

<b>Report to:</b>	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Investment Programme - Employability update and funding application
<b>Date:</b>	25 January, 2013
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Jill Minne, Head of Human Resources
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## **1.0 Purpose**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on the employability aspects of the Investment Programme and to seek approval, in principle, to apply jointly with partners across the city, for European funding to assist with the provision of apprenticeships.

## **2.0 Background**

2.1 As part of the Investment Programme the Council has committed to the provision of 400 placement, apprenticeship and internship opportunities and the creation of 200 job opportunities. Members have received regular updates on the number of placements and job opportunities; up to date figures are provided below.

2.2 Corporate Human Resources has been working with colleagues in the European Unit, to research funding opportunities that might allow the Council to provide further work experience and apprenticeship opportunities. One such potential funding opportunity, the call for proposals for social policy experimentations under PROGRESS 2012, is outlined below.

## **3.0 Key Issues**

### **Update on job opportunities and work placements**

3.1 The number of job opportunities publicly advertised to date is 139 permanent job opportunities and 37 temporary job opportunities This exceeds the target of 110 set for year one.

3.2 A total of 149 work experience placements have been provided and HR continues to work with DEL and other partners to maximise the opportunities that the Council can offer.

3.3 The Property and Projects and Parks and Leisure departments have recently confirmed budget provision to create a number of apprenticeship opportunities (seven craft apprentices and three horticultural apprentices) and the recruitment process for these will begin shortly.

3.4 Members will recall the approval for five ring fenced Business Support Clerk posts to the long term unemployed and the provision of a two week pre recruitment programme for 45 people. This pre recruitment programme is being advertised week commencing 20 January 2013 and will start on 25 February 2013. The programme will consist of one week of work experience in a council department, one week of classroom based training and a mock interview.

### **Potential European funding**

3.5 The call for proposals for social policy experimentations under PROGRESS offers financial support to experiment with innovative social policy changes and reforms before implementing them on a wider scale. It is aimed at public authorities acting as policy makers at national, regional or local level and three themes are supported under the call:

- i) promotion of youth activation measures to tackle youth unemployment and exclusion
- ii) provision of childcare services
- iii) promotion of active and healthy aging

3.6 €1 million has been allocated to the youth theme and requests for grants should be between €700 k and €1 million. 20% co-financing is required. The deadline for applications is 15 February, 2013 with project duration of 24-36 months.

3.7 Preliminary discussions with a number of employability partners in the city, DEL, BMET, Belfast Partnership Board and some of the LEMIS providers in the city indicated a desire to collaborate on an application under the first theme, with a focus on barriers to labour market entry faced by young people within the Belfast area.

### **Funding proposal**

3.8 It is proposed that an application is submitted to fund ten paid apprenticeships for young people to work in Belfast City Council for a fixed term of two years in the areas of:

- Facilities management
- Horticulture
- Waste management
- Business administration

3.9 This list is not exhaustive and other subject or vocational areas that the Council could offer will be considered. The young people would also work towards an NVQ qualification. The relevant Council departments have confirmed they have the capacity to support this initiative through the provision of relevant work experience and supervision.

3.10 The experiment will focus on helping young people facing multiple barriers to employment to identify their potential and develop personal, employability and vocational skills as well as work experience in an occupational area direct relevant to the aspirations of the young person. The aim will be to challenge current policy around apprentices for young people (i.e. employer incentives and funding - specifically in the public sector and the predominance of class-room based apprenticeship programmes).

3.11 DEL has confirmed that it is content to lead the application for EU funding in principal and proposes a partnership approach with the Council, DEL, BMET, Belfast Partnership Board and LEMIS providers citywide, with DEL and the Council being the lead partners. The partners are exploring options to secure the required 20% match funding, (including whether or not 'in kind' contributions would be an 'acceptable option').

- 3.12 The project detail is still to be worked up and the application submission will be dependent upon full agreement of all partners. Full details of this will be presented to members at a later date but members are asked to agree in principal to the Council's involvement in this partnership to allow an application to be made.
- 3.13 The partnership accepts that the probability of securing funding is limited as there will be considerable competition across Europe for the amount available. However all partners feel that the discussions that have taken place to date regarding potential collaboration is good preparation for future funding calls. All agree that discussions should continue to generate further ideas for collaboration, regardless of the outcome of this particular funding application.

#### **4.0 Resource Implications**

##### 4.1 Financial

If funding is approved there would be no financial cost to the Council as all employment and training costs would be covered by the funding. The application will be dependent upon the partners being able to secure match funding.

##### 4.2 Human Resources

The apprentices would be employed by the council for the duration of the project therefore line management would be required to carry out normal supervision and coaching. Project management, co-ordination and administration costs will be built into the funding application.

#### **5.0 Equality and Good Relations Implications**

- 5.1 The recruitment and selection process will be agreed between the partners and the Equality Commission for N. Ireland and will be city wide.

#### **6.0 Recommendation**

- 6.1 Members are asked to approve council involvement in the proposed partnership in principal and agree to the submission of a joint application.

#### **7.0 Documents attached**

None

#### **8.0 Abbreviations**

DEL - The Department of Employment and Learning  
 LEMIS - Local Employment Intermediary Services  
 BMET - Belfast Metropolitan College