

Committee: FULL COUNCIL

Date: 19 October 2021

Title: Kickstart employment scheme

Purpose of Report

For members to consider taking on an employee as part of the government backed Kickstart scheme.

Recommendation:

Members **RESOLVE** to employ one/two employees in the external works team for 25/37 hours per week through the government Kickstart program. Officers to be delegated responsibility to decide whether to use a Kickstart Gateway or to apply directly.

Report:

1. The Kickstart scheme provides funding to create new jobs for 16 to 24 year olds who must be on Universal Credit and who are at risk of long-term unemployment.
2. The scheme provides for 100% of the National Minimum Wage (or National Living Wage if the age is appropriate) for 25 hours per week over a period of 6 months.
3. It will also cover the employers National Insurance Contributions as well as the minimum automatic enrolment pension contributions. Additional funding would be available for training and support to assist people on the scheme to obtain jobs in the future.
4. Members can decide if they wish to extend the contract to 37 hours in line with the existing staff but the council will then be responsible for those costs involved in the additional hours that are worked.
5. We can apply for funding up until the 17 December 2021 with a start date by the 31 March 2022 which would mean the council could obtain funding through to the end of September 2022 if they were to start on the 31 March 2022.

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6. The criteria laid down is that the new employee should not replace any existing employees or planned employees. Their employment should also not impact upon existing employees in way that would see a reduction in hours or loss of jobs for existing employees or contractors. As this is a new avenue of worker for the council to explore, we are in compliance with these stipulations.
7. In addition to the wage support that the council would receive, central Government will also provide an additional £1,500 to support the setup costs for the employee and to help develop their longer-term employability skills. The council will be required to keep the financial records to show how this has been achieved.
8. In looking to support the employee in becoming more employable the type of assistance that is required includes:
 - assist them in looking for long-term work, including career advice and setting goals
 - support with curriculum vitae (CV) and interview preparations
 - developing their skills in the workplace
 - helping them to move to another employment scheme once the Kickstart role comes to an end and no other employment has been obtained
9. The council can choose to either recruit and manage the Kickstart scheme themselves or they can enrol with Kickstart Gateway and the Gateway will then manage the recruitment and applying for the funding on our behalf. For this they receive direct from the government £360 to cover admin costs. If they do not pay VAT then the council would receive a further £60 to assist with setup costs.
10. Kickstart Gateways will:
 - gather information about the jobs we would like to offer
 - share this information with DWP on our behalf
11. Alongside the essential responsibilities of a Kickstart Gateway, they will also:
 - add the young person to their organisation's payroll
 - pay the young person's wages on our behalf using the funding from DWP
 - provide the employability support on the council's behalf
12. Whichever route members wish to pursue be it direct or through a Kickstart provider the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will need to be provided with job descriptions that work coaches at Jobcentre Plus will use to match candidates to the job.

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13. We will then be emailed each time a person is referred to the job. Candidates will then be given the opportunity to apply and we will interview any that wish to apply for the vacancy. Once the person starts, DWP will be told so that funding can commence.
14. If the council decides to advertise the post itself a DWP work coach will still be required to provide an introduction in order that we will receive full funding.
15. Somerset County Council (SCC) are currently acting as a Gateway provider for the public sector through "Step Up Somerset". Contact has also been received from other providers who have been in touch with the council.
16. It is proposed that the council employs one Kickstart employee who will be provided with a role and training through the external works team. The employee will be line managed by the Countryside Manager. In anticipation of this **APPENDIX 17A** has been produced by the Countryside Manager to assist with identifying training and support.
17. By the time any Kickstart employee is employed by the council it is hoped that there will be a clearer idea of how various services currently carried out by SSDC and SCC will be devolved down to the Town Council. It is quite likely that the council will need to make allowances to carry out additional service provision over and above what it is currently carried out.
18. With this in mind members may wish to employ a second Kickstart employee to work on the Recreation side of the external works team to help develop the recreational services for residents of Ilminster.
19. Currently there is no budget identified for the continued employment of a Kickstart employee beyond the initial time frame identified, however members may wish at the Budget Setting day on the 30 October to make provision in the salaries budget to do so.
20. A possible resolution that members may wish to make as a result of a debate on this subject is;
 - a. Members resolve to employ one/two employees in the external works team for 25/37 hours per week through the government Kickstart program. Officers to be delegated responsibility to decide whether to use a Kickstart Gateway or to apply directly.
21. Members are free as always to arrive at resolutions of their own.

Mark Tredwin
Town clerk
October 2021