



<b>Subject:</b>	Apprenticeship Programme Update
<b>Date:</b>	24 October 2025
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Christine Sheridan, Director of Human Resources
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Catherine Christy, Corporate HR Manager - Development

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</b>	
Insert number <input type="checkbox"/>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Information relating to any individual</li><li>2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual</li><li>3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)</li><li>4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter</li><li>5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained</li><li>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</li><li>7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime</li></ol>	
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Call-in</b>	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	<b>Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on a joint initiative with a number of councils to recruit a Higher-Level Apprentice.

<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	Through SOLACE, several councils agreed to develop a co-ordinated recruitment campaign for Planning Apprentices.
3.2	Engagement was undertaken with Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) institutes, and a Higher-Level Apprenticeship (HLA) course was identified as the best vehicle to provide opportunities for students to study a Planning related course while gaining valuable work experience in a Local Authority to better understand the role of a professional Planner and to experience how the entire planning system operates.
3.3	The HLA will involve an apprentice working within a Council planning team for 2.5 years while studying at Belfast Met, on day release for a Level 5 HLA in Property, Housing and Planning. The Course content has been reviewed by RTPI and Planning professionals and provides the essential skills for a planner while providing a pathway to study level 6 and above courses at university.
3.4	While there can be no commitment by Council to retain students beyond the HLA course duration, Local Government acknowledges there will be plenty of opportunities for full time jobs given the demand for planners in Local and Central Government.
3.5	The Committee is aware that funding for an annual apprenticeship programme was secured via the annual estimating process and ratified at the March 2025 meeting of the Council. The costs for the HLA Planning Apprentice will be met from the corporate budget and once appointed will bring the number of apprentices in the rolling programme to 9.
3.6	It is envisaged that the marketing of this opportunity will be carried out jointly between the participating councils and will commence in November with interviews in early December, with each council undertaking out their own recruitment as per their agreed procedures.
3.7	It is anticipated Apprentices would commence their employment in January with the course commencing in January at Belfast Met.
3.8	A full induction plan and programme of support is being developed to ensure that the HLA apprentice is properly inducted into their new role.

3.9	<p><b>2026/27 apprenticeship programme</b></p> <p>Departments will be asked to submit their bids for the 2026/27 apprenticeship programme in Quarter 3. Departments must ensure that a relevant course is identified, and a commitment from line managers to provide the extra supervision and support required to make the apprenticeship a success. Directors, or their nominees will be required to engage with CHR, Development Team to identify suitable courses before a bid can be submitted.</p>
3.10	<p>Areas of the business already supported through the programme are unlikely to succeed in future bids whilst the current apprenticeship is ongoing. CMT will be required to make the final decision on which apprenticeship bids are successful for 2026/27.</p>
3.11	<p><b>Financial and Resource Implications</b></p> <p>To date funding of £256,000 has been agreed for this programme in the 2025/26 rate setting process and future investment will need to be considered to enhance the programme.</p>
3.12	<p><b>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</b></p> <p>Recruitment for apprenticeship programmes is carried out in accordance with the Local Government Staff Commission's Code of Procedures on Recruitment and Selection.</p>
4.0	<p><b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b></p>
	<p>None</p>