

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 26TH SEPTEMBER, 2016

REFERENCE FROM CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 1ST SEPTEMBER, 2016

“283 YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL (REF) –

The Chairman indicated that he would take Agenda Items 5 and 6 together.

The above matter had been previously considered by the Cabinet on 11th July, 2016 and referred to the Committee for consideration.

The above report set out the Council’s approach to the increased employment of young people in line with the Council’s Workforce Planning objectives i.e. the need to increase the employment of 16-24 year old employees proportionate to the wider workforce as previously approved by the Cabinet at its meeting on 23rd May, 2016. The Head of Human Resources indicated that the percentage of 16-24 year old employees within the Council’s workforce fell from 13.4% in 2013 to 12.6% in 2015. This compared to 17.1% when taking account of the age profile within the Vale of Glamorgan area.

The above objective was a medium to long term aim and was congruent to the Wellbeing Outcomes as set out in the Corporate Plan for 2016-20.

The Head of Human Resources also reminded the Committee of its previous decision when it considered the possibility of a partnership arrangement with Caerphilly Council to implement their PASSPORT Youth Employment Scheme across the Vale of Glamorgan. However, the above plans could not be progressed due to the withdrawal of WEFO funding resulting in the Caerphilly Council scheme being discontinued. He indicated that in view of the above, it had been important to look at alternative options for strengthening the Council’s approach. In addition, it was also important to note that the UK Government was also introducing a new apprenticeship levy from April 2017, to be paid by all employers at a rate of 0.5% of the wage bills. It was still unclear as to how the scheme would be implemented in Wales, however the Council was in a position to fully utilise the levy once the parameters and working practices had been agreed.

The Head of Human Resources’ attention then turned to the continuing good work that had been achieved by the Council with the existing employment of administratively based Foundation Modern Apprentices (FMAs) and Craft Apprentices within the Council’s Building and Housing Teams. He indicated that whilst the Council’s existing arrangements were positive, they did not always reflect

the diverse nature of the Council in terms of its services and occupational groups and may not, on their own, help the Council achieving its Workforce Planning objectives. Having regard to this, he suggested that a more co-ordinated approach was required and specifically to “improve the employment of school, college and university leavers” as well as “launch a Council wide professional apprenticeship scheme”.

In terms of a way forward, it was proposed that the Council broaden the provision of youth employment further developing the apprenticeship programme and building stronger relationships with school, local colleges and Career agencies to promote the available opportunities within the local employment market. He indicated that strengthening the Council’s approach would meet the Council’s wellbeing objectives and also compliment the actions set out within the draft Corporate Strategy for Children Who Need Care and Support in prioritising Looked After Children in accessing opportunities for employment and skills.

In order to deliver the above principles, it was proposed that work would continue surrounding the continued investment in the provision of FMAs across the Council with over the next 12 months it being proposed to increase the marketing of the FMA scheme within the Vale schools and in partnership with Career Wales and Job Centre Plus; to further broaden the provision of apprenticeships into a Council wide provision across a wider range of service areas and with this in mind, he indicated exploratory discussions had taken place recently with Cardiff and Vale College to develop a strategic partnership in the development of apprenticeship opportunities within the Council and followed the recent launch of the College’s Apprenticeship Training Academy (ATA) model. He further indicated in exploring the above model, work would continue with managers across the Council to identify opportunities within the relevant service areas. Under the ATA model, the College would employ the apprentices and provide the learning and support for employees to complete their qualification. The salary and the administrative costs would be met from the relevant service areas out of existing staffing budgets. Cabinet, at its meeting on 11th July had granted delegated authority to the Head of Human Resources, in consultation with the Managing Director and the Leader, to continue such exploratory discussions with the College and to develop a proposal for final consideration by the Cabinet.

In addition to the above, the Council would continue to accommodate work experience placements where capacity and co-ordination allowed. In addition, the Council’s Workforce Plan also referred to the strengthening of the Council’s approach to the use of trainees over the next year and seeking to build a Council wide scheme. It was noted that the Council currently had a total of 15 trainees / interns employed cross the Council, but managed on a service by service basis. He intimated that a more co-ordinated approach to this issue would provide the opportunity to strengthen the marketing and promotion of graduate / trainee recruitment and in liaison with universities and colleges.

Plans were also proposed to develop the promotion of the available opportunities for employment within the Council, the profile and reputation of the Authority and the

review of the methodology for advertising such opportunities. The greater targeting of recruitment literature and communication methods through social media would both support the spirit of the initiative and to ensure greater cost effectiveness. He indicated that work in this area would be helped through the development of a Human Resources Service Centre over the coming months and the capacity afforded through the appointment of a temporary Employment Officer as referred to in paragraph 37 of the report, who would assist to “pump-prime” the activity set out within the report and to develop a sustainable model of delivery which could be adopted across the Authority.

In referring to the report, the Vice-Chairman considered that the Council should be a leader within the youth employment sector and should be aiming for a target percentage of 25% when looking at the age profile within the Vale of Glamorgan area. He referred to his recent citing of the Council’s vacancy bulletin and referred to certain posts which were requiring experience, but in his view, considered such roles to be competency based with the requirement for experience blocking young individuals’ access into work. He questioned whether service departments needed to be micro managed by Human Resources to ensure that appropriate measures were in place when advertising vacant posts. In addition, the Vice-Chairman referred to Job Growth Wales and considered that the Council needed to look again at this initiative and importantly to revitalise the Council’s approach to youth employment. He also alluded to the reference from the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee which raised concerns about the number of vacant posts in the Council’s Highways and Engineering Department, with the Scrutiny Committee suggesting that the Council consider a training programme to encourage “home grown” staff and develop appropriate skills. He considered that the concerns raised by that Scrutiny Committee were legitimate and supported the suggestion.

A Member of the Committee supported the comments of the Vice-Chairman and indicated that he would like also to see how effective the proposals were and whether there were indicators in place. In response, the Head of Human Resources referred to the Workforce Planning Performance Indicators and suggested that he could bring a further report on the issue to a future meeting.

Another Member made reference to the Council’s existing challenges in terms of its Reshaping Services Programme and considered it was still important to place the importance on experience within the workforce. He also considered that there was a responsibility on the wider public sector across the Vale to look at partnerships to increase greater youth involvement in the employment market. He felt it was important the Council should not be left alone to undertake such a task given that it had limited resources.

In response, the Head of Human Resources indicated that similar issues were being experienced across other Local Authorities in Wales and particularly in relation to the promotion of career opportunities within Local Government. On this basis he agreed to raise the issue with the Local Government network and particularly through the WLGA.

The Chairman considered that given the wider context of youth employment within the county and the implications for the Council in meetings its Workforce Planning objectives, suggested that the matter be referred to the Cabinet for further consideration and requesting that the matter be referred to the Public Service Board for consideration. In addition, he concurred with the view of the Head of Human Resources given the limited ability of the Council in regard to capacity and co-ordination to ask the Cabinet to raise with the WLGA the image of career opportunities within the Local Government and public sector given recruitment difficulties currently experienced by the Council.

Having regard to the above, it was

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the Head of Human Resources submit a report to a future meeting in respect of the Council's Workforce Plan indicators / performance.
- (2) T H A T the Cabinet be requested to raise the image of employment / career opportunities within the Local Government sector with the WLGA and the Public Service Board.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) To allow the Committee to monitor the progress of the Council's Workforce Plan.
- (2) To raise awareness of recruitment difficulties and career opportunities within Local Government and the Public Sector."