

For publication

**Establishment of digital communications apprentice post (R100)**

---

Meeting: Joint Cabinet and Employment and General Committee

Date: 20 February 2018

Cabinet portfolio: Leader/deputy leader

Report by: Communications and marketing manager

---

**1.0 Purpose of report**

- 1.1 To establish a digital communications apprentice post to support the growth in digital communications as a method for the public to contact the council.
- 1.2 To help deliver the Council Plan objective of 'improving access to technology that meets the needs of our residents, businesses and visitors' and the focus for 2017/18 to 'improve the technology that supports our service delivery and increase the skills and capacity of our staff to work in a more commercial manner.'

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 To establish a digital communications apprentice post in the policy and communications service.
- 2.2 That the post is funded through income generated by the policy and communications service.

2.3 That the communications and marketing manager is given delegated authority to recruit to the post and to a further apprenticeship every two years (subject to income levels remaining in place to fund the post).

### 3.0 **Background**

3.1 On 10 January 2017 Joint Cabinet and Employment and General Committee approved a restructure of the policy and communications service.

3.2 The original proposals for this restructure included the desire to create a digital communications apprentice post to meet the year-on-year growth in customer service demands generated through digital communications including the website, Facebook, Twitter and videos on YouTube.

3.3 Due to funding issues the proposal was withdrawn from the restructure with a view to revisiting it if funding could be found to cover the cost of the post.

3.4 As a result of the policy and communications service securing internal contracts to provide survey and communications services for the housing service this opportunity has now arisen. Previously these contracts were awarded to private sector companies.

3.5 It is proposed to use the income from these contracts to fund the digital apprentice post, which will provide the extra capacity required to deliver those internal contracts but also benefit all services of the council and help deliver the Council Plan.

3.6 In particular, it would seek to address a range of issues and opportunities. It would:

- Provide extra capacity to manage the year-on-year increase in customer enquiries through the website and social media, freeing up the communications officer to devote more time to communications campaigns to support the delivery of Council Plan objectives and the communications work for the housing service
- Provide extra capacity to manage day-to-day information updates on the council website, freeing the digital content editor to focus more on website development work that will improve the customer experience and deliver financial efficiencies for the council (through the digital by default approach)
- Provide extra capacity to update the aspire intranet with up-to-date information and monitor and respond to user comments
- Enable the council to monitor and respond to issues identified by customers in other social media environments (eg the social media accounts of local newspapers and radio stations; community Facebook groups; online forums)
- Produce more videos to communicate key messages or campaign information, recognising the growth in demand for this from residents and the media
- Look at opportunities to develop the digital offer to customers

### 3.7 **Human Relations**

3.8 Having an apprentice post will also help the council to support its commitment to being an Apprentice Town and to meet its duties under the Apprentice Levy to increase the number of apprentices within the organisation.

3.9 It is proposed that the digital communications apprentice post would be managed by the digital content editor as part of the policy and communications service. A job description and person specification are attached at appendix 1.

3.10 The apprentice would do an 18-month Level 3 Digital Marketing apprenticeship, which provides training for all elements of the job required. The council has already procured this apprenticeship for other council staff. If approval for the post is given this would enable recruitment to take place with a view to the apprentice joining the July intake of students.

3.11 While there would be no guaranteed job at the end of the apprenticeship the skills the apprentice will gain are highly sought by both the council and other employers, leaving the apprentice in a good position to move on to a permanent role.

3.12 Providing sufficient income remains in place it is proposed for the apprenticeship to be continued, with a new starter every two years.

3.13 **Financial**

3.14 The digital communications apprentice would be employed on the council's apprenticeship rates shown below:

3.15

<b>Year</b>	<b>Apprentice Under 18</b>	<b>Aged 18 to 20</b>	<b>Aged 21 to 24</b>	<b>Aged 25 and over</b>
Year 1	£4.05 an hour	£5.60 an hour	£7.05 an hour	£7.50 an hour
Annual cost	£7,792.20	£10,774.40	£13,564.20	£14,430
On-costs (20%)	£1,558.44	£2,154.88	£2,712.84	£2,886
Apprenticeship course 10% contribution	£1,200	£1,200	£1,200	£1,200
<b>Total year 1 cost</b>	<b>£10,550.64</b>	<b>£14,129.28</b>	<b>£17,477.04</b>	<b>£18,516</b>
<b>Year</b>	<b>Apprentice Under 18</b>	<b>Aged 18 to 20</b>	<b>Aged 21 to 24</b>	<b>Aged 25 and over</b>

Year 2	£8.45 an hour	£8.45 an hour	£8.45 an hour	£8.45 an hour
Annual cost	£16,257.80 a year	£16,257.80 a year	£16,257.80 a year	£16,257.80 a year
On costs (20%)	£3,251.56	£3,251.56	£3,251.56	£3,251.56
Apprenticeship course 10% contribution	£1,200	£1,200	£1,200	£1,200
Total year 2 cost	<b>£20,709.36</b>	<b>£20,709.36</b>	<b>£20,709.36</b>	<b>£20,709.36</b>

- 3.16 These costs would be fully met using £21,900 of income generated by the policy and communications service for carrying out surveys and producing newsletters on behalf on the housing service. This work is funded through the Housing Revenue Account and was previously carried out by the private sector.
- 3.17 By bringing the work in-house the same work can be delivered while achieving a £5,000 saving for the Housing Revenue Account and generating the £21,900 of income required to create this post.
- 3.18 Any surplus income above that required to fund the post (depending on the age of the apprentice or the year of their apprenticeship) will go to the General Fund balance.
- 3.19 **Communications**
- 3.20 The post would bring considerable external and internal communications benefits by improving the speed with which the website and intranet can be updated, and providing extra capacity to produce videos and update and monitor social media to communicate key messages or support promotional or behavioural change campaigns.

3.21 The post will also assist in business continuity or emergency planning situations by providing extra capacity to monitor and respond to customers on social media.

### 3.22 **Information assurance and data protection**

3.23 One of the key functions of the role will be to increase the monitoring of social media accounts across the council to ensure all accounts are being properly updated and run in line with the council's social media policy.

3.24 The apprenticeship will strengthen the digital skills held by employees of the council. Information assurance and data protection duties will form part of the apprenticeship role.

### 3.25 **Consultation and community engagement**

3.26 The post would assist the council as it increasingly seeks to consult and engage residents, businesses and partners online and through social media.

### 3.27 **Commercial opportunities**

3.28 The post will assist the council to promote its full range of commercial services through the website, social media and videos.

### 3.29 **Equality and diversity**

This new apprenticeship opportunity is likely to attract candidates from under-represented groups within our workforce, including young people, so could provide an opportunity to increase workforce diversity.

### 3.30 **Other issues**

3.31 Legal and human rights issues have been considered.

### 3.32 Risk management

Description of the Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Mitigating Action	Impact	Likelihood
Income generated is not sufficient to fund the post	M	L	Work is already agreed that will generate enough income to cover the cost of the post. The apprentice post is time limited (two years) enabling the income situation to be reviewed before recruiting any further apprentices.	L	L
Applicants put off applying due to there being no permanent role at the end of the apprenticeship	L	L	The digital skills that will be developed during the apprenticeship are highly sought by employers making successful apprentices attractive applicants for job opportunities. Council may be able to identify	L	L

			succession opportunities within the timeframe of the apprenticeship.		
--	--	--	--	--	--

#### 4.0 **Alternative options and reasons for rejection**

##### 4.1 Option 1: Do nothing

4.2 This would enable the income generated to be used to assist with reducing the council's budget deficit but would not address any of the customer service and communications issues identified in paragraph 3.6.

##### 4.3 Option 2: Recruit a part-time permanent digital content officer (on either four days a week or 2.5 days a week).

4.4 These posts would be more likely to attract experienced staff with existing digital skills.

4.5 However, it would reduce the ability to address the issues identified in paragraph 3.6 as there would be part of the week where the existing workforce would have to continue delivering the work. It would not support the council's commitment to the Apprentice Town initiative or its Apprentice Levy requirements.

##### 4.6 Option 3: Recruit a full-time permanent digital content officer.

4.7 As with option 2 this post would be more likely to attract experienced staff with existing digital skills, enabling the council to address the issues identified in paragraph 3.6 quickly. Having a full-time post (open to job shares) is likely to attract a wider field of candidates than a purely part-time post.



4.8 However, it would require a growth bid to fund one day a week of the post as the income available is not sufficient to fund the post permanently. As with option 2, this post would not support the council's Apprentice Town commitments.

#### 4.9 Options appraisal

4.10 For the reasons identified above none of the alternative options are recommended.

### 5.0 **Recommendations**

5.1 To establish a digital communications apprentice post in the policy and communications service.

5.2 That the post is funded through income generated by the policy and communications service.

5.3 That the communications and marketing manager is given delegated authority to recruit to the post and to a further apprenticeship every two years (subject to income levels remaining in place to fund the post).

### 6.0 **Reasons for recommendations**

6.1 To deliver effective corporate services to meet the changing needs of the council.

6.2 To enable effective communications and customer service for residents, businesses and visitors to the Chesterfield borough.

#### Decision information

<b>Key decision number</b>	<b>799</b>
<b>Wards affected</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>Links to Council Plan</b>	Improving access to technology

<b>priorities</b>	that meets the needs of our residents, businesses and visitors
-------------------	--

### Document information

<b>Report author</b>		<b>Contact number/email</b>	
John Fern, communications and marketing manager		01246 345245 <a href="mailto:John.fern@chesterfield.gov.uk">John.fern@chesterfield.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Appendices to the report</b>			
Appendix 1	Digital communications apprentice job description and person specification		