

Report of Development Manager Parks and Countryside

Report to Director of Environment and Housing

Date: TBC

Subject: Apprentice and other staff re-grades

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. This report proposes re-grades for apprentices due to complete a two year course of study and practical work experience in summer 2015. It also proposes to re-grade two members of staff in the Business Development team who, following the recent departure of other staff are now undertaking additional responsibilities and conducting further duties.

Recommendations

2. The Director of Environment and Housing is requested to approve the re-grade of 10 Parks and Countryside apprentices and 2 members of staff in the Parks and Countryside Business Development team.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report proposes re-grades for apprentices due to complete a two year course of study and practical work experience in summer 2015. It also proposes to re-grade two members of staff in the Business Development team who, following the recent departure of other staff are now undertaking additional responsibilities and conducting further duties.

2 Background information

- 2.1 A Parks and Countryside apprenticeship programme commenced in 2013, and represented the re-introduction of apprentices following the discontinuation of a similar scheme in the late 1980s. There are 9 horticultural apprentices and 1 business partnership apprentice that are due to complete a course of study that has complemented practical and technical skills, as well as knowledge developed through experience mentoring in the work place.
- 2.2 The management of the Streetscene Grounds Maintenance contract was transferred to Parks and Countryside from August 2012. Subsequently from April 2013 Parks and Countryside took on all management and monitoring activities with respect to the contract (along with tree works, enquiries and inspections) ahead of ALMO reintegration into Housing Leeds. The service has now operated the contract for 2 seasons and currently options are being explored to extend the contract term and it is anticipated that the contract arrangements will be extended for the full permissible term to December 2021.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 The horticultural apprentices are approaching completion of a 2 year formal course of training to achieve a Level 2 Horticulture qualification to acquire the relevant skills, knowledge and experience to undertake craft gardener duties. As part of the training process, apprentices are increasingly deployed on tasks to embed this learning so as to have achieved craft gardener capabilities at the end of their studies. It is therefore appropriate to recognise that both academic qualifications have been achieved, along with practical demonstration of the work required. On completion of studies apprentices (currently graded A1) will have demonstrated that they are carrying out the role of craft gardener (graded B3).
- 3.2 The business partnership apprentice is approaching completion of a 2 year formal course of training to achieve a Level 3 Diploma and BTEC Level 3 in Marketing to acquire the relevant skills, knowledge and experience to undertake this role. As part of the training process, apprentices are increasingly deployed on tasks to embed learning so as to have achieved relevant technical capabilities at the end of their studies. It is therefore appropriate to recognise that both academic qualifications have been achieved, along with practical demonstration of the work required such as working unsupervised and engaging with clients to secure external sponsorship. On completion of studies this apprentice (currently graded A1) will have demonstrated that they are carrying out required technical duties of a Business Partnership Assistant (graded C1).

3.3 A critical need to ensure business continuity has arisen following a recent reduction in the team, including a Client Officer post (graded PO2), an Asset and Information Officer post (graded SO1), a Contract Officer (graded B2) and an Assistant Monitoring and Compliance Officer post (graded A1). Since then an existing Asset and Information Technician post holder and an existing Assistant Monitoring and Compliance Officer post holder have increasingly undertaken higher graded duties and demonstrated the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to operate at a higher level. As there is a need for business continuity, a re-grade is appropriate in both cases to recognise the increase in responsibility.

3.3.1 The funding for the apprentice re-grades will be made within existing revenue budgets. Savings have already been identified in the business development team following the team reduction outlined above, there will be a net saving of £80k. This will enable the future recruitment of 3 horticultural apprentices and 1 business graduate appointment in the autumn of 2015.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.4 Consultation and Engagement

4.4.1 A copy of this report was sent to Trade Unions for feedback and following the two week deadline no comments have been received. The approach has been discussed and agreed with colleagues in Human Resources. Consultation on the need to review staffing arrangements in the business development team took place in December last year and involved trade unions and staff. With regard to apprentices, there was always the assumption that they would move on to undertake gardener roles commensurate with their skills and qualification when they satisfactorily concluded their apprenticeship.

4.5 Council policies and City Priorities

4.5.1 The changes will be undertaken in line with Council policy and current legislation.

4.6 Resources and value for money

4.6.1 The funding for the apprentice re-grades will be made within existing revenue budgets. Savings have already been identified in the business development team following the team reduction outlined above, there will be a net saving of £80k. This will enable the future recruitment of 3 horticultural apprentices and 1 business graduate appointment in the autumn of 2015.

4.7 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.7.1 These proposals are in line with Council policy and current legislation.

4.8 Risk Management

4.8.1 No significant risks have been identified associated with this report.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 The Director of Environment and Housing is requested to approve the re-grade of 10 Parks and Countryside apprentices and 2 members of staff in the Parks and Countryside Business Development team.

6 Background documents¹

- 6.1 None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.