

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Acting Executive Director of Housing, Environment and Economic Development (Housing and Regeneration Services)

**Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee:
5 September 2007**

Subject: Skillseekers Training for Young People (Local Initiatives)

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to bring the Committee up to date on the progress of training initiatives delivered by the Skillseekers Section of Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services in partnership with the Department's Economic Development Section. The programmes are designed to increase the number of Modern Apprenticeships available in Engineering and Construction for young people resident within West Dunbartonshire.

2. Background

- 2.1** In early 2005 consultations took place with a variety of engineering companies within West Dunbartonshire and it became apparent that very few companies were offering apprenticeships. The main reason given was that companies were unwilling or could not afford to engage apprentices due to initial costs as first year training is entirely college based, with little return for the company.
- 2.2** In August 2005 a pilot project delivered through partnership with the Economic Development Section, Tell Training and Anniesland College was established that provided the opportunity for 6 young people to attend college and gain an HNC and SVQ Level 2 qualification in an engineering discipline. At the end of the first year 5 of the 6 gained employment through this partnership with 1 young person choosing to continue a career within engineering through academic study.
- 2.3** During 2005/6 consultations with local construction companies mainly through the construction alliance identified that a number of small local construction companies were reluctant to recruit apprentices due to a number of factors including time out required for recruitment and selection, increased insurance costs and CITB registration and associated costs. The greatest factor was the additional wage costs as first year apprentices can be at college for up to 20 weeks in the first year.

- 2.4** In December 2005, a European funding application was submitted by the Economic Development Section. The aim of this application was to overcome the barriers faced by small local construction companies in the recruitment of apprentices by frontloading the costs during their first year and by providing employers with assistance and support in the selection, recruitment and bureaucracy involved in apprentice training.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** In April 2006 the Skillseekers Section commenced a marketing campaign of local construction employers. The project involved a range of wet and dry trades in the construction industry in addition to plumbing and electrical. From May to August the Skillseekers Section worked with the Careers Service to assist the employers to select, assess and recruit 20 apprentices. The following positions were filled. Joiners X 8, Painter Decorators X 5, Plumbers X 2, Plasterers X 2, Bricklayer X 1, Electrician X 1 and a Ceiling Fixer.
- 3.2** The apprentices were all registered as Modern Apprentices with the appropriate bodies and commenced training at College during August and September. The apprentices are paid a minimum of £120 per week and assistance towards additional travel costs. Each apprentice was provided with a kit of tools and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) up to the value of £230.
- 3.3** The length of time spent at college varies across the trades, for example Joiners are required to attend 20 weeks in the first year, in 5 four week blocks, whereas Plumbers attend for periods of 1 week 13 times. Employers were reimbursed wage costs for weeks at college on receipt of an invoice and college attendance records.
- 3.4** By December 2006, 1 Painter Decorator and the Ceiling Fixer, despite prolonged sessions of guidance and support, chose to leave the College part of their training. However, both are still working for their employers.
- 3.5** By June 2007, 18 of the 20 apprentices successfully completed the first year of their apprenticeship and gained the appropriate units towards their Modern Apprenticeship. It is expected that the 18 will continue with College training at the start of the new term in August.
- 3.6** Due to the success of the previous year's engineering Apprenticeship pilot, it was decided to repeat the process. From the lessons learned and in the pursuit of best value some changes were made in the delivery of the project.

- 3.7** The Skillseekers Section took over the responsibility for the project and commenced the recruitment and selection process. Clydebank College was engaged to undertake the delivery of the HNC and SVQ 2 programme. MI Technologies, a private training organisation with expertise in the Engineering sector, joined the partnership with responsibility for marketing employers and continuing the Modern Apprenticeship through workplace training and assessment to SVQ level 3.
- 3.8** In August 2006, 6 young people commenced training at Clydebank College. During training the young people received an allowance of £85 per week plus assistance with travel costs.
- 3.9** By July 2007 all 6 had successfully completed their HNC and SVQ level 2 and had secured employment with reputable Engineering Companies within West Dunbartonshire.

4. Personnel Issues

- 4.1** There are currently no Personnel Issues. The above projects are resourced and facilitated by Skillseekers staff and partners.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** Financial support for the construction and engineering projects have been met mainly from the Skillseekers and Economic Development Sections' revenue budgets which included project officers' salaries. Grant support for participating construction employers and College fees was secured from the CITB and Scottish Enterprise.
- 5.2** The Construction project is funded in part through the European Social Fund Objective 3, 45% of the eligible costs will be reclaimed. Eligible costs include: Skillseekers and European Officer staff time, marketing of the project, grants to employers to assist with Employer Liability Insurance costs, college fees, the contribution towards journeyman downtime, recognising the considerable time spent on the job demonstrating and instructing, payment of apprentice wages during periods of off the job training at college for up to 20 weeks, apprentices travel expenses and apprentice tools and PPE.

6. Risk Analysis

- 6.1** Care requires to be taken to ensure that the costs of the project can be met from the budget available.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1** The Skillseekers and Economic Development Sections continue to deliver and facilitate high quality training opportunities in partnership, for young people in West Dunbartonshire.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1** The Committee is invited to note the success in providing training opportunities for young people.

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Appendix: Nil

Background Papers: Nil

Wards Affected: All Wards