

REPORT TO: POLICY & RESOURCE COMMITTEE 24th JUNE 2008

SUBJECT: LOCAL EMPLOYMENT PARTNERSHIP

BY: HEAD OF PERSONNEL SERVICES

1. REASON FOR REPORT

1.1 To ask the Policy and Resources Committee to consider the Moray Council's participation in the Local Employment Partnership initiative.

1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to formulating and supervising the implementation of and review as necessary the policies and practices of the Council in relation to its arrangements for promoting, fostering and maintaining equal opportunities.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 **It is recommended that the Committee agree to our participation in the Local Employment Partnership initiative and agrees to the commitments required to support the long term unemployed into work.**

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Local Employment Partnerships (LEP) involve Jobcentre Plus and local organisations working together in order to assist the long term unemployed and other priority jobless groups into work. This initiative is United Kingdom wide and is seen as a key part of central government's drive to reduce the number of people claiming welfare benefits.

3.2 The Moray Council's participation in this initiative is both consistent and complementary with the terms of the outcomes as contained within the Single Outcome Agreement. Specifically, in terms of the following commitments :-

We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people;

- *The number of young people employed in Moray who have access to career development opportunities will increase*
- *We will make full potential of those not yet in the labour market*

We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society;

- *Deprivation in Moray communities will be tackled*
- *The number of incapacity benefit claimants will reduce*

3.3 /

- 3.3 In real terms, our participation in this initiative should not generate any additional costs to the Authority. We are already undertaking a number of activities within the Council, which satisfy the criteria within the proposed LEP Agreement, particularly through the activities of Moray Training. Perhaps the most significant implication for the Authority in formally signing up to such an agreement is the commitment that is given to working with Jobcentre Plus in order to find work opportunities for the client group referred to in para. 3.1 above. This commitment is summarised below: -
- Offering work trials, which are of a maximum duration of three weeks, and guaranteeing interviews for those who are successful during the placement.
 - Working with Jobcentre Plus on the design of pre-employment training, where required, for potential recruits to ensure it is relevant to our needs as an employer.
 - Encourage our employees to mentor those on work trials.
 - Review our job application process to ensure that potential recruits are not inadvertently excluded, for example, through requirements for qualifications that are unnecessary or overly complicated recruitment procedures.
 - Consider sympathetically the needs of potential recruits for flexible working patterns
 - Offering further relevant training to new recruits once they are appointed to post.
- 3.4 Discussions have taken place with Jobcentre Plus in order to clarify the details of the commitment that The Moray Council would be required to make in order to formally reach a LEP Agreement.
- 3.5 These discussions have indicated that it would be appropriate and beneficial to highlight job types that may be suitable for the terms of the LEP schemes and that our activities would be focussed in these areas. It is likely that these would be concentrated around former Manual Worker, Community Care and Clerical/ Admin groups. It is entirely acceptable to Jobcentre Plus that we do not roll the terms of the agreement across the entire spread of our job types but rather focus on areas where there is likely to be most uptake.
- 3.6 Should the Moray Council seek to participate in this initiative then it will be necessary for Personnel Services to provide adequate information to Managers who may be involved in this process. Moray Training have already expressed their desire to be involved in this process in terms of working with Jobcentre Plus on identifying suitable recruits and assisting with their job readiness.
- 3.7 These proposals are quite separate from the Apprenticeship Scheme currently under development within the Authority. The focus of the LEP initiative is to assist the long term unemployed and other priority jobless groups into work.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Development Plan/Community Plan/Service Improvement Plan

The Council has made a commitment to develop a culture which encourages both equal opportunities and the observance of equal opportunities.

(b) Policy and Legal:

These proposals are consistent with the Council's commitments within the Single Outcome Agreement. On the basis that this initiative is aimed at assisting many of the disadvantaged groups within society gain employment status it is unlikely to create any challenge under discrimination legislation.

(c) Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property):

There are no direct additional financial costs to the Authority associated with these proposals. In fact, there may be some limited financial benefits given that employers engaging long term unemployed individuals maybe entitled to access some funding packages.

(c) Consultations:

At this stage discussions have taken place between Personnel Services, Moray Training and Jobcentre Plus. Should these proposals be supported then further discussions on the finer details of the agreement will be necessary. Furthermore, a communications exercise would also be necessary to ensure that Managers and trade unions are fully briefed on the terms of the agreement and the implications thereof. The Corporate Management Team have indicated their support for these proposals.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 It is recommended that the Committee agree to our participation in the Local Employment Partnership initiative and agrees to the commitments required to support the long term unemployed into work.

Author of Report: Grant Cruickshank, Principal Personnel Adviser