

FINANCE COMMITTEE

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

SUBMISSION FROM FIFE COUNCIL

1. Thank you for your letter of 17th July 2012 seeking information on the steps Fife Council is taking to offer employment opportunities to individuals furthest from the labour market. Tackling unemployment is a key priority for Fife Council and we are currently reviewing our role 'as an employer' to explore ways of strengthening our contribution to the employability agenda.

2. We are involved in a range of programmes targeting young people, disabled people and other groups experiencing high levels of multiple deprivation as summarised below.

Modern Apprenticeships (MA) and Get Ready for Work (GRFW)

3. Fife Council currently employs 160 young people through our Modern Apprenticeship programme and supports their training in a range of vocational areas including craft trades, administration, horticulture and motor vehicle mechanics. Our current contract with Skills Development Scotland is to provide 30 new MA places within the Council during 2012/13. We generally receive in excess of 2,000 applications for our apprenticeship programme. Our GRFW and Life Skills contract provides intensive support for a further 90 disadvantaged young people aged 16 to 18, many of whom have disengaged with school. Fife Council provides training and placements for 50 of these young people and external placements are sought for the remainder.

Fife Young People Initiative (FYPI)

4. In response to rising unemployment levels and particular concerns about youth unemployment and high demand for training places, we have invested an additional £825K during 2012/13 in our waged placement programme. This programme provides 16 to 24 year olds with waged in-work training places over 26 to 52 weeks. Where possible the placement is linked to an MA training route. Placements are provided by Fife Council, NHS Fife and private sector employers linked directly to employer needs. Fife Council has employed 9 young people through this programme with the majority of the 96 opportunities created in the private sector.

Family Firm

5. This refers to Fife's activities in the area of employability and progress to positive destinations as a good 'corporate parent' for looked after young people and those young people leaving care. Key worker support is provided to currently 140 young people to ensure that each individual has a pathway programme developed under 16+ including employability support before, during and after training, further education and employment. There is ongoing work with Fife's colleges to ensure

continuity of support and development of work experience and coaching support within the Council and through its partners. A number of places on our FYPI programme have been ring fenced for this group. We are currently developing a BIG Lottery bid in partnership with Aberlour, which, if successful, will lead to the funding of a mentoring programme.

Supported Employment

6. Our Social Work service manages the Supported Employment programme enabling people with disabilities and health issues to find and sustain employment within Fife Council services, private employers and through our supported business at Matrix Fife. 140 supported employment places are provided and 36 people with disabilities are employed at Matrix Fife. The Council also provides pre-vocational training in woodwork, pottery and IT in our Glenrothes workshops and horticulture training in a therapeutic environment near Cupar. The aim is to help disabled people to improve work confidence and skills and achieve their work ambitions.

Access to Jobs

7. We have a policy to open up all internal vacancies to those unemployed people who are participating in the 'Fife Employability Pathway' programme – a partnership employability programme targeting those facing multiple barriers including long term unemployment and delivered through our employability partnership 'Opportunities Fife'. Internal vacancies are also available to those participating in other Fife Council employment and training programmes including Supported Employment, GRFW and Community Based Adult Learning programmes. We also have an agreement with Jobcentre Plus who use their client database of local unemployed people to identify a suitable short list to fill short term vacancies of up to a maximum of 16 weeks.

Employability Programmes

8. Fife Council contributes to a range of employability programmes through 'Opportunities Fife', our employability partnership, to help prepare people for local labour market opportunities including pre-recruitment training programmes for specific skill shortage areas. However, as an employer we have not been actively engaged in this more recently due to the impact of budget cuts and a reducing workforce.

9. We welcome the Committee's focus on addressing the need to improve the employability of individuals experiencing high levels of multiple deprivation as a prerequisite to increasing sustainable economic growth and look forward to being fully engaged in future actions to support this.