

34. ICT Structure

The Assistant Director for Business Development and Finance:

- a) presented a report regarding the proposed conversion of an ICT Apprentice post into an entry-level IT officer post.
- b) explained that the previous post-holder had progressed into another role within the ICT Team, but that repeated efforts to recruit to the ICT Apprentice post had failed and that no applications had been received.
- c) stated that there was a need to recruit an additional team member to support the Council's ICT service, and so it was proposed to provide an entry-level IT Officer post which would meet service requirements.
- d) noted that the Council's main provider for apprenticeship training had been unable to offer suitable dedicated ICT qualifications, which presented additional difficulties in maintaining the post at an apprentice level.
- e) invited members' questions and comments.

Trade union members questioned whether it was possible to use an alternative apprenticeship training provider if suitable courses were not offered.

The Assistant Director for Business Development and Finance responded that while training was provided externally, assessment was usually carried out internally. The Work-Based Learning Team had expressed concerns that offering ICT training from an alternative provider meant that assessment could not be carried out internally, thereby complicating ongoing work with the service's OFSTED accreditation.

Trade union members questioned whether the training and qualifications provided to and required of an IT Officer would be different from an equivalent apprentice.

The Assistant Director for Business Development and Finance responded that training for the IT Officer post would be agreed via the appraisal process, meaning that both employer and employee could agree suitable training and qualifications structured around the needs of the individual and the service. It was emphasised that suitable funding was available to support the development of the ICT Team and the individual IT Officer.

Trade union members questioned why no applications had been received for the apprenticeship post, noting that similar problems had been experienced with recruitment within CMS and suggesting that outreach programmes be undertaken with local schools.

The Assistant Director for Business Development and Finance responded that the post had been advertised internally and externally, including on a national apprenticeship website. Efforts had also been undertaken to find suitable applicants through the neighbourhood management teams. However, no applications had been received.

The Chief Executive and Town Clerk confirmed that the Work-Based Learning Team already undertook significant promotional work for the apprenticeship scheme, and promoted the scheme within schools and colleges wherever possible. However, the principal apprenticeship scheme did not ordinarily experience problems with recruitment.

Trade union members expressed concerns that the conversion of the post represented a diminution in the Council's commitment to training and developing internal talent.

The Assistant Director for Business Development and Finance responded that the post remained at a suitable entry-point for those who might otherwise have been interested in apprentice posts. Equally, the post was now offered on a permanent basis and training and development would also be available to the postholder.

Elected members further emphasised the continuing commitment of the Council to developing apprentices within the Council.

Elected members questioned whether the proposed IT Officer post would be affected by changes to the living wage.

The Assistant Director for Business Development and Finance responded that the post was a scale 2 post and was already paid in excess of the living wage.

RESOLVED that:

1. the Committee's comments be forwarded to the Executive to assist the Executive in reaching a decision regarding this matter.
2. officers be requested to investigate the reasons for the failure to attract applicants for the ICT Apprentice post.