



Subject:	Apprenticeship Programme
Date:	23 February 2024
Reporting Officer:	Christine Sheridan -Director of Human Resources
Contact Officer:	Catherine Christy - HR Manager - Development

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted? Yes No

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
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
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in? Yes No

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to outline options for a Belfast City Council apprenticeship programme including indicative costs.

2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to note the content of this report and determine next steps.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	The Inclusive Growth Strategy sets out the Council's commitment to addressing current and future recruitment needs through apprenticeships from entry-level through to higher-level technical and professional qualifications. Apprenticeships provide a sustainable route into employment across all levels of the workforce and as a council we are committed to embedding apprenticeships within our workforce planning strategy.
3.2	The Council has not undertaken an apprenticeship programme in recent years and in line with our commitment as set out in the Inclusive Growth Strategy, SP&R Committee at its meeting of 20 October 2023, requested that a paper be brought to a future meeting on introducing a Belfast City Council apprenticeship programme and the potential cost implications.
3.3	<p>Previous apprenticeship programmes</p> <p>When the Council previously recruited apprenticeships, these were in traditional roles such as Electricians, Joiners, Fleet Technicians, Plumbers, Gardeners and Painters. Our records indicate that since 2005, 38 apprentices were appointed into apprenticeship roles, 26 of whom went on to secure permanent posts in the Council with 2 currently engaged in Fixed Term Contract posts.</p>
3.4	<p>At the end of an apprenticeship programme, if permanent vacancies existed and the number of qualified apprentices was equal to the number of permanent jobs, apprentices were appointed automatically to those posts. Where the number of vacancies was less than the number of qualified apprentices, the posts were ringfenced to the qualified apprentices, a selection process undertaken, and appointments made in order of merit.</p>
3.5	<p>Current funding arrangements</p> <p>Belfast City Council does not have a central budget to fund apprenticeship programmes and previous apprenticeships have been funded by departments through realigning existing staffing budgets. There is a desire across all departments to explore apprenticeships and address strategic workforce planning challenges. However, the absence of a corporate budget or funding to create new apprenticeship opportunities continues to be a barrier. Elected Members will be aware that as a public authority, the Council is not able to access government funding for associated apprenticeship training costs, and while this presents an</p>

additional challenge, the main issue to be addressed going forward is the direct salary costs.

Potential areas to consider for a future apprenticeship programme

3.6 Elected Members asked officers to identify potential areas for apprenticeship programmes. Like many organisations, the Council has experienced difficulties in recent years in attracting applicants to certain roles and in particular, within technical areas where the current supply is not meeting employer demand. Two potential areas identified are:

- CNS, Fleet & Resources ; auto electricians and technicians
- Digital Services; cyber security, support and systems development.

Financial and Resource Implications

3.7 The indicative salary costs for an apprenticeship programme in the Fleet & Resources and Digital Services are set out below. Apprenticeship programmes can take between 1 and 4 years to complete and the average time to complete is usually 3 years.

Skill area	Level required	Approximate BCC Salary Grade	Approximate Annual Salary Costs per apprentice	Approximate Annual Training costs per apprentice
Auto Electrician / Auto Technician	Apprentice level 2 or 3	Scale 2	£30 000	£2000
Digital services	Higher level apprenticeship level 4 to 7	Scale 6	£40 000	£5000

In addition to the recurring salary costs for the period of the apprenticeships, there will be training costs which will vary depending on the specific course, approximate costs are set out in the table above,

3.8	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> Recruitment for an apprenticeship programme will be carried out in accordance with the Local Government Staff Commission's Code of Procedures on Recruitment and Selection.
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	None