

## **Council - 7 January 2013**

### **Notice of motion**

I set out below the response to the notice of motion to Council on 7th January 2013 from Councillor I. Shires:

*Council recognises that young unemployed people are particularly disadvantaged by the current economic situation and that they deserve extra support to move onto the first steps to permanent employment.*

*Council notes and supports the £1 billion Youth Service Contract – launched by the coalition government as a result of Liberal Democrat intervention – that opens up various opportunities for young people.*

*Council further acknowledges that the cost of transport to job centres, job interviews, work experience and apprenticeships can be a tall order for young people.*

*Council, therefore, requests the Chief Executive to write to Centro to enquire the feasibility of extending the concessionary travel scheme to include 18-24 year olds in receipt of job seekers allowance or undertaking apprenticeships and to report back to Council in three months.*

In February 2012, Cabinet approved £2.2 of funding to be ring-fenced to launch the Walsall Works apprenticeship programme. This programme symbolises the Councils vision of creating the conditions for sustainable employment growth within our Walsall based businesses. Its core aim is to raise the ambition and aspiration of our young residents aged 16-24 years old. In doing so, it will reduce the number of young people who are not in education, training and employment by helping them access new jobs. We have pledged to support 740 young people into pre-apprenticeship activity and full apprenticeship vacancies within businesses in our growth business sectors.

Following a review by the Walsall Works Management Group, from 01/01/2013 the scheme will now offer the following incentives to employers

- £3,000 maximum for employers taking on a young person aged 16 or 17 at a rate of £3.00ph.
- £4,500 maximum for employers taking on a young person aged between 18 and 20 at a rate of £4.98 ph.
- £6,000 maximum for employers taking on a young person aged between 21 and 24 at a rate of £6.19 ph.

In return employers will offer our young residents a minimum employment contract of 35 hours per week for at least 12 months. They will also commit to employing the young person for the full duration of the apprenticeship which could last from 1 year to 4 years. Employers are contracted to support the personal development of the young apprentice by providing good quality work experience, supervision and access to training in relevant settings that lead to a nationally recognised qualification.

Our pre-apprentices will obtain learning to a Level 1 qualification in preferred sector and in literacy, numeracy and ICT. Alongside this they will undertake a four week work placement and also obtain learning in transferable skills such as employability, communication, time-management, problem solving and working with others.

The Council works closely with partners who have secured funding to deliver the Youth Contract in the borough. Prospects Career Service nationally secured the Youth Contract funding to deliver IAG support young people aged 16-19 years old. In Walsall this is being delivered by Prospects Career Service under the IYPSS services.

In addition, this provision is being managed directly by the Jobcentre plus offices, and as part of the provision they will offer assistance to young jobseekers by offering:

*Wage Incentive* – a wage subsidy of £2275 is being offered to employers who employ young people who are 6 months+ unemployed and claiming Jobseekers Allowance.

*Work Experience* – encourage employers to offer work experience for 4-8 weeks for young jobseekers

*Sector Based Academies* – A sector-based work academy can last up to six weeks and has three key components:

- Pre-employment training- relevant to the needs of your business and sector
- A work experience placement - of great benefit to both the individual and a business
- A guaranteed job interview

Apprenticeship Wage Incentives – a wage subsidy of £1500 for employers who are employing their first young apprentice.

*Support for 16-17 year olds* – The Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) are running an open competition for organisations from all sectors to lead this programme on a regional or sub-regional basis. Organisations will be given complete freedom to design and tailor a programme of support to help them move into full-time education, an Apprenticeship or a job with training. They will receive payment by results depending on how successful they are at helping young people to make a sustainable move into a positive outcome. In addition, Walsall Council is working with its partners across the borough to understand issues for this cohort and to develop project ideas to secure funding from the new ESF programme for 2014 and beyond. The current ESF programme is called Accelerate and this comes to an end in the December 2013.

Travel costs and transport arrangements have been repeatedly identified as a barrier to employment through a number of consultation exercises and through the Working Neighbourhoods Fund target action planning process. In response to this the

Workwise project was financially supported and this was matched to ERDF and Centro funding.

The support provided by Workwise addresses the key aim of moving Jobcentre plus customers into and sustaining them in employment by offering:

- Free public transport information and journey planning service. This useful service enables individuals to gain the confidence to travel to employment opportunities farther away from their local area
- Free travel passes to attend job interviews (day pass) and to attend new employment (for up to 8 weeks)
- Assistance to people into work by removing the transport barrier through a variety of means such as paying for transport costs to and from interviews, training and the first weeks of work.
- Passes will be available for travel on buses, trains or the Metro tram within the Network West Midlands area (Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall, and Wolverhampton). Travel passes are tailored to suit the individual's needs for travelling to interviews or new employment.
- Workwise will provide a non mandatory service that helps to remove any actual and perceived barriers to employment for residents of the target area.
- The Service will be provided from a central location, the four One Stop Shops and in and around the community via the MIU thereby ensuring that we meet the needs and requirements of the service users.

The service is eligible to people living in and paying their council tax to Walsall Council. The individual must be unemployed (either claiming or not claiming benefits) as long as they are not already able to seek help with travel costs through other programmes.

On 10 December 2012, the Government announced that free bus travel is to be given to more than 800,000 people who are unemployed to help them find jobs. From January 2013, those people who have been out of work for between three months and a year will be eligible for the Britain-wide scheme, which has been organised by a coalition of transport bodies. Those eligible include people claiming jobseeker's allowance, incapacity benefit, employment and support allowance or income support. It is hoped the move will help job hunters to travel around more easily in search of employment, to interviews and training courses. National Express who manage the West Midlands Travel Service are one of the operators backing the programme. The feasibility of extending the concessionary travel scheme needs to factor in this recent announcement.

Tim Johnson,  
Executive Director, Regeneration

27th December 2012