



Belfast City Council

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Report to: | Strategic Policy and Resources Committee |
| Subject: | Employability Initiatives |
| Date: | 23 March 2012 |
| Reporting Officer: | Jill Minne, Head of Human Resources, ext 3220 |
| Contact Officer: | Catherine Christy, Principal HR Advisor, ext 3226 |

| 1. | Relevant Background Information |
|-----|--|
| 1.1 | <p>The purpose of this report is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• update members on progress with employability initiatives contained in the Investment Programme and• seek agreement to remove existing limitations in relation to the facilitation of work experience placements in the Council. |
| 1.2 | <p>As part of the Investment Programme members have committed to 400 placement, apprenticeship and internship opportunities in the Council and to the creation of 200 job opportunities at no additional cost to the rate payer. Progress in taking these initiatives forward is outlined at paragraph 2.1.</p> |
| 1.3 | <p>Clearly, it is important to ensure that work placement opportunities with the Council are widely accessible to all. The Council's community outreach programme was launched in 1998 to promote Belfast City Council as an attractive, equal opportunities employer with wide and varied job opportunities. Initially activity focused on young people (mostly students and school children) and people with disabilities. Outreach activity however has been extended over the past few years to focus on the long term unemployed and ex- offenders and these initiatives have been particularly successful. Committee approval was sought to engage in these initiatives which did not meet existing work experience placement requirements. Members are asked to consider two issues which have in the past prevented some people from availing of work placement opportunities with the Council. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• indemnity arrangements and• involvement in government led training programmes. |

| | |
|----------|---|
| 2 | Key Issues |
| 2.1 | <p data-bbox="325 331 561 365">Progress to date</p> <p data-bbox="325 405 1378 602">To build upon the council's existing work experience programme and to look to extend the remit of it, a number of meetings with potential partners are currently taking place. These partners include DEL and their lead contractors who deliver employability programmes and Local Employment Intermediary Services (LEMIS) across the city, the Employment Services Board as well as Belfast Metropolitan College. The purpose of these meetings is to:</p> <ul data-bbox="363 642 1374 952" style="list-style-type: none"> • identify opportunities to provide more placements and internships • explore how we can work with partner organisations to support young people needing work experience as part of existing apprenticeship programmes • consider how a council specific apprenticeship scheme might be developed • explore how we can best prepare the long term unemployed to compete for council positions as they become available and • agree plans to provide this support. |
| 2.2 | <p data-bbox="325 987 1358 1189">A number of suitable immediate vacancies have already been identified and support is being targeted at the long term unemployed through the Job Assist Centres. Work has started to develop a recruitment plan and a programme of targeted timely support. This support will include work placements, site visits, motivational talks, information and training on the council's recruitment and selection procedures, mock interviews etc.</p> |
| 2.3 | <p data-bbox="325 1225 1137 1258">Indemnity arrangements for work experience placements.</p> <p data-bbox="325 1294 1369 1597">The current indemnity arrangements for work experience placements were agreed by the Policy and Resources (Personnel) Sub Committee at its meeting on 28 June 2004. At that time it was agreed that the Council accept work experience students from those educational establishments which either sign the council's form of indemnity or provide an alternative form of indemnity. In the past this has prevented certain people from taking up work experience placement opportunities in the Council; individuals without their own insurance provision and participants from small community or voluntary organisations with limited resources.</p> |
| 2.4 | <p data-bbox="325 1632 1378 1966">The Council has however, in the past agreed to self insure certain placements where individuals do not have their own indemnity or where organisations are not in a position to sign the Council's indemnity form, i.e., placements for people with disabilities, a community service pilot for ex offenders and for the long term unemployed. Requests for the Council to self insure individuals have been presented to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on a case by case basis for approval. Where organisations require the Council to sign their indemnity forms and associated insurance arrangements, advice is sought from Legal Services and Audit Governance and Risk Services regarding any implications for the Council.</p> |
| 2.5 | <p data-bbox="325 2002 1337 2036">The Council's insurance brokers are of the view that the risk to the Council of</p> |

| | |
|-----|--|
| | claims arising from injuries sustained by students during work experience placement is relatively low and could be minimised through good risk management practice. Processes have already been put in place to help manage and minimise risk. |
| 2.6 | In order to increase the number of placements that the council can facilitate while endeavouring to mitigate against the risk, Legal Services has recommended that the Council's default position should be to self insure, unless the Council is aware that the sponsoring organisation is in a position to provide its own indemnity arrangements. |
| 2.7 | New Deal and Job Skills initiatives At Policy and Resources (Personnel) Sub Committee on 22 September 2003 it was agreed that all requests for work experience placements linked to the government's New Deal or Job Skills initiative would be referred to the sub committee for consideration. |
| 2.8 | Involvement in government led training programmes will be an essential element of our employability activities, not only to deliver on our commitments but to reach those who most need assistance. Programmes like Steps to Work and Training for Success (which have replaced New Deal and Job Skills) can provide the council with a platform to reach those furthest removed from the labour market and provide placement opportunities for the long term unemployed and apprentices. (The Department of the Environment has already committed to providing a large number of placement opportunities through the Steps to Work programme). It is proposed therefore that the commitment to employability initiatives outlined in the Investment Programme will remove the requirement for Committee to consider case by case requests for government programme work placements. |
| 2.9 | Members will of course receive regular reports on progress with the delivery of all our employability initiatives. Specific proposals will be presented to Committee in May. |

| | |
|------------|--|
| 3.0 | Resource Implications |
| 3.1 | Financial When placements are unpaid or externally funded there is no direct financial implication although the self- insurance aspect is a financial risk. Due to the stringent risk assessment approach being carried out, this risk will be managed. Any additional resources identified will be agreed as part of the Investment Programme. |
| 3.2 | Human Resources There are no human resource implications as all work experience placements within the Council are dependant on the relevant department having the capacity to accommodate such a request and all the placements are offered and accepted on the basis that no permanent offer of employment will follow, without adherence to the council's recruitment and selection processes. |

| | |
|------------|--|
| 4.0 | Equality Implications |
| 4.1 | Consultation on the Investment Programme is ongoing. An EQIA report, together with a full report on the consultation process will be submitted to assist final decision making in the Investment Programme. Any employability initiatives delivered as part of the Investment Programme will be on a city wide basis and all opportunities will be widely promoted across all Section 75 groups. |

| | |
|------------|--|
| 5.0 | Recommendations |
| | <p>The committee is asked to agree that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the council's default position should be to self insure work experience placements, unless the Council is aware that the sponsoring organisation is in a position to provide its own indemnity arrangements (see paragraphs 2.3 to 2.6) and that • the requirement to refer decisions to Committee regarding participation in government led training programmes is removed (see paragraphs 2.7 & 2.8) |

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 6.0 | Decision Tracking |
| Jill Minne, Head of Human Resources, will be responsible for taking forward any actions related to this report. | |

| | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| 7.0 | Key to Abbreviations |
| DEL - Department of Employment and Learning LEMIS - Local Employment intermediary Service | |