

PILOT WASTE APPRENTICES SUPPORT SCHEME REVIEW
WDA/34/15

Recommendations

That Members:

1. Note the fact that of 16 apprentices supported through the pilot programme, 13 have found permanent employment;
2. Agree with the recommendations of the evaluation report (attached at Appendix 1) listed at paragraph 3.10 of this report; and
3. Agree to support an Apprenticeships scheme subject to budget provision in 2016/17 in line with the Next Steps proposed at paragraph 4.

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Report of the Chief Executive

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To present Members with the evaluation of the pilot Waste Apprenticeships support scheme and to set out proposals to support the Apprentice scheme in 2016/17.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Authority approved the pilot Apprenticeships support scheme on 27th September 2013 (Report WDA 33/13) and the Budget at the 31st January 2014 meeting. The pilot scheme was undertaken to provide an evidence base to determine if the impact of the scheme supports the Authority objectives and value for money of future programmes.
- 2.2 Following discussions with all districts, St Helens and Sefton Councils submitted proposals and Members approved £77,000 to support up to 12 one year apprenticeships in those districts for operational management and recycling schemes. Both schemes were completed by March 2015.
- 2.3 The pilot was extended by an Executive Decision on 10th November 2014 to include Wirral Council. This pilot was to employ waste prevention apprentices and four young people were employed in January 2015 for 12 months.

3. Evaluation Report

- 3.1 Acorn Environmental Solutions are consultants who specialise in recruiting apprentices for front line waste positions and understand what is required to identify and train suitable apprentices. Acorn Environmental Solutions were appointed by officers to conduct the review in June 2015 (the report is attached at Appendix 1). The evaluation included a series of face to face interviews with the managers and apprentices in each of the pilot districts and with the two non-participating districts (Knowsley and Liverpool).
- 3.2 Four key drivers were identified for taking part in the programme:
- The grant from MRWA;

- Strategic objective or council policy to focus on getting more young unemployed people into work;
- Resources to deliver a new work stream e.g. new collection system or new garden waste policy;
- Reputation for dedication to employment of young people;

3.3 Barriers to participation in the scheme revolved around timing in relation to staffing restructures and other priorities.

3.4 There were a number of economic benefits from MRWA's investment in this programme (tabulated in paragraph 6.2.4 of the evaluation report):

- National government funding for Pre-Employment Training (PET) and Apprenticeships Training. An additional £59,000 was accessed by the districts from these funding sources;
- Regionally an additional £17, 645 financial benefits were obtained through free recruitment and Functional Skills testing, zero college fees for the apprentices training and candidates PET certification paid for by education partner; and
- District contributions both in kind (management, mentoring, support, interview times and classroom space for approximately 17 training days per year) and cash contributions towards the apprentices' salaries.

Total funding and contribution in kind excluding MRWA = £229,378.

3.5 16 apprentices were initially appointed:

- St Helens: 4 young school leavers in St Helens were employed. Three completed the programme and one resigned. Their work included fly-tipping clearances with progression after training to working with crews on bin lifts, recycling duties and educational roles engaging with customers;
- Sefton: 8 apprentices were appointed and six completed the programme. Five have subsequently been employed by the Council. The apprentices were divided between the Coast and Countryside team and the Waste team and of the three pilots offered the most diverse projects with a strong social dimension and engagement with the community. Their work including operational

duties rolling out new collection services and helping to co-ordinate the recycling rounds, engaging with residents to ensure new services were running smoothly and reviewing services to disabled residents. The coastal team also looked at recycling marine waste along the Sefton coastline especially plastics and the re-use of drift wood.

- Wirral: 4 apprentices were employed as waste prevention officers and are still in place at the time of this report. Their work is aimed at reducing household waste by education and running a wide range of educational programmes with schools within the district particularly through the Eco-Schools programme. Each apprentice was lead co-ordinator on a variety of projects.

3.6 The programme generally exceeded the Apprentices expectations and made them better prepared for work in the future in terms of skills, qualifications and general experience. It was also felt they gained in a broader social sense with increased self-esteem and confidence as well as the stability gained from having a regular income and working routine.

3.7 Outputs achieved from the pilots included:

- 100,000 brown bins for plastic and cardboard recycling delivered across Sefton by the Apprentices which has helped to increase the recycling rate from 39% to just under 42%;
- Targeting Sefton households with two or more residual bins to reassess eligibility which helped reduce residual waste arisings by 1,000 tonnes in 2014/15;
- Updating Sefton's assisted collection database for disabled customers and contacting residents regarding the service;
- Removal and recycling of marine debris on Sefton beaches particularly of plastics;
- 310 school visits by apprentices in Wirral and general reduction of waste in schools through the Big Bin Challenge, food waste audits and introducing food composters;
- 29 Wirral and Sefton apprentices' days engaging with public at events including MRWA's waste prevention events programme across the region;

- 500 recycling containers per week delivered to residents in St Helens including food caddies, black boxes and recycling bags; and
 - Increased number of missed bins emptied in St Helens through the use of an extra resource.
- 3.8 The evaluation indicates that the value of the apprenticeships pilot was considered to be high by the three districts with a very high job retention rate. Of the 16 apprenticeship positions created, 13 are in full time positions after the completion of the one year programme (this includes all four Wirral apprentices who are still on the programme).
- 3.9 The grant in itself was innovative. It is the first sub-regional waste programme for apprentices in England and the first offered in England through a waste disposal authority to support apprentices in the sector. This has led to discussions in other areas e.g. North London Waste Authority. Without the MRWA grant, some of the activities would not have been undertaken such as the waste prevention programme in Wirral and it ensured the roll out of new recycling bins in Sefton and increased recycling, re-use and waste prevention in the participating districts.
- 3.10 The report concludes that there is a desire within all five Merseyside districts to be involved in the programme in the coming financial year. The programme has not included Halton as the funding is Levy based but they have been included in the discussions for information. The report proposes the following recommendations:
- The programme should be offered to all five Merseyside local authorities for 2016/17;
 - Recycling, re-use and waste prevention should continue to be key eligibility criteria within the programme as well as quarterly returns on data capture of agreed metrics;
 - Districts continue to be the lead partners in any bid and to use local council policies on salary to their apprenticeships rather than MRWA setting a salary figure;
 - Expressions of interest should be sought from the districts to apply for the remaining available 2015/16 budget for Apprenticeships. This would be allocated no later than March 2016 following receipt of a final agreed project plan to fund salaries for a twelve month apprenticeship programme in the successful districts. These salary costs are required to be paid in advance as a commitment to the

Apprenticeships programme and may be used to secure further external skills funding support.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 In taking forward the evaluation recommendations and the success of the pilot scheme, it is recommended that Members agree to support an Apprenticeships scheme, subject to budget provision, in 2016/17
- 4.2 It is anticipated that four of the five districts will be in a position to submit Expressions of Interest for the current Apprenticeships budget of £55,000. This will be for sums up to £13,750 per authority which will be awarded no later than 31st March 2016 for a twelve month apprenticeship programme. Increased funding may be available to other districts up to the maximum £55,000 should any district not submit an Expression of Interest or fail to successfully agree a project plan in line with MRWA criteria by the end of the 2015/16 financial year.
- 4.3 Liverpool has not participated in the Apprenticeship programme to date, but it is anticipated that they should be invited to put forward a proposal should an apprenticeship budget be approved for 2016/17.

5. Risk Implications

5.1

Identified Risk	Likelihood Rating	Consequence Rating	Risk Value	Mitigation
Ability to fund apprenticeships	2	4	8	Reduced rate and timescales may risk VFM basis but opportunity to submit Expressions of Interest and discussions to agree project plans should mitigate the issue.
Failure to recognise the impact of economic and	3	3	9	Partnership working to deliver local benefits including delivery

political environment				of the MRWA events programme. Members do have consider implications that there may not be an equal distribution of awards
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6. HR Implications

- 6.1 There are minimal resource requirements for MRWA to award funding and monitor the programme. This can be accommodated within existing strategy team resources. The apprentices will not be employed directly by MRWA and therefore there are no HR implications to this effect.

7. Environmental Implications

- 7.1 The Apprenticeships programme helps to deliver corporate objectives and the focus is on increasing recycling, re-use and waste prevention at the local level.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 This report does not have any financial implications in the current year and whilst the Authority is asked to support the scheme going forward, Members are not asked to commit to future funding at this stage.
- 8.2 Members will consider supporting the scheme in 2016/17 as part of the overall budget approval at the Authority meeting on 5th February 2016.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1 The Authority has a statutory duty to manage waste in line with the waste hierarchy with waste prevention, preparing for re-use and recycling as the most favoured options.
- 9.2 All approved apprenticeships through this scheme would need to demonstrate that their work supports the Authority's statutory duties and in particular, Corporate Aim 2 for Sustainability in the Authority's Corporate Plan.

10. Conclusion

- 10.1 Members agreed a pilot waste apprenticeships support scheme in November 2013 with St Helens, Sefton and Wirral Councils being funded to deliver the pilots which will be completed by January 2016.
- 10.2 An evaluation report has been submitted to the Authority by Acorn Environmental Services and the pilot schemes have been considered successful by the participating districts, MRWA officers and the apprentices themselves.
- 10.3 All Merseyside districts have indicated a wish to be involved in any future programme. MRWA has a current budget available in the 2015/16 programme to fund additional apprenticeships this financial year as the Apprenticeships programme requires salaries to be paid twelve months in advance. Expressions of Interest will be sought from the districts for apprenticeship proposals to be allocated in the 2015/16 financial year.
- 10.4 Members are asked to consider and agree the recommendations to support the Apprenticeships programme in 2016/17 subject to budget provision.
- 10.5 Should Members agree the recommendations then Liverpool City Council would be invited to submit a proposal early in the new 2016/17 financial year.

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The background documents to this report are open to inspection in accordance with Section 100D of The Local Government Act 1972:

1. MRWA Pilot Waste Apprenticeships Programme Evaluation Report September 2015.