

The background of the slide features a large, light blue watermark of the University of Alberta crest. The crest is a shield divided into four quadrants. The top-left quadrant shows a building, the top-right shows a stag's head with antlers, the bottom-left shows a three-masted sailing ship on waves, and the bottom-right shows an eagle with wings spread. Above the shield is a crown with four floral motifs. Below the shield is a banner with the motto 'ANNE FOR A'.

# **Agenda Item 10**

## **Refreshing the Workforce**

Falkirk Council

**Title: Refreshing the Workforce**

**Meeting: Executive**

**Date: 24 August 2021**

**Submitted By: Director of Corporate & Housing Services**

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1. This report explores the options for a Refreshing the Workforce programme through our priority ambition of employability, linked to our Council of the Future change project.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. **It is recommended that Executive:**

- (1) agree the proposed refreshing the workforce programme using modern apprentices and graduates, recognising that the normal saving criteria for voluntary severance and flexible retirement may not be achieved**
- (2) Note that workshops will be held for managers on the use of modern apprentices to encourage the take up of places across the Council**

**3. Background**

- 3.1. The Council's workforce plan identifies areas of potential future skill shortages. In some cases, this is because of an ageing workforce and highlights the need to further develop succession planning approaches, including further development of trainee and apprenticeship programmes.
- 3.2. In 2020, over 25% of the workforce were over age 55 and less than 6% were under age 24. We recognise that we have an ageing workforce with over 50% of our employees over age 45. This creates a medium-term risk for the Council and requires measures to attract younger people into the employment of the Council. The risk is greater in some service areas e.g. Social Work Adult Services and Development Services where there is a higher percentage currently over 50.

- 3.3. The Council previously had a target of 5% of the workforce to be apprentices and we currently have 90 apprentices at various stages which is c1.2% of the workforce. Currently we spend time and money training apprentices and do not always have jobs available to enable us to keep individuals in jobs following their training. This also means limited return on our investment in these individuals.
- 3.4. We are considering ways to refresh the workforce and to bring in new employees to bridge skills gaps; whilst supporting the employability Council of the Future project. We also need to ensure we are not left in a position where we are unable to fill posts or provide services, due to a lack of succession planning or available skills in the recruitment market.

#### **4. Considerations**

- 4.1. Given the workforce age demographics and the need to consider succession planning, options to 'grow our own' and introduce more young people to Falkirk Council's workforce need to be explored.
- 4.2. The Employment Training Unit currently has 66 Modern Apprenticeship (MA) places that they can align to Falkirk Council and external organisations. There are different group funding streams for different age groups: 16 – 19 year olds, 20 – 24 year olds and those aged over 25.
- 4.3. For the MA programme to be successful, there needs to be a long term approach using workforce planning so that once the MA has completed their course, there is a job available for them to take up in their chosen field.
- 4.4. For this to succeed, Services need to consider their needs alongside the opportunities they could offer. This should include consideration of modern apprenticeship as well as the ongoing graduate and internship arrangements and be in line with workforce planning requirements and action plans.
- 4.5. The MA programme and graduate/intern programmes could be of benefit in many different areas of the Council. There are however, 2 main areas where a pilot approach to refreshing the workforce could be targeted, using the MA and graduate/intern programmes. These are Social Care, a hard to recruit to area, and front-line areas in Development Services, arising from changes from the transition to Place Services. To refresh the workforce, and to ensure on-going jobs for any trainees, careful consideration requires to be given to applications for Flexible Retirement and Voluntary Severance. There are regularly a number of applications in progress for Voluntary Severance/Flexible Retirement in these Services. It is, however, often difficult to agree these due to the on-going need to retain jobs and/or skills in these areas.

- 4.6. It is suggested that for these areas, a temporary suspension of the normal voluntary severance/flexible retirement funding 'rules' is put in place. This would enable future severance/flexible retirement cases to be granted on the basis that the posts would be backfilled with a MA or a graduate with the aim of refreshing the workforce. To support this, we will suspend the requirement to achieve savings and the need to achieve a reduction in FTE. To facilitate this, there may require to be an overlap in the employee leaving on severance/being granted flexible retirement and the MA/graduate commencing. This would be to ensure the service continues to have appropriate cover. The caveat is that the MA/graduate would then slot (or be matched if there is more than one) into the vacant post left by the severance/flexible retirement once the employee has left/reduced their hours. The issue with this is that the initial savings generated would potentially not meet the full requirements of the voluntary severance/flexible retirement policy. The benefit of this approach is that it will enable the Council to refresh the workforce by bringing new employees into local government, of an age where they are likely to be with us for some time. It will also support succession planning and promote employment in local government. In addition, it importantly supports our corporate plan commitments and in particular, our Employability Council of the Future project. Detailed discussions will be required with both the Health & Social Care Partnership and Development Services, to ensure such opportunities are used appropriately and in areas where we experience recruitment issues and/or difficulties in getting new employees with appropriate skills.
- 4.7. There are also a number of practical barriers in place to generally increasing the number of modern apprentices/graduates across our wider workforce in the current climate, such as funding, capacity to support and remote working. To overcome some of these barriers, we propose to hold briefing sessions/workshops with managers to allow case studies and good practice examples to be shared. This should hopefully generate more interest in the MA & graduate programme in other areas of the Council.
- 4.8. If areas participate in a Refreshing the Workforce MA or graduate programme and receive funding for this, they will be set a higher target percentage of the workforce to be MA's.
- 4.9. We also want to ensure equality is at the core of what we do as a council. We recognise that our workforce would benefit from more diversity. Currently, less than 3% of our workforce have declared they have a disability, 3.5% of our workforce are from a BME background and 25% of our workforce are male. Our commitment to improve on such diversity will also be considered as part of this work.

- 4.10. We also need to make our managers aware of the different programmes available and when and why these can be used. For example,
- Modern Apprenticeships (as detailed above)
  - Interns – recruited annually for summer placements for those studying to HNC level or above. Paid for by service from own budget.
  - Graduates – recruited annually for 1 – 2 year placements starting in August for graduates with HND level or above. Paid for by service from own budget. In 2021, we received Young Persons Guarantee Funding which also allowed us to recruit 5 graduates for a March/April start.

## **5. Consultation**

- 5.1. CMT has been consulted on this proposal.
- 5.2. The Trade Union representatives who attended the Corporate Partnership Forum on 04 August 2021 were presented with the Refreshing the Workforce report, had no adverse comments, and agreed to sign off this policy/report.

## **6. Implications**

### **Financial**

- 6.1 The Employment Training Unit have access to European and Scottish Government funding. The Scottish Government funding is now available to the public sector and can cover 50% of the salary costs for posts between 16 and 40 hours per week for 12 months, e.g., Scottish National Living Wage £9.50ph x 37 x 52 = £18,278 (50% = £9,139).

This funding is available for those with barriers to employment. For this funding, additional posts need to be created, they are not there to replace existing employees.

There is likely to be national funding available to help refresh the workforce in Social Care. This will be researched further by the Employment & Training Unit.

There are costs associated with Voluntary Severance. To be agreed we must normally save 100% of salary within 5 years and must lose 1/3 FTE from post. For Flexible Retirement there must be a 25% savings. If the refresh the workforce proposal is agreed, it is likely that such savings will not be fully generated and different sources of funding, via reserves, will require to be used. Finance colleagues have been consulted on this and consider this to be an acceptable use of reserves with the aim of refreshing our workforce, and also supporting on-going employment opportunities.

Graduates are paid Grade E, currently £21,452 - £23,420.

### **Resources**

- 6.2 Resource will be required from HR and ETU teams to hold workshops with managers and assist with workforce planning. In appointing a MA or graduate, resources will be required from within Services to provide appropriate support to the trainee.

### **Legal**

- 6.3 Modern Apprentices must be paid at least the national minimum wage for their age and will be entitled to statutory minimum annual leave, pro rata to hours worked. We do however, intend to offer the MA's the same annual leave as an employee with 0 years continuous service.

### **Risk**

- 6.4 There is a risk of reputational damage if the scheme is not implemented properly.

### **Equalities**

- 6.5 An EPIA is being carried out.

### **Sustainability/Environmental Impact**

- 6.6 There are no additional environmental impacts arising from this report.

## **7. Conclusions**

- 7.1 A targeted Refreshing the Workforce scheme could be beneficial for workforce and succession planning. It is linked to the workforce plan objective of growing our own. This could attract potential employees to the council who may not have considered public sector employment previously.

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Date: 11 August 2021

## **Appendices**

None

## **List of Background Papers:**

The following papers were relied on in the preparation of this report in terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973:

- None