



**Belfast City Council**

<b>Report to:</b>	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Investment Programme – job opportunities and employability
<b>Date:</b>	23 November 2012
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Jill Minne, Head of Human Resources

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	To update Members on progress with the job opportunities and employability targets set out in the Investment Programme and to seek agreement to ‘ring-fence’ five vacant Business Support Clerk (BSC) posts to people not in employment.

<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	Members will be aware that one of the main ways to deliver the 200 job opportunities committed to in the Investment Programme is to reduce long-term, perpetual dependency on agency usage and create directly employed council posts. At its meeting on 24 August 2012, Members agreed to create and recruit up to 40 permanent basic - entry ‘peripatetic’ BSC posts for that specific purpose.
2.2	As well as delivering job opportunities, the Council is also committed to providing suitable work experience opportunities to help people get ‘job ready’ to apply for the job opportunities in the Council, and elsewhere, as and when they become available. Members will also be aware that discussions with our employability partners have indicated that while the provision of work experience and other employability interventions have merit, ring-fencing posts or a percentage of available posts is an essential element of any long term unemployment intervention to give the long term unemployed a real chance of being able to compete for jobs.
2.3	The recruitment of the first tranche of these vacant BSC posts (up to 20 posts) provides a significant opportunity for the council to deliver a targeted employability initiative by purposely ring-fencing a number of them to people not in employment.
2.4	Further information on progress against the specific job opportunities and employability targets set out in the Investment Programme, along with details on this specific recruitment and ring-fencing initiative, are set out below.

<b>3.0</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>												
3.1	<p><b>Job opportunities</b> Progress against the job opportunity targets previously agreed with Members are as follows:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Target</th> <th>Actual to date</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>110</td> <td>109 permanent and 33 temporary posts</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>60</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>30</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	Target	Actual to date	1	110	109 permanent and 33 temporary posts	2	60		3	30	
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	<p>49 of the publicly advertised permanent job opportunities posts have been newly created posts and sixty have been permanent posts arising from staff turnover (pre- Investment programme these were likely to have been frozen). 22 of the temporary posts have been 'newly created' job opportunities and eleven have been temporary posts arising from staff turnover.</p> <p>3.2 <b>Recruitment and ring-fencing initiative</b> The recruitment process for the BSC posts does not require applicants to possess formal qualifications or experience. Instead, their skills and competence are tested by a series of computer-based tests, followed by paper-based skills tests, followed by interviews.</p> <p>3.3. The Equality Commission Northern Ireland (ECNI) has confirmed that it would be fully supportive of five of the 20 BSC posts being ring-fenced to people not in employment providing the rationale is clearly outlined, the approach and timeframe are well planned and that best practice is strictly adhered to.</p> <p>3.3.1 <b>Rationale:</b> this relates to the Council's commitment to helping to stimulate the local economy through the job creation and employability outreach measures as outlined in our three year Investment Programme. In particular, reaching out to those furthest removed from the labour market will purposely allow the Council to target assistance where it is most needed. The recruitment process, i.e. the use of skill tests instead of formal qualifications and the number of posts available make this an appropriate recruitment exercise in which to apply this specific targeted employability outreach initiative.</p> <p>3.3.2 <b>Approach and timeframe:</b> The ECNI and DEL are fully supportive of the proposed two-strand recruitment approach with coordinated testing, selection and appointment processes:  (i) a mainstream recruitment campaign for fifteen of the BSC posts will be publicly advertised in November 2012 with testing taking place in January and February 2013, and interviews taking place in March / April 2013; and  (ii) a ring-fenced recruitment campaign for five of the BSC posts will be open only to those people who have not been in employment for six months and who have been chosen for and successfully completed a pilot pre-recruitment training programme with the Council to help them become 'job-ready' to apply for the post of BSC. It is proposed that approximately 45 places will be available for the pre-recruitment programme and the Council will work with DEL, the ECNI and other employability partners across the city to ensure fair selection of participants. The normal testing and interview processes will follow for those who have successfully completed the programme and the people with the top five scores after interview will be recommended for appointment to the five ring fenced BSC posts.</p> <p>3.3.3 <b>Best Practice:</b> The ECNI is content that this selection process demonstrates best practice and it recommends that the approach is implemented on a pilot basis to allow for full evaluation. The ECNI has also advised that the programme should be open to both those in receipt and those not in receipt of benefits and that the six month 'not in employment' eligibility timeframe should be applied to everyone regardless of age. The Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC) has also confirmed full support for this employability initiative.</p> <p>3.4 <b>Next Steps – job opportunities</b> Another area of work that has had sustained significant and consistent use of agency staff is the post of Cleansing Operative. Any decision to replace agency workers with permanent Cleansing operatives will however depend on the outcome of an ongoing</p>
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	<p>review of Waste Collection. More information on the potential for creating job opportunities in Cleansing will be provided to Committee at a later date.</p> <p>3.5 The creation of job opportunities in front line services continues to be a priority and while there is potential to create some front line jobs from reducing reliance on agency workers and from structural reviews, the focus will have to be on reducing overtime to create more of these types of jobs. This is a complex piece of work and may have far reaching implications for some existing staff. Therefore, the potential job opportunities in front line services expected from a reduction in overtime will take longer to achieve.</p> <p>3.6 <b>Employability targets</b> The Council has provided 102 work placements since the start of April 2012 for a range of people and organisations including schools, colleges and universities, the Youth Justice Agency and disability organisations. This figure also includes 10 young people participating in the second year of the Young Person's Employment Initiative (YEPI). Please see Appendix 1 for further detail.</p> <p>3.7 At its meeting on 24 August 2012, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee received information on the following government led programmes and the placements being provided in the council for each of the following programmes :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Steps to Work</li> <li>• Programme Led Apprenticeships</li> <li>• Graduate Acceleration Programme</li> <li>• Youth Employment Initiative</li> </ul> <p>DEL and its lead contractors are in the process of allocating sixty council placements and the first clients are expected to be in place in the council over the next few weeks. Further opportunities will be advertised when the current sixty placements have been taken up. Information on the government programmes and placement targets for each year of the Investment Programme is attached at Appendix 1.</p> <p>3.8 <b>Next Steps – employability targets</b> The Property and Projects Department has identified the potential to create and sustain a number of craft apprenticeships and is in the process of developing a business case to secure the necessary resources. The possibility of further work placement opportunities is currently being explored with the Cleansing Section. The section currently uses agency workers to cover its temporary seasonal requirements and there may be potential to provide valuable work experience for the long term unemployed on a seasonal basis. More detail on this will be presented to Committee at a later date. The Council will continue to work to explore existing and potential funding to support the Council's employability targets and with employability partners citywide to raise awareness and promote the opportunities being provided.</p>
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<b>4.0</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
4.1	<p><b>Human Resources</b></p> <p>The applicant response for the mainstream BSC posts could be huge and the effective management of this project will require significant human resource input. In addition, the software licence for the online testing application expires in early February 2013, meaning that all applicants need to be tested by then. In light of the anticipated volume of applicants and time constraints, it is proposed that the terms of application for the BSC posts make it clear that there can be no re-scheduling of testing and/or interview arrangements for applicants under any circumstances.</p>
4.2	<p><b>Financial</b></p> <p>The PCs for testing are already available but some installation and configuration may need to take place out of hours to meet the required timescales.</p>

<b>5.0</b>	<b>Equality Implications</b>
5.1	The planned approach to the recruitment of the BSC posts, including the ring-fencing of five of the 20 posts to people not in employment has been agreed with the ECNI.

<b>6.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
6.1.	<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Note the progress in relation to job opportunities and employability targets.</li> <li>2. Agree the planned approach and timeframe for recruiting BSCs, including the ring-fencing of five vacant posts to people not in employment for six months.</li> </ol>
<b>7.0</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
7.1.	The recruitment and ring-fencing approach for the BSC posts will be implemented on a pilot basis to allow for full evaluation and the findings will be reported back to committee as appropriate.

<b>8.0</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
<p>BSC – Business Support Clerk          DEL – Department of Employment and Learning          LGSC – Local Government Staff Commission          ECNI – Equality Commission for Northern Ireland</p>	

<b>9.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
<p><b>Appendix 1</b> - Type and number of placements being offered for Year 1 of the Investment Programme.</p>	

**Appendix 1 -Type and number of placements being offered for Year 1 of  
Investment Programme**

<b>Type of placement</b>	<b>No. of placements</b>	<b>Description</b>
School	40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 week placements or 1-2 day per week over an extended period</li> </ul>
Disability	31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special needs schools and disability organisations</li> <li>• 1 week placements or 1-2 days per week over an extended period</li> </ul>
College/ university	30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Range of placements-1-2 week placements; 1-2 days per week over an extended period; up to 16 weeks for some universities</li> </ul>
PBNI/YJA	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work experience for placements required to carry out community service orders</li> <li>• 40-240 hours community service</li> </ul>
Graduate Acceleration Programme (GAP)  DEL programme delivered by Business in the Community	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For graduates from QUB and University of Ulster</li> <li>• Work placement programme lasts up to 26 weeks</li> <li>• Graduates complete project/ piece of work alongside studying for an Educational Development International (EDI) certificate</li> </ul>
Steps to Work  Delivered by DEL lead contractors across the city	23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 18+ years old</li> <li>• Work experience placements- range from 8-26 weeks</li> <li>• £15.38 training allowance (paid by DEL ) in addition to current benefits</li> <li>• No cost to employer</li> <li>• Additional support, guidance and training provided by DEL advisors</li> </ul>
Programme Led Apprenticeships  Delivered by DEL lead contractors across the city	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 16-17 year olds</li> <li>• Work experience placements- up to 104 weeks</li> <li>• Receive EMA - non means tested (currently £40 per week); travel expenses; child care expenses (if applicable)</li> <li>• No cost to employer</li> <li>• Mixture of work experience and training provided by college</li> </ul>
Youth Employment Scheme  Delivered by DEL	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voluntary programme</li> <li>• 16-24 year olds (mixture of NEETS and employed young people)</li> <li>• 2-8 week placements</li> <li>• Retain benefits; travel expenses; child care expenses (if applicable)</li> <li>• £250 grant available to council (conditions apply)</li> </ul>
Young Persons Employment Initiative (YPEI)  Delivered by Bryson Future Skills	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 18-24 year olds</li> <li>• Work placement programme lasts up to 26 weeks</li> <li>• No cost to employer</li> </ul>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>170</b>	

