
REPORT TO:	HOUSING & COMMUNITY SERVICES	AGENDA ITEM:	10
DATE OF MEETING:	6 TH OCTOBER 2005	CATEGORY:	DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES	OPEN	
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	CHRIS MASON 5794	DOC:	
SUBJECT:	EMPLOYMENT OF MODERN APPRENTICE – GROUNDS SERVICE	REF:	
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	All	TERMS OF REFERENCE:	HCS10

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 That Members approve the submission of a service development proposal in the 2006/2007-budget process to fund the appointment of a modern apprentice in the Grounds Maintenance Service.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To identify the background to the appointment, the benefits that should accrue from the appointment and the cost to the Council of making the appointment.

3.0 Executive Summary

- 3.1 The recent review of the grounds maintenance service contained a non-specific commitment to the appointment of a modern apprentice. It is now intended to try and progress this appointment to have someone in place for April 2006.

4.0 Detail

- 4.1 In the Leisure & Community Development Service Plan 2005/08, a key task is a commitment to increase the skill base of the Council's grounds maintenance workforce. One of the ways we can achieve this is through the development and training of our own staff. The appointment of parks based senior grounds staff and the subsequent appointment of a modern apprentice are important elements in this strategy.
- 4.2 The senior grounds staff appointments have been in place since April 2005 and, although not fully established in Maurice Lea Memorial Park (because of the restoration work), they now provide a proper base to supervise and accommodate a modern apprentice. In addition to the primary objective of offering a skills based employment opportunity to a young person the appointment will increase the skill resources available to the Council, allow us to tackle a broader range of work and most importantly provide our own trained staff to be considered for any future

vacancies that may arise in the service. The appointment will also partially contribute towards the major commitment we will be making to the Heritage Lottery Fund towards the quality of maintenance work that will be undertaken at the restored Maurice Lea Memorial Park.

- 4.3 Initial investigation has identified that there are a number of apprenticeships available in horticulture, with amenity horticulture looking the most appropriate for the current work undertaken by the Council's grounds service. This can achieve two levels:

Foundation – Leads to NVQ level 2 and takes appropriately 2 – 2½ years

Advanced – Leads to NVQ level 3 and takes approximately 3 – 3½ years

The advanced course can follow on from the foundation course

- 4.4 In both courses there are key skill elements including communication, literacy & numeracy. There would be no minimum qualification for selection although to achieve NVQ level 3 the candidate is likely to need English Language to GCSE level (grade a – c)
- 4.5 If funding is available, the appointment will be made using the Council's appointment procedure with the apprentice being employed on a contract of achievement with no guarantee of permanent employment after completion of their apprenticeship. An initial meeting has taken place with a training provider who administers this particular scheme in South Derbyshire. They indicate that all training costs would be provided as long as the apprentice was under the age of 25 on completion.
- 4.6 In terms of process, the issue has been included in the staff consultation process that has taken place regarding the review of the service and the subsequent changes to the grounds staffing establishment. This process of consultation will continue as the details of an appointment are firmed up.

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 Members may be aware that the Housing DLO now employ a modern apprentice and after negotiation with the GMB the following rates of pay were approved:

- For the first 6 months the apprentice would be employed by the training provider with the Council paying the provider £65 per week.

- Next 12 months 35% of a tradesperson's wages = £5700 per annum

- Next 12 months 50% of a tradesperson's wages = £8130 per annum

- Next 12 months 71% of a tradesperson's wages = £11,600 per annum (only apply to advanced modern apprentice)

However, once the apprentice reaches 18 years of age we would have to pay £8,177 per annum

- 5.2 While the age of the appointed candidate will impact on the wages paid the overall financial commitment made by the Council including on costs will be *****

6.0 Corporate Implications

- 6.1 One of the Council's planned outcomes in the 2004-07 Corporate Plan is the creation of more jobs and investment in the District.

7.0 Community Implications

- 7.1 In addition to making a contribution to improving community facilities the creation of a new post, particularly for a young person, will indicate to other employers the Council's commitment in this important area of employment.

8.0 Conclusions

- 8.1 As part of the review of the grounds service considered by Members earlier this year there was a commitment to continue the process already started in Housing of taking on modern apprentices. For many reasons, including the Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) process, that have mitigated against local authorities taking on apprentices. There was also our internal organisation that didn't really make it practical to manage apprentices in the way we would like. These conditions are now changing and are more favourable to properly managing apprentices. The report proposes that we seek to have a person in post for April 2006.

9.0 Background Papers

- 9.1 Information sheet from LANTRA on Modern Apprenticeships in Amenity Horticulture.

