

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Enterprise, Planning & Infrastructure
DATE	19 th March 2013
DIRECTOR	Gordon McIntosh
TITLE OF REPORT	Development of a Youth Employment Strategy
REPORT NUMBER:	EPI/13/027

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report has been produced in response to a motion raised by Councillor Townson on the 6th November 2012 to develop a Youth Employment Strategy within Aberdeen City Council.

The motion requested that:

a) The Council should extend 'job sharing' to school leavers in respect of appropriate positions and that such 'job sharing' should be for the first year only and at the end of said year one person be offered full time employment and the other be released onto the job market with the advantage of training, experience and development of a work history and a work ethic'.

b) The Council should consider opportunities for increasing employment of young people and to research the feasibility, legal and financial implications of Aberdeen City Council taking the lead amongst its partners in applying a 'job sharing' principle to suitable job vacancies

The report follows on from the report to the EP&I Committee on the 6th November which outlined the activities already taking place both internal and external to the Council in relation to increased positive engagement with school leavers and young persons. Additionally this report will highlight the feasibility research carried out within the Council to identify the potential of delivering activities as per Councillor Townson's motion.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that committee approve to:

a) Agree that the legislative and financial implications of this motion will prohibit further progression of this proposal

- b) Agree that current activities delivered by the Council and its partners are having a positive impact on the numbers of disengaged 16 – 24 year olds within Aberdeen City
- c) Support the delivery of a Modern Apprenticeship Road Show and CV workshops to assist the targeted population segment access employment, both within the city council and external businesses.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The motion is not clear on whether new posts would require to be created as part of the proposal or whether it would be applied to the recruitment and selection of existing posts. There would be a financial implication for the Council if the former was the case.

If the proposal concerned the creation of new posts from outwith the budget then Committee approval would be required: if the posts were available from within the budget, delegated powers would suffice. A report would require to be prepared outlining the business case for their creation.

The finances of the Council are restricted currently with it not being clear from the motion where the funding would come from if the proposal involved the creation of new posts. Unless budget monies were identified it would not be possible to proceed.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Legal and policy implications

The Council's recruitment and selection policy requires recruiting managers to identify the best candidate for the job and appoint on 'merit and merit alone'. This is what is stated in the Local Government and Housing Act and applies to all local authorities.

If preference were given in recruitment and selection to younger people for certain identified posts this would be contrary to the Council's recruitment and selection policy and could potentially be unlawful discrimination on grounds of age, unless the proposal could be objectively justified. To be objectively justifiable the Council would likely need to demonstrate that young people made up a disproportionately large part of the pool of unemployed people in the local jobs market and that a measure giving preference to that group in the recruitment and selection for certain posts would help improve the job prospects of young people. Unless there was evidence of the above, in the form of labour market statistics, it would likely be difficult to justify. It would also have to be shown that the measure was a proportionate means of achieving the objective for it to be lawful. It may be that other evidence would also be required in addition to the above.

It is possible that the measure could be viewed as 'positive discrimination', which would not be allowable under the Equality Act. If the proposal was identified as being potentially illegal this would leave

the Council open to challenge and possible litigation if say an older candidate complained about not being permitted to be considered for a post.

It should be noted that justifiable direct discrimination because of age can be allowable under the Equality Act, with some age based rules and practices regarded as justifiable.

Less favourable treatment of a person because of their age is not regarded as direct discrimination if the employer can show that the treatment is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim, known as the 'objective justification' test.

The question of whether the rule or practice is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim is approached in two stages. Firstly, it would need to be determined if the aim one that represents a real objective consideration. Secondly, if the aim is identified as being legitimate it would need to be determined if the means of achieving it is proportionate, being appropriate and necessary in the circumstances.

If the proposal or a variation of it were to be considered it would require to be fully checked out with the Legal Section first of all to determine its legality and any risks of applying it, including whether the above test could be met.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

Rising unemployment within the 16 – 19 year old age group is of key concern nationally and a number of initiatives have been launched by both the Scottish and UK governments to address this issue.

The unemployment rates for the 16 – 19 year olds within the city whilst not giving reason to be complacent are significantly lower than other areas of the country.

In the November report we highlighted that “Skills Development Scotland’s data for September 2012 highlight that there are currently **270** Job seeker allowance claimants within the 16 – 19 year category. This represents **0.17%** of the working age population of Aberdeen, which has an average unemployment rate of **2.2%**”. The most up to date data currently available from Skill Development Scotland – October 2012 highlights that there are currently **210** Job seeker allowance claimants within the 16 – 19 year category, which highlights a drop of almost **23%** within weeks. This information reinforces that the positive actions towards engaging with this segment of the population reported in the November 2012 committee paper are having a positive impact on reducing the numbers of dis-engaged youngsters.

The following extract from SDS school leaver destination report illustrates the destinations of local school leavers.

Initial	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
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	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Higher Education	679	38.3%	631	35.6%	664	36.5%
Further Education	453	25.6%	460	25.9%	462	25.4%
Training	51	2.9%	44	2.5%	41	2.3%
Employment	329	18.6%	380	21.4%	418	23.0%
Voluntary Work	4	0.2%	3	0.2%	7	0.4%
Activity Agreements	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	16	0.9%
Unemployed Seeking	212	12.0%	201	11.3%	161	8.9%
Unemployed Not Seeking	20	1.1%	22	1.2%	31	1.7%
Not Known	24	1.4%	33	1.9%	18	1.0%
Total	1,772	-	1,774	-	1,818	-

Current and proposed employment initiatives for 16 – 24 year olds managed by Aberdeen City Council.

It should be noted that the Council currently offers approximately up to 20 apprenticeship opportunities per year, most of which are taken up by younger people. There are also many opportunities in Social Care which are often filled by younger employees.

In addition, new proposals have been drawn up around graduate recruitment, modern apprenticeships and internships which are about to be presented to the CMT for initial support, which would then go to Committee for approval to implement. Again, it is expected that these will be of interest to younger people.

Developing skills in house

As per the Strategic Workforce Plan: 2013/14 – 2017/18 the following initiatives are currently delivered by the Council.

Trainee Schemes

To overcome the skills shortages we face, we have developed schemes to 'grow our own' workforce in order to supply the staff we need. Examples include, HR professionals, Solicitors, Accountants, Environmental Health Officers, Trading Standards Officers, Planners and Building Standards Officers.

Typically, these schemes involve identifying individuals with potential, either in house or externally, designing an individual development plan for a defined

period, supporting the individual while they study for the relevant qualification (e.g. providing mentoring) and providing them with work experience. This can either lead to their appointment to a suitable post at the end of their training programme or create a pool of trained and skilled people, with the skills and behaviours we need, to recruit from when vacancies arise.

Apprenticeships

We provide a range of craft apprenticeships (e.g. joiners, electricians and plumbers) which provide apprentices with an opportunity to gain experience and to learn the skills and behaviours that we need. We employ approximately 96 apprentices (under a 'training contract') at any one time and this provides us with a valuable pool to recruit from.

In summary there are potential implications for the Council if it were to seek to implement the motion the main ones being legal and financial. Although the motion is laudable it could pose a legal difficulty for the Council and could also commit the organisation to expenditure that may not be available on an ongoing basis. There is also the issue of releasing people at the end of the one year appointment whom the Council had invested monies in, who would not be providing a return on the investment through service to the organisation.

School Work Experience

Work is also ongoing within the Age equality group to address the lower end of the age range within the Council's workforce. HR have been coordinating with the Work Experience Unit in Education Culture and Sport to boost the Council's profile within Schools as well as promoting the hosting of work experience opportunities to managers. A workplace pack is also under production to further promote the Council and the various roles that operate within it.

Additional activities that will enhance employability and employment options for those within the 16 – 24 year old age bracket

In preparation for the production of this report officers have mapped as per the 6th November report all support activities available for the target group, which, according to the latest available statistics, these are having a positive impact. To further enhance these services we propose to deliver the following additional initiatives:

Modern Apprenticeship Road Show

It can be a difficult task for those leaving school to identify possible apprenticeship opportunities and the companies that may be offering them. Additionally there does not appear to be a facility that allows individuals to view the complete offering of apprenticeships and evaluate their options. It is currently being proposed that the council facilitate an event that brings as many apprenticeship vacancies together as possible under one roof, allowing school and college leavers to meet with a range of potential employers in one location and effectively select the option that most suits their needs. This event will also be beneficial to employers as it has already been noted that

speculative applications for apprenticeships are greatly reduced this year in comparison to last year. Much of this has been blamed on the potential to earn more within the Energy sector.

CV workshops

As previously stated earlier in this report “The Council’s recruitment and selection policy requires recruiting managers to identify the best candidate for the job and appoint on ‘merit and merit alone’. This is what is stated in the Local Government and Housing Act and applies to all local authorities”.

Whilst we cannot favor any groups or individuals in the recruitment process consideration is currently being given to running “Council application workshops” where tuition will be given on optimum completion of Aberdeen City Council’s on line application process.

This service would be delivered within the facility at Spring Garden and promoted through schools and Skill Development Scotland, which would increase this population segment’s skills in this area and ultimately increase their employability.

In response to this paper Councillor Townson acknowledges the comprehensiveness of this report and notes the legislative and financial difficulties and risk of positive discrimination that may arise from this motion.

6. IMPACT

The project contributes significantly and directly to the achievement of

Single Outcome agreement (SOA) National Outcomes:

1. We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people
2. We are better educated, more skilled and more successful
3. People of all ages take an active part in their own learning to achieve full potential. Learning and training is appropriate and accessible to learner’s needs

Aberdeen - the Smarter City

We will ensure all citizens are encouraged and supported appropriately to make their full contribution.

We will help every citizen to improve their knowledge and skills, together contributing to our success as a learning city

We will enhance the physical and emotional wellbeing of all our citizens by offering support and activities which promote independence, resilience, confidence and self-esteem.

We will work with our partners to seek to reduce the levels of inequality in the city.

We will provide a high quality education service within our schools and communities which will improve attainment and life chances of our children and young people to achieve their full potential in education, employment or training.

Working with our third, public and private sector partners, we will provide opportunities for lifelong learning which will develop knowledge,

skills and attributes of our citizens to enable them to meet the changing demands of the 21st century.

Again, working with partners, we will create a City of Learning which will empower individuals to fulfill their potential and contribute to the economic, social and cultural wellbeing of our communities.

Equality and Human Rights implications

An EIA was not conducted as this report informs on activities currently being delivered by ACC and partners

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Scottish Government's Youth Employment Strategy
Skills Development Scotland's Youth employment Action Plan
guidance
Aberdeen City Council – Strategic Workforce Plan

8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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