

PUBLICA

TITLE: PUBLICA INTERN AND GRADUATE TRAINEE PROGRAMME

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This report sets out proposals for a new intern and graduate trainee programme within Publica and requests that three of the partner councils (Cotswold, Forest of Dean and West Oxfordshire District Councils) consider and approve reinvestment from the over-delivery of savings back into Publica to deliver the programme.

1. Objective

To set out Publica's plans to create an intern and graduate trainee programme, focused primarily on areas of the business where it is hard to recruit suitably qualified employees (e.g. Planning; ICT; Environmental and Regulatory Services) and to seek Council support to invest some of the Publica savings into this programme.

2. Background

- 2.1 Publica has an ambition to become a "Great Place to Work" in support of its partner councils. As part of delivering that ambition, we are making progress in creating a pipeline of talent for the future by investing in the next generation of employees through apprenticeships and work experience placements. To take this to the next level and augment our ability to grow our own talent for the future, we now wish to introduce an internship and graduate trainee programme.
- 2.2 We are fortunate to be based in a region with a number of high quality universities, including: University of Gloucestershire; University of Bristol; University of the West of England; Oxford Brookes University; and Oxford University. Our HR team has been in discussion with these local universities to help develop this proposal for a Publica intern and graduate trainee programme and would build on these emerging relationships to provide a cohort of suitable candidates for the programme once it is established.

- 2.3 Publica is on track to over-deliver against the budgeted savings targets for 2018/19 agreed with the partner councils. It is proposed that Cotswold, Forest of Dean and West Oxfordshire District Councils consider and agree to reinvest part of this over-delivery back into Publica, to enable the creation of a new intern and graduate trainee programme. This reinvestment should be seen as an 'invest to save' measure, as it will enable Publica to grow talent for the future, providing a potential pipeline of future employees for services that pose recruitment challenges. The programme will also strengthen the reputation of Publica as an employer and - by association and ownership - the reputation of the Councils, investing proactively in the next generation of public sector workers.

3. Proposed Intern and Graduate Trainee Programme

3.1 Internships

- 3.1.1 Internships are now viewed as an essential part of the career ladder for many professions, providing benefits to employers and the interns themselves. Internships arranged through universities, usually last between six and ten weeks, generally taking place over the summer months.
- 3.1.2 The proposal is to offer six internships a year across three of Publica's locations (Cirencester, Coleford and Witney) for two years. Interns would be paid positions, in line with employment law, as they will be expected to undertake project and other work over their time with Publica. We would base these internships in services that pose particular recruitment challenges, such as Planning, ICT and Environmental and Regulatory Services, in the hope that interested and successful interns would wish to apply for future positions in these services in the future.
- 3.1.3 The cost of providing six 10-week internships a year for two years is estimated at £45,000 (£15,000 per Council). This would cover salary, on-costs and any travel or other expenses.

3.2 Graduate Trainees

- 3.2.1 Graduate trainee programmes provide a great way to develop a workforce of home-grown talent that is fully able to understand and exhibit the core values of a company. Graduate trainees can provide a fresh approach and vigour, often injecting new life into a workplace with their energy and enthusiasm for their first work environment. They can also, importantly, help to compensate for increasing skills gaps that companies and councils experience when trying to recruit.
- 3.2.2 Previous experience of working with the LGA graduate scheme has shown us that, to provide a worthwhile programme, each graduate trainee position should be offered over a two-year period. This provides sufficient time for the trainee to acquire enough practical experience to complete a competency-based route to professionally recognised status - such as membership of the RTPI (Royal Town Planning Institution).
- 3.2.3 The proposal is to offer three, salaried, graduate trainee positions, each appointed for a two-year period, across three Publica locations (Cirencester, Coleford and Witney). Each graduate trainee would be offered a structured programme in a particular service area. The advertisement for the graduate trainees will provide a number of examples of services within which a traineeship could be based, in order to attract a wide cross-section of candidates. We would look particularly to appoint trainees into one of the services where we (along with local

authorities country-wide) have the greatest recruitment challenges, for example: Planning; ICT; or Environmental and Regulatory Services.

3.2.4 The cost of providing three, two-year graduate trainee positions is estimated at £165,000 (£55,000 per Council). This would cover salary, on-costs (including pension), professional membership fees and any travel or other expenses.

4. Recommendation

4.1 That Cotswold, Forest of Dean and West Oxfordshire District Councils each support the reinvestment of £70,000 into Publica for the creation of a new, two-year intern and graduate trainee programme, to be funded from the over-delivery of savings delivered by Publica in 2018/19.