

Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 24th September, 2013

Lead Member / Officer: Cllr Barbara Smith, Cllr Hugh Irving

Report Author: Sally Ellis

Title: Volunteering, Apprenticeships, Work Experience, Graduates and Internships

1. What is the report about?

1.1 The report provides a summary of the work which has taken place within Denbighshire County Council over the last 16 months in relation to coordinating a number of work streams including volunteering, graduates, apprenticeships, work experience and internships. In particular it focuses upon a potential future programme of work to develop volunteering which will bring significant benefits to the organisation and further advance its “bringing the Council closer to the community” priority and its regeneration priority.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

2.1 Funding to support the development of volunteering, apprenticeships, work experience, graduate, traineeships and internships was originally allocated as part of the People and Places Board programme. The resources were for 1.5 graduate trainees for a period of 1 year, subsequently extended to 18 months. Funding was especially geared to developing opportunities for young people in the context of Denbighshire’s demographic profile and the continuing out-migration of young people. The investment made has exceeded targets in most cases but the funding originally ended in September 2013. This report proposes a continuation of the programme with a stronger emphasis on the development of volunteering.

3. What are the Recommendations?

Cabinet are recommended to:-

3.1 adopt a Corporate Volunteer Strategy (**Appendix One**); and

3.2 adopt targets for the volunteering work programme and for the continued work to develop work experience placements, internships, graduate traineeships and apprentices as set out in paragraph 4.8

4. Report details

4.1 As a result of the investment in graduate trainees, significant outputs, including the following have been achieved. A fuller account is given in **Appendix Two:-**

- employment of 35 apprentices (so far this financial year) across the organisation in a range of skill areas (Denbighshire has reached the finals of Large Employer of the Year in Apprenticeship Awards Cymru)
- 20 Job Growth Wales opportunities; 6 month paid work opportunities for 16-24 year olds, 6 Steps to Employment and 13 Summer Placement Scheme opportunities
- 10 graduate trainees in an 18 month period across a wide range of services and projects. A paid internship scheme is about to start building on the previous unpaid scheme.

- a new work experience process has been developed enabling a wider range of placements to be provided more efficiently for local school students
- researching current use of volunteers and supporting the development of a Corporate Volunteer Strategy, building on that developed in Communications Marketing and Leisure
- introduction of Synergy: Young Employees' Network which has provided a range of development opportunities including, peer support, workshops, networking, focus groups, workshops to both staff and the public, visiting secondary schools etc.

4.2 The cost to the authority of developing these opportunities has been relatively modest (£40k for 12 months' staff costs and a £40k match fund). Most opportunities created have been supported via external funding and a very high proportion of the young people taking up these opportunities have been retained by the organisation, with others successfully gaining work elsewhere. Though there has not been a comprehensive evaluation, available information suggests that a high value is placed on these opportunities by young people and managers alike and that this work also enhances the Council's reputation in the community.

4.3 The development of volunteering has not advanced as quickly as that for employment opportunities. However, it is considered that the development of volunteering will bring significant benefits to the organisation including:

- Enabling the organisation to be closer to a wide spectrum of the community and in turn creating ambassadors.
- Raising the organisation's profile to take the local lead in delivering opportunities to the community and supporting a talent flow through the organisation.
- Providing specialised skills/qualities to compliment and strengthen service provision, fulfilling a diverse range of provisions which are not provided by paid employees. The ability to provide a personalised touch concentrating on one client, task or issue.
- Adding value through the provision of an invaluable resource to sustain excellent service delivery. Ensuring the sustainability of the organisations service delivery during austerity measures.
- Supporting the organisation to meet its core objectives and future ambitions in terms of the Denbighshire Vision, Corporate Priorities and Economic & Community Strategy.

4.4 From the research carried out regarding volunteering within Denbighshire County Council (**Appendix Two**) it was apparent the organisation would benefit from a more strategic focus and sustainable coordination of volunteering opportunities. To support this, a Corporate Volunteer Strategy has been developed (**Appendix One**) which clearly outlines a consistent approach to the attraction, management and retention of volunteers. In addition, services have agreed to fund an interactive Volunteer Management Information System (MIS) which provides a clear portal for all volunteer opportunities within the organisation. This system will allow for a more effective approach to the management of volunteers as well as providing new opportunities.

4.5 Though this puts in place a good strategic framework, it has been the view of all involved that the council would not maximise its use of volunteers without some staff resource. Given the financial position, it was not possible to identify this from individual service budgets. However, CET have agreed resources to fund a post for 12 months from allocations for corporate priorities and the Spend to Save fund because of its potential to add value to all priorities.

4.6 The purpose of the post (see **Appendix Three** for JD and PS) will be to:-

- Successfully implement the volunteer strategy across the organisation utilising best practice techniques to ensure all volunteers have a high quality and positive experience.
- Support the implementation of the volunteer MIS system through effective communication, providing training and guidance to those using the system.
- Raising awareness of how to effectively use volunteers within services who currently do not use volunteers. Creating a toolkit of effective resources which will provide support, guidance, clear policies, processes and procedures.
- Ensure effective stakeholder engagement and collaborative working. Raising awareness externally of the system in particular to agencies helping those back into employment, schools, colleges and universities etc.
- Maintain the development and implementation of the range of traineeships and work experience. Providing support to managers through the identification and implementation of these opportunities.

4.7 This sector leading approach to the management of volunteers will also ensure a flow of talent to our other traineeship opportunities.

4.8 It is anticipated that as part of adopting the strategy and the implementation of this post the following outcomes will be achieved:-

- Increase of 200 volunteers in the first year with the total number of people volunteering reaching 2000 by 2016
- 60 work experience placements
- 5 traineeships and 5 graduate internships
- 35-40 apprentices

4.9 In summary, Denbighshire County Council has a clear vision on how the investment and creation of opportunities such as volunteering and traineeships will contribute to meeting the Council's corporate priorities. A substantial amount of work has been achieved but this work cannot be absorbed by other officers in the organisation. Continued investment is needed to ensure the work on volunteering strategy and traineeships is further developed to achieve its full potential benefit.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

The decision from this report contributes to developing the local economy and through providing benefits to the community in terms of:-

1. Developing the economy; through the identification of both paid and unpaid opportunities. The creation of these opportunities not only supports developing a skilled workforce, it also encourages people to stay within Denbighshire.
2. Return on Investment; through developing a workforce with job relevant transferrable skills and the necessary understanding in order to meet the council's needs both now and in the future. Also through the creation of cost benefit solutions to combat workforce succession issues and the provision for a resourceful workforce. Many of the graduate posts are related to projects associated with the Modernisation Programme.

3. Being closer to the community, through adopting the Corporate Volunteering Strategy to establish high standards of volunteer opportunities throughout the organisation which will be available to the community, for the advantage for the community. Also through the traineeships making links with the community in terms of delivering work shops to the public and schools.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

The cost of the Management Information System has already been covered through the central budget. The staff resource has provisionally been identified as a Scale 7 (£23,945-£26,539) which including oncosts will be £31,128.60 - £34,500.39. The costs of this will be met from the financial provisions for the Council's Corporate Priorities and the Spend to Save fund.

In terms of affecting others services, the work will facilitate services throughout the council by: identifying a range of opportunities; providing guidance on the options available given the circumstances and budget requirements; providing direction on how to action the opportunities and bring them to fruition.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision?

All matters regarding those with protected characteristics have been taken into account. The work on volunteering and traineeships is likely to create further opportunities for those with protected characteristics.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

SLT and CET have discussed employment opportunities and volunteering. Discussions have also taken place with the key Lead Members.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

The additional temporary cost of developing the programme can be funded from within existing resources. It is proposed that the cost be split equally between the corporate priority budgets allocated in 2013/14 for Modernising the Council and Developing the Economy with the remainder funded from the Modernisation Reserve.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

A strategy to support this work beyond the current funding period does not yet exist. Clear evidence will need to be brought forward within 12 months to enable judgments to be made about the scale/longer-term need for this.

11. Power to make the Decision

-Contacted-