassetlaw	6	2	0	0
Broxtowe	33	4	2	2
Gedling	12	1	0	0
Mansfield	6	1	1	1
Newark and Sherwood	10	2	2	0
Rushcliffe	16	2	0	0
Nottingham City	102	17	7	4
Non-Nottinghamshire	27	3	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8</b>

#### 14. Recruitment breakdown by university

University	Applicants	Assessment Centre	Interviewees	Appointed
Nottingham	80	17	8	5
Nottingham Trent	58	5	3	2
Sheffield	4	0	0	0
Sheffield Hallam	3	0	0	0
Leicester	3	2	1	0
De Montfort	5	0	0	0
Derby	17	2	0	0
Lincoln	5	1	1	1
Loughborough	2	0	0	0
Other	48	8	2	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8</b>

15. Work continues to encourage applications from a diverse range of candidates to the programme. Utilising feedback from previous years, there appears to continue to be diversity of applicants selected for the assessment centres in terms of disability and sexual orientation. However there appears to have been a decrease in diversity by ethnicity. This however has not been reflected at the application stage where in 2020 20% of applicants were identified as Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority while this year the percentage increased to 22.9% (Note: where known, non-disclosures are shown in brackets. Non-disclosures are also considered when calculating the percentage figures).

Year	Assessment Centre Attendees	Black Asian & Ethnic Minority	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%
2021	35	1(2) = 3%	7(3) = 21.9%	24 = 68.6%	11 = 31.4%	5(2) = 15.2%

#### Review of the Programme Implementation

16. Candidates continue to spontaneously feed 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 as well as from colleagues at East Midlands Councils who continue to be involved in the assessment process.

17. Indications are that the programme is successful and continues to see positive impacts including:

- Continued high levels of engagement and interest from the local graduate population

- Continued engagement and partnership working with local universities to attract local graduates
  - No drop-outs during the traineeships to date. Currently we are researching what the attrition rate is for graduate trainee programmes across the public and private sector nationally
  - Overwhelming majority of graduate trainees secure employment with the Council at a higher level than their entry point
  - Anecdotal evidence from internal managers reflecting high levels of satisfaction with the quality of trainees and their contribution to the work of the Council
  - Benefits of using social media to generate interest in a cost-effective way
  - Virtual recruitment process reducing costs while maintaining the recruitment of high quality candidates
  - Continued utilisation of the Apprenticeship Levy through integration of the programme with a relevant apprenticeship standard and management qualification.
18. Further work is underway to ensure the Council retains the graduate trainees in employment to recoup the investment in the trainee programme but also to utilise the talent which was identified and nurtured from the recruitment stage of the programme, and which has been developed over the course of the two years through the completion of four six-month placements and attainment of the formal qualification. We continue to develop our resourcing model and processes to ensure our graduate trainees have the best opportunity to continue to develop their careers within the Council or its partner organisations.

### **Next steps for trainees**

19. Cohort 3 trainees are soon to enter 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 late 2022 as part of the apprenticeship standard. Plans are in place to facilitate the successful completion of their apprenticeship standard including the ILM qualification as well as the development of a robust process to enable the retention and progression of the trainees as they leave the scheme to access job opportunities within the organisation.
20. The process of identifying appropriate placements for April 2022 for both Cohort 3 and Cohort 4 trainees will start in December 2021. In this respect, the quality of previous cohorts of trainees act as the most effective promoter of the scheme and it is usual to have a greater number of placement opportunities than we have trainees to fill them.

### **Future Development of the Graduate Programme**

21. 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. Ongoing promotion of our graduate initiatives include the development of an in-house monthly blog which can be shared with future applicants; a graduate recruitment 'landing page' is being developed to support our wider engagement with students and graduates and to promote the organisation as an employer of choice. We are seeking Members' agreement to continue with the programme and recruit a new cohort of trainees in 2022 with an anticipated start date of late September 2022.

## **Other Options Considered**

22. 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 applying to our 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 potentially in future, raise their families, in Nottinghamshire.
23. Members have previously discussed the recruitment challenges facing this Council and nationally across a wide range of professional areas. Future reports will be brought to this Committee to consider the workforce strategy and associated workforce resource plan, developed to ensure the Council can recruit people with the right skills, knowledge and experience to deliver the priorities set out in the new Council Plan. Graduate recruitment forms an integral part of the emerging wider youth employment strategy due to be considered at December's Committee. It is therefore proposed to continue with the current iteration of the in-house programme subject to this Committee's approval and to recruit local graduates once again for a September 2022 start.

## **Reasons for Recommendation**

24. The current scheme has proved 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.
25. 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**

26. 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**

27. 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 personal data is available in this report.

## **Financial Implications**

28. The costs associated with the new scheme are comparable to that of the previous national scheme and no additional budget has been requested. Additional placements are funded from existing service budgets and for two trainees, have been funded using contingency funds. The cost per trainee for two years is £78,000. Creative use of the identified budget has allowed the Council to recruit to eight posts rather than the original three. The learning provider costs are covered by the Apprenticeship Levy.

## **Human Resource Implications**

29. The graduate trainees will continue to be managed internally using existing resources and effective support arrangements. The development of the programme provides a useful model to develop our emerging Youth Employment strategy prioritising job opportunities for trainees in the majority of circumstances to enable the Council to retain this talent and to recover the money invested in them already to date.

## **Public Sector Equality Duty Implications**

30. 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 2022.
- 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 eight, to be funded from Contingency.
- 3) Commend the success of the Graduate Trainee Programme to date and agree to receive a further update report in November 2022.

**Marjorie Toward**  
**Service Director – Customers, Governance and Employees**  
**Chief Executives Department**

### **For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

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### **Constitutional Comments (EKH 13/10/2021)**

31. The proposals in this report fall within the remit of Personnel Committee.

### **Financial Comments (RWK 21/10/2021)**

32. There are no specific financial implications arising directly from the report.

### **Human Resources Comments (JP 20/10/2021)**

33. The Graduate Trainee Programme has demonstrated significant success over the previous three years and provides a valuable source of future talent at a time we know we face significant recruitment challenges in a number of areas. Over time, as our relationships with the universities continues to mature, we will build on the positive work undertaken to date to assist with future workforce planning and skills analysis.

34. 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 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