Belfast City Council

Subject:	Apprenticeships Update
Date:	21 June 2024
Reporting Officer:	Christine Sheridan -Director of Human Resources Trevor Wallace - Director of Finance
Contact Officer:	Catherine Christy - HR Manager - Development

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?		**Yes**		**No**	X

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number [ ]

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision	
After Council Decision	
Sometime in the future	
Never	

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update elected members on the Council's apprenticeship programme including seeking approval to fund an additional apprenticeship opportunity in Fleet Services, City and Neighbourhood Services.

2.0	**Recommendation**
2.1	The Committee is asked to:
	• Note the content of this report and approve a third apprenticeship opportunity.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	Initial proposals on an apprenticeship programme were presented to SP&R committee in February 2023 and members agreed that a further report be submitted detailing how the proposals could be financed. At its meeting in March 2024, the Committee approved funding for two apprentices 2024/25 from realignment of specified reserves with the costs for future years to be incorporated into the medium-term financial plan.
3.2	Two apprenticeship opportunities were approved: one in Fleet Services and one in Digital Services. The report detailed approximate salary and training costs for the two posts of £77,000 per full year (around £45,000 for 24/25 by the time the posts are recruited).
3.3	The proposed costings were based on a higher-level Digital Services apprenticeship (level 4 – 7). Having had detailed engagement with Belfast Met, the Head of Digital Services has determined that a Level 3 apprenticeship better meets the needs of the service. Accordingly, the revised indicative salary costs are set out below. Members will note the reduction in annual salary costs of around £10,000.

Skill area	Level required	Approximate BCC Salary Grade	Approximate Annual Salary Costs per apprentice	Approximate Annual Training costs per apprentice
Fleet Technician	Apprentice level 2 or 3	Scale 2	£30,000	£2,000
Digital services	Apprentice level 3	Scale 2	£30,000	£5,000
			Total indicative costs per annum	£67,000

Revised proposal

| 3.4 | Following further discussion with City & Neighbourhood Services, the department has advised that based on previous experience, recruiting 2 apprentices to work alongside each other, increases learning and the support provided by a "buddy" to each other, can also increase the chances of an apprentice completing the training programme. |

		Peer support for the Digital Services apprenticeship will be provided by the service's two industrial placement students.
3.5		The revised annual cost of 2 Fleet Technician and one Digital Service's apprentice is approximately £99,000, this is around £61,000 for the 24/25 financial year. The Director of Finance has confirmed that an additional cost of £16,000 could be funded from firstly in year underspends, if available, or re-alignment of specified reserves. As proposed previously, costs for future years will be incorporated into the medium-term financial plan. Members are asked to approve the recruitment of an additional Fleet Technician apprentice.
		Recruitment and employability outreach.
3.6		The Fleet Technician Apprentice post will be recruited in July 2024 with a view to starting the apprenticeship programme in September 2024. The Digital Analyst Apprentice post will be recruited during September 2024 with a view to starting the apprenticeship programme in November 2024.
3.7		A programme of employability outreach will be delivered in line with inclusive growth ambitions. Corporate HR will work with Place & Economy Department to ensure the opportunities are promoted across all four inclusive growth cohorts and other groups currently underrepresented in our workforce. The outreach activity will focus on the apprenticeship opportunities (the job roles) as well as the benefits of working for the Council.
3.8		Members are reminded that at the completion of an apprenticeship programme, where permanent vacancies exist and the number of qualified apprentices is equal to the number of permanent jobs, apprentices are automatically appointed permanently to those posts. Where the number of vacancies is less than the number of qualified apprentices, the posts are ringfenced to the qualified apprentices, a selection process undertaken, and appointments made in order of merit.
		Financial and Resource Implications
3.9		The Financial implications are set above out at 3.3 and 3.5 above.
		Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
3.10		Recruitment for an apprenticeship programme will be carried out in accordance with the Local Government Staff Commission's Code of Procedures on Recruitment and Selection.

4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	None