



CABINET

Monday 8 July 2018

LEVEL 3 PLANNING TECHNICIAN APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME 2019-2021

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. In 2016 the Suffolk councils supported the establishment of a Level 3 Planning Technician Apprenticeship. 10 apprentices were appointed including 2 within the two former councils.
2. It is proposed to run a similar programme across Suffolk commencing in September 2019 and Cabinet is asked to approve funding of up to £50k to support the appointment of 2 apprentices in ESC. In recommending this additional spend it is noted that £25k has been allocated by the Suffolk Public Sector Leaders as a contribution to the overall programme across Suffolk to be taken from the Transformation Challenge Award (TCA) funding.

Is the report Open or Exempt?	Open
Category of Exempt Information and reason why it is NOT in the public interest to disclose the exempt information.	<p>This report is to be considered during the CLOSED part of the Agenda because it contains exempt information as defined in Paragraph (insert paragraph number) of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.</p> <p>It is considered that the public interest in not disclosing the exempt information outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information because (insert text)</p>

Wards Affected:	All
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Cabinet Member:	Cllr David Ritchie- Cabinet Member for Planning and Coastal Management
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Supporting Officer:	Philip Ridley Head of Planning and Coastal Management (01394) 444432 Philip.ridley@eastsuffolk.gov.uk
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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In 2016 the two former Councils appointed two Level 3 Town Planning Technician apprentices as part of a cross Suffolk programme to strengthen the planning teams acknowledging that recruitment of planners , at all levels, was becoming more challenging. A Level 3 Apprenticeship is an equivalent standard to that of A Levels. The programme was a success and has resulted in East Suffolk Council recruiting one of the appointed apprentices to a permanent role as a Planning Officer, and is now studying for a Town Planning degree. Of the 10 Level 3 Apprentices appointed across Suffolk, there are 4 now permanently employed and studying for a degree in planning. This is positively growing the capacity of planning teams across Suffolk.
- 1.2 The recruitment of planners continues to be a challenge as there continues to be a shortage at all levels of experience. Various joint working initiatives across the Suffolk councils have looked at how we can build further capacity which includes this Council's Head of Planning and Coastal Management being appointed as the National Chairman of the Local Authorities Employee group developing the Degree Level Town Planning Apprenticeship for the Royal Town Planning Institute.
- 1.3 The Suffolk authorities again want to provide a joint Level 3 programme, and are looking to recruit a cohort of a further 10 Level 3 apprentices for a September 2019 intake, with East Suffolk potentially appointing 2 of these.

2 LEVEL 3 APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME 2019-2021

- 2.1 As set out above there is a significant shortage of town planners across the country and East Suffolk has found it difficult to recruit planners at all levels in recent years. The range of work opportunities planners will have to develop their career in planning in East Suffolk is significant and it is a key strategy to look to "grow our own" to ensure we have experience, as well as local knowledge in the teams. As part of a number of initiatives the council has enhanced its general recruitment activities and literature including for the planning teams to positively promote the work opportunities in the area and as a quality place to live.
- 2.2 The teams also acknowledge that the promotion of planning as a career in schools is an opportunity to be taken as part of the council being a community leader. The planning team are currently working with the Royal Town Planning Institute's ambassador programme to go out to schools to promote planning as a career. To date 6 school events are proposed this year meeting secondary school students across East Suffolk. This will also include potentially attending the Suffolk Skills Show in October.
- 2.3 It is also interesting to note that a number of the current staff in the planning teams have local connections to the area so, having regard to future skills requirements, there is a clear justification for us to "grow our own" to enable local students to develop a career to support and improve their local area and thus enable those who want to continue to grow their career in the area, to do so.
- 2.4 The Suffolk councils are proposing a new cohort of Level 3 Planning Technician Apprentices to commence in September 2019. Whilst employed through their 2 year term by the Council, the apprentices will undertake study on a block release basis (most likely at Chichester College) but also work within the planning teams across East Suffolk. The previous 2 apprentices were valued additional members of staff, making a positive contribution to the teams work outputs. However with the investment in the teams in recent times there is now an even better/stronger internal support/mentoring network for these apprentices as well as a better programme for all the Level 3 apprentices on this programme to work and share their experiences and develop together. The work across all the Suffolk councils will ensure that all the Level 3 apprentices, and those

studying for degrees, will have an organised programme of development supported and developed by all the planning teams. The Suffolk councils have produced the brochure attached at Appendix A to promote the recruitment.

- 2.5 The appointed apprentices will be paid £11,035 pa in their first year and £12,611 pa in their second year. This proposed salary is equivalent to the salary paid to the apprentices employed by the two former councils in the first cohort (with relevant cost of living uplifts).
- 2.6 On top of the salary, course fees are at £9k per apprentice, however this would be paid from the apprenticeship levy. Other additional costs would total c£8.5k for the 2 posts over the 2 year programme, for travel and accommodation to enable them to complete their programme.
- 2.7 It is proposed that £25k would be allocated by the Suffolk Public Sector Leaders to be allocated from the Transformation Challenge Award (TCA), which equates to approximately a 10% contribution. It is proposed that the shortfall would be provided by the East Suffolk Council and would be up to £50k for the 2 year programme for the two apprentices.

3 FINANCIAL AND GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 When setting the Council's 2019/20 budget in February 2019, the cost of appointing two Level 3 Planning Technician apprentices was not included due to this proposal not being known at the time.
- 3.2 As the £50k cost was not included in the budget, this represents growth and in line with the Council's financial procedure rules, section 3.1.10, Cabinet are required to approve the additional expenditure from their supplementary estimates £500k general fund revenue allowance.
- 3.3 The financing of the £50k will be met from the Planning team's training earmarked reserve of £52k, which was established for the purpose of supporting this type of apprenticeship.
- 3.4 At this point in time, there is no further financial commitment beyond the two year apprenticeship, as permanent employment would increase the Council's establishment costs and further increase the Council's budget gap.

4 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 The need to have a resilient workforce in planning teams to help manage the growth challenges across Suffolk is acknowledged by all councils. The councils propose initiating a second cohort of Level 3 Planning Technician Apprentices to help develop and strengthen the planning teams and Cabinet is asked to agree the funding of 2 Level 3 apprentices as set out above for East Suffolk Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet agrees funding of up to £50k to support the appointment of 2 Level 3 Planning Technician apprentices for the two year programme commencing in September 2019.

APPENDICES	
Appendix A	Recruitment Brochure for Level 3 Apprentice

BACKGROUND PAPERS None.
