



Glasgow City Region Cabinet

Item 8

5 November 2024

Report by: Fiona Whittaker, Chair of the Local Government Future Skills Working Group, and Chief Officer - People Resources, North Lanarkshire Council

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Local Government Future Skills Programme (LGFSP) – Progress Update

Purpose of report:

This report provides Cabinet with an update on progress with the work of the Local Government Future Skills Working Group and the Regional Skills Devolution Group.

Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to:

- Note the content of the report

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This report provides Cabinet with an update on progress with the work of the Local Government Future Skills Working Group and the Regional Skills Devolution Group.

2. Local Government Skills Programme

- 2.1. The updated RES Action Plan, was approved by Cabinet on 6 August 2024, included an action under the Future Skills Programme:

*Deliver the **Local Government Skills Project**, including for planning roles and scoping a wider programme of activity.*

- 2.2. The GCR Programme Management Office ('the PMO') engaged with Member Authorities (MAs) and key stakeholders including Local Government HR representatives within GCR and established the GCR Local Government Future Skills Working Group. The Working Group is chaired by Fiona Whittaker, Chief Officer of People Resources at North Lanarkshire Council. The membership of the Working Group consists of the Heads of HR from the GCR MAs.
- 2.3. At the first meeting of the GCR Local Government Future Skills Working Group ('the Working Group') on 5 December 2023 it was agreed that addressing shortages within Planning Departments would be the initial focus, and that this would be subsequently built upon to pilot similar approaches for other job roles across Local Government.
- 2.4. The Chief Executives' Group (CEG) received an update report on 25 April 2024 and agreed a proposed approach for the GCR Planning Graduate Apprenticeship Programme. This approach entailed working closely with the University of the West of Scotland (UWS) to develop a fully-funded, work-based learning degree qualification in Town Planning. UWS has now appointed a Town Planning Programme Leader to oversee the delivery of the course and confirmed that the initial cohort for experienced students who would undertake an accelerated 2-year Masters programme will commence in January 2025. The subsequent cohort will be a 4-year Undergraduate degree course commencing in September 2025.
- 2.5. Following a presentation to the GCR Chief Executives' Group (CEG) on 24 October 2024, the Chair of the Working Group has written CEG, Heads of Planning, and Heads of HR across GCR to ask them to review and confirm their commitment to both the 2-year Masters programme and the 4-year Undergraduate degree course.
- 2.6. To better understand wider Local Government Training Opportunities, the PMO conducted a survey with the MA Heads of HR to map existing local authority training provision, from school work experience places through to graduate posts. This mapping was both to capture the level of activity across Local Government, but also to identify best practice that could be shared.
- 2.7. While there is a significant amount of activity across the MAs, demonstrating best practice, it is clearly fragmented and there is a lack of consistency. Some examples of good practice from across the Region include:
 - North Lanarkshire Council with 120 paid places for summer placements,
 - Renfrewshire Council with 40 students undertaking Graduate Apprenticeships,
 - Glasgow City Council with up to 20 internships per annum.

- 2.8. It is proposed that at the next meeting of the Local Government Future Skills Working Group, MAs will present project best practice, with an aspiration to develop a consistent programme and share best practice across the 8 MAs.
- 2.9. The GCR PMO has engaged with Mark Ratter, Director of Education, East Renfrewshire Council and chair of the Regional Education Collaborative (REC) to consider the most effective approach to promoting career opportunities in Local Government with young people in their senior phase in school, as they transition into a positive destination and employment. The REC understand the significant opportunity presented by aligning the transition from senior phase and Local Government skills shortages and vacancies.
- 2.10. The REC has committed resource to undertake an audit of current *Developing the Young Workforce* (DYW) activity to better understand provision in place across the region, focusing on Local Government. DYW is funded by the Scottish Government and connects employers with education so that young people develop the skills needed for the workplace. There are 20 DYW Regional Groups across Scotland, with three within the Glasgow City Region: Lanarkshire & East Dunbartonshire, Glasgow and West.
- 2.11. Following this review, the REC will link with the existing GCR Employability Group and the Future Skills Working Group to determine the next steps.
- 2.12. Scotland's [Local Government Workforce Report](#) was launched at the SOLACE conference on 6 September 2024. The report identifies many acute challenges in several job roles, especially in social care and social work. A number of professional roles such as trading standards officers, planners and environmental health officers are also highlighted.
- 2.13. The biggest barrier to recruitment was noted as lack of financial resource and pressure to make budget savings. It also noted that there are insufficient numbers of graduates being produced in relevant disciplines, and discussions are underway with relevant national HE & FE bodies about how this might be addressed.
- 2.14. The report identifies that councils are willing to consider what national co-ordination is needed and most respondents supported collaborative work in engaging with further and higher education in developing solutions to address gaps at a national or regional level.
- 2.15. To continue to meet the demands of delivering public services in the 21st century, local government must position itself as an employer of choice and better promote local government as a rewarding sector in which to pursue a career, with many varied types of roles and benefits available. In particular, local government must work on attracting the younger generation into the workforce. This clearly links to the work taken forward with the REC.
- 2.16. Following the last meeting of the Local Government Future Skills Working Group, there was agreement that the SOLACE report should provide the framework for the approach adopted across GCR. However, given the budget issues identified with planning, wider systemic issues need to be addressed before another area of work can be tackled.
- 2.17. In response to the discussion at the CEG, the PMO is liaising with the Working Group to develop the core actions for 2025; these will be finalised by the Group at the next

meeting in December 2024 and will be added to the Regional Economic Strategy Action Plan.

3. Regional Skills Devolution Group Update

- 3.1. Representatives from the Regional Skills Devolution Group (RSDG) continue to engage with Scottish Government Skills colleagues to consider areas of opportunity to work in partnership, to support the delivery of the recommendation from the Withers Report (2023).
- 3.2. A meeting has taken place with SG Modern Apprenticeship colleagues in late October to progress the discussion on the flexibility of Modern Apprenticeship funding. The RSDG have asked SG for additional flexibility to vire Modern Apprenticeship budgets that have already been committed.
- 3.3. The GCR PMO is working with Glasgow City Council and the Centre for Civic Innovation (CfCI) to utilise the Scottish Approach to Service Design to develop a more effective mechanism of employer engagement. The Withers Report specifically recommended better employer engagement as a method of more effective future skills planning. Scottish Government skills colleagues have also asked to also contribute to this work.
- 3.4. Scottish Government have asked Regional Partnerships to participate in Regional Skills Planning Engagement Sessions. The RSDG have been asked to represent the GCR Regional Partnership in these discussions.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1. Cabinet is asked to:
 - Note the content of the report

