

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE

4 SEPTEMBER 2012

Title:

COUNTRYSIDE APPRENTICE

[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Stephen O'Grady]

[Wards Affected: All]

Summary and purpose:

To seek approval to a new trial approach to securing a specific countryside apprentice which is complementary to the existing apprentice scheme for October 2012.

How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:

- The Countryside Apprentice will assist with the protection and enhancement of Waverley's green environment for its residents.
- Provides value for money and will build on the success of the Council's existing apprentice scheme

Equality and Diversity Implications:

Provides an excellent opportunity for a young person to gain the training and work experience that is essential in order to gain their first job in the conservation sector.

Environment and Climate Change Implications:

Post will assist the Council in delivering its corporate priorities in relation to protecting the Environment.

Resource/Value for Money Implications:

The apprentice will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Countryside team and provide a cost effective way of delivering this. It is proposed that the costs be met by an increase in Waverley's staff vacancy target.

Legal Implications:

None

1. Background

- 1.1 Waverley launched an apprenticeship programme in 2010, with six apprentices recruited in September 2010 and a further six in September 2011. Apprentices are offered a contract of up to two years in a team at Waverley and undertake a relevant NVQ through Waverley Training Services (WTS). WTS have offered similar apprenticeships to young people for a number of years. The scheme is targeted at young people and has the aim of reducing the number of NEETs (those Not in Education, Employment or Training) as well as 'growing our own' talent.

Four of the apprentices have already secured permanent positions at Waverley as a result of the scheme.

- 1.2 It was agreed by Members in April 2010 that the scheme would be initially be funded through budget underspend and Waverley's vacancy factor. In February 2011 a growth item was approved as part of the base budget to provide on-going funding for 12 apprentice places. Recruitment exercises take place to fill vacancies as they arise with a cohort of four apprentices being recruited in May this year, and a further intake planned for September.
- 1.3 Following consideration the Countryside service felt that an addition to the current corporate apprentice scheme would enable the Council to provide a fantastic opportunity to a young person who envisaged future working in the countryside sector.
- 1.4 This placement would require an apprentice of at least 18 years of age or over who holds a driving licence. It is felt that embarking on a more focused apprenticeship opportunity would provide a successful outcome for both the apprentice and the Council, but that the nature of the role and specialist training would require a slightly different approach to the one encompassed by the existing apprentice scheme.
- 1.5 Currently, competition for jobs in the countryside sector is fierce and unless the job seeker has work experience and is certificated they are unlikely to get an interview. Generally the only route is to undertake a lot of unpaid voluntary work and pay for their own training, which can be a significant barrier to those with limited resources or from low income family backgrounds.
- 1.6 A specific countryside apprentice post offers a great opportunity for a young person to gain the essential practical experience and training needed to help secure their first job in countryside management.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 Waverley's Apprentice Management Team considered a bid for a countryside apprentice in January 2012, but after careful consideration it was felt that it would be more appropriate to progress this directly through the countryside service, rather than the present corporate apprentice scheme. Strong traits of the Corporate Scheme are the targeting of the scheme to younger people, the provision of the NVQ through Waverley training services and the office-based nature of the positions – which allow the induction of the apprentices to focus on each intake as a distinct group and to grow connections between them.
- 2.2 The proposed Countryside Apprentice would be required to have a driving licence, be a minimum age of 18 (in order to operate machinery, e.g. shredders and chainsaws) and would be required to attend specialist countryside training provided by the local Merrist Wood College rather than the NVQs provided by Waverley Training Services.
- 2.3 Merrist Wood College is running an Environmental Conservation Apprenticeship scheme from October 2012.
- 2.4 The college apprenticeship scheme would:

- Assist with recruitment and interviewing the apprentice
- Provide one day a week college training including H&S, mechanical equipment operation, off road driving etc
- Carry out the work based assessments leading to a Level 2 Certificate in Land based Activities

2.5 Waverley Borough Council's Countryside Service would:

- Provide countryside ranger staff to provide the practical work experience of 4 days a week required to undertake the course at Merrist Wood College
- Provide employment out of college term time
- Assist in the personal development of the countryside apprentice

2.6 The Council would benefit from this scheme as the apprentice would assist in improving the efficiency of the countryside team; as many jobs require two people working together to meet our risk assessments for work. Currently this means experienced Countryside Rangers have to support each other, which reduces the number of jobs/tasks that can be done overall by individual Countryside Rangers.

2.7 The apprentice would be fully trained and supervised in all ranger activities but would not use mechanical equipment until they were fully competent in its use.

3. **Resource Implications**

3.1 The cost per year (salary, training and certification) of providing this apprentice opportunity is set out in the following table.

Course Year	Salary	Merrist Wood College Training Fee	Certification Costs
Year 1	£5,190	£nil 100% recovered from government (50% if aged 19+)	£500 – First Aid
Year 2	£9,204 (if aged 19/20)	£508 50% funded by government	£1,000 – Specialist Equipment Licence
Year 2	£11,043 (if aged 21+)	£508 50% funded by government	£1,000 – Specialist Equipment Licence

3.2 Based on a start date of 1st October 2012, the estimated additional costs to Waverley will be £3,100 for 2012/13 and £8,700 (or £9,600 if the apprentice is over 21 years old) for the full 2013/14 financial year.

3.3 It is proposed that the costs be met by an equivalent increase in Waverley's staff vacancy target. As stated in the Budget Monitoring report, almost 90% of the £156,000 target for 2012/13 already been identified and CMT are confident that the increased figures of £159,100 for 2012/13 and £265,600 (maximum) for 2013/14 are achievable.

