

FINANCE COMMITTEE

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

SUBMISSION FROM ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL

1. With reference to your letter of 17 July 2012 seeking information on the steps Aberdeenshire Council is taking to offer employment opportunities, including Modern Apprenticeships, to individuals furthest from employment market, please find details below

Background

2. Aberdeenshire is the 6th largest of the 32 local authority areas in Scotland, has a population of 232,849 and covers a predominately rural area of 2,480 square miles, comprising a mixture of farmland, towns, coastline and mountains.

3. Many parts of Aberdeenshire experience an excellent quality of life with good employment prospects, high standards of health care and low levels of crime. However, there are pockets of deprivation, both in urban areas where people may experience disadvantage due to problems associated with low income, poor health or low educational attainment, and in a small or remote rural communities, where lack of access to employment and services disadvantage individuals and families in those areas.

4. In Rural Aberdeenshire the local communities depend on only a few employers with limited local employment opportunities. The limited access and the increasing costs in relation to transport and flexible childcare are significant barriers to accessing employment or training that are available in the urban areas.

Modern Apprenticeships

5. Modern Apprenticeships and work experience are currently at the top of our employability agenda and we have recently increased apprenticeship numbers and are working with services to increase work experience opportunities in areas where previously there were none.

Partnership Approach to Employability

6. Aberdeenshire Council leads the employability partnership, which works to the Aberdeenshire employability & skills pipeline. The partnership brings public, private and third sector partners together to deliver a holistic and person centred employability service for those individuals within Aberdeenshire who require additional support. The partnership shares an information system which tracks clients' progression and matches them to the opportunities available. The system is managed through the Working for Families Project. Aberdeenshire Council had continued to allocate funding to the Fairer Scotland Fund, which allows Community

Planning Partners to increase resources to deliver employability programmes that ensures the partnership outcomes are achieved.

Delivery through Aberdeenshire Council

7. To support employability Aberdeenshire Council engages with the community through a range of services that greatly improve an individual's chance of gaining employment as well as supporting businesses to continue to grow and develop.

8. Employability programmes and services are delivered within Education, Learning and Leisure, Housing and Social Work and Infrastructure Services. There are 4 main stream activities. These are:

Opportunities for All Programmes - 16+ Opportunities

9. The target group for these programmes is the 14 – 20 age groups who are at risk of not progressing to a positive destination. The programme ranges from 1 -1 individualised support packages to work experience and supported work placements. The Work Experience Unit coordinates and secures all work placements, giving looked after children, young carers and long term unemployed a high priority. The scheme links into programmes supported through Job Centre Plus.

Working for Families Project

10. Working for Families (WFF) uses the key worker model and focuses on parents and young people who require support to achieve a positive destination. From 2006 to 2011 more than 1,400 people engaged with the project. Over the last 6 months the project has supported 312 individuals into training and 136 individuals gained employment.

11. The project administrates a flexible fund, which is used to reduce barriers to employment through covering transport costs, childcare and training costs. The fund is open to all employability partners and the individuals are entered into a shared information management system, which ensures individuals continue to be supported through the employability pipeline.

12. This team have worked with sectors within the council to improve recruitment for hard to fill vacancies through delivering pre-employment training courses, which are tailor made to meet the services' requirements. The key workers have supported hard to place individuals into work experience placements within the services, which had led to secured employment within the council.

Social Work & Housing Employability Team

13. The Employment Development Service (EDS) supports people with learning disabilities, mental ill health and substance misuse issues moving on from social work services into employment and other employability activities in the community.

Community Benefit Clauses through Procurement

14. Community Benefit Clauses have been introduced through procurement of the Council's Capital Programme. This has increased the amount of apprenticeships available in the local area, work experience and supported employment opportunities. The target groups that are benefiting are young people 14 – 19, looked after children, long term unemployed and lone parents.

15. Aberdeenshire Council have increased sustainable opportunities for looked after children through the development of Community Benefit Clauses, Working for Families Project and 16+ opportunities.