

FINANCE COMMITTEE

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

SUBMISSION FROM EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

1. Thank you for your letter of 17 July 2012 seeking information on the steps East Ayrshire Council is taking to offer employment opportunities to individuals furthest from the employment market. I am pleased to have this opportunity to highlight our work in this area and trust that the information provided will be of interest to you.

2. Through our employability services we recognise the important need to support equality of opportunity, particularly in respect of our most vulnerable residents and disadvantaged communities. Our Skills Development and Employability Service deliver a wide range of projects and work closely with other council services, including Human Resources.

EAST AYRSHIRE WORKS

3. East Ayrshire Works is a project run by the Council's Skills Development and Employability Service in partnership with a wide range of public sector and third sector organisations which offers opportunities to individuals to gain and sustain employment by ensuring they are equipped with the core, transferable and vocational competencies and skills they require to enter and progress within the labour market.

4. The project is funded by way of a grant from the European Social Fund - Priority 5 and provides valuable financial support to all partners involved, helping them to provide additional services within the proposed strategic skills pipeline. The Strategic Skills Pipeline involves a five stage approach to delivering employability services:

- Referral and Engagement
- Barrier removal
- Vocational Activity
- Employer Support, Engagement and Job Matching
- In Work Aftercare and Skills Development

5. A review is currently underway to examine how we can ensure that the services in relation to training, up-skilling and employment are fully integrated across East Ayrshire.

THE PRINCE'S TRUST

6. Working with the Prince's Trust, we give practical and financial support to the young people who need it most and assist in developing key skills, confidence and motivation, enabling young people to move into work, education or training. Within

East Ayrshire, the Trust has worked closely with individual partner agencies and the wider Community Planning Partnership to adapt and deliver a wide range of programmes in response to locally identified need.

7. Further information in relation to our employability services can be provided on request; however, our response focuses on the action being taken by the Council to ensure that we ourselves offer employment opportunities to individuals furthest from the employment market.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT SUMMIT – COUNCIL PLEDGES

8. East Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership organised a Youth Employment Summit which took place on 21 August 2012 to examine in more detail the problems at a local level and to pledge support to tackling an issue which could potentially leave a generation of our residents in unemployment or trapped in a labour market characterised by part time, low wage, insecure employment. The Council has made the following pledges:

- Working with our local business base to secure additional job opportunities or work experience placements for all our young people, providing them with a positive destination (c150 places per year);
- The delivery of 100 Modern Apprenticeships over 5 years within the Council;
- A greater commitment to providing opportunities tailored to the specific needs of our Looked After and Accommodated Young People, recognising our role as Corporate Parents;
- The creation of an internship programme for young people with a learning disability through Project Search;
- The inclusion of Community Benefits Clauses in all our works contracts over an appropriate scale; and
- Further work to refine our internal processes and ensure a one door approach to meeting the needs of our young people and employers.

MODERN APPRENTICESHIPS

9. In the last six years, 264 local young people have accessed Modern Apprenticeship opportunities with the Council, with a success rate of 75% completing their qualification. 80% of Modern Apprentices were retained in employment within the Council on completion of their qualification, 15% entered employment in other sectors. Only 5% did not progress any further.

WORK EXPERIENCE

10. Work experience opportunities are provided across a number of our services and have proved to be an important tool. We currently have 5 Transitional Support Workers who are employed to work within our schools to support those pupils who are disengaged from education and unresponsive to mainstream careers advice, those trapped in chaotic lifestyles, those with behavioural issues and those who are looked after and accommodated. In some cases, Support Workers have been able

to organise short term, flexible work experience, including placements within the Council.

11. The Council's Outdoor Amenity Service has offered work experience placements and this has successful with young people progressing to Get Ready for Work and two undertaking Modern Apprenticeships. This has led to the pledge detailed above to guarantee thirty work experience opportunities for our youngsters with additional support needs.

PROJECT SEARCH

12. The Council is currently developing plans to implement Project Search in partnership with our Community Planning Partners. This is a project which will, once fully developed, provide internship opportunities to young people with learning disabilities or autism and who are in their final year at school.

13. The Council has been successful in a bid to be a site for Project Search which is led by the Scottish Consortium for Learning Disability (SCLD) on behalf of the Scottish Government. Community Planning Partners have given their commitment in principle to the project which includes agreeing placements in both the Council and the NHS, along with local colleges agreeing to take the lead in supporting the tutoring of young people.

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

14. The Supported Employment Service offers support to young people and adults with Learning Disabilities, Autistic Spectrum Disorders, Mental Illness and/or Acquired Brain Injury. Referrals are taken from Social Work, Job Centre Plus and Partners within the East Ayrshire Works ESF Programme; self-referrals are also welcomed. Individuals can be supported into paid employment in the open labour market including opportunities within the public, private and third sectors.

15. The Council has been supportive of the service provided and awareness raising meetings and sessions have taken place across all services to encourage the employment of individuals through this service. Over the last two years, 6 individuals have been supported to progress into employment with the Council; 5 individuals have sustained this employment and continue to work in their specific roles with support from the Supported Employment team.

DOUBLE TICK SCHEME

16. We are signed up to the Department for Work and Pensions double tick symbol 'positive about disabled people'. This demonstrates to disabled jobseekers and disabled employees that we are committed to ensuring that people with a disability have every opportunity to access employment and develop their careers with East Ayrshire Council.

17. I trust that the information provided reassures the committee that in East Ayrshire we are taking steps to ensure that, not only do we offer opportunities to

individuals to gain and sustain employment through our Skills Development and Employability Service; as a major local employer, we ourselves are offering employment and training opportunities within the Council. We are, of course, happy to provide any additional information which would assist the work of the Finance Committee and look forward to your findings.