

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET – 6 FEBRUARY 2008

REVISION TO TRAINEE ACCOUNTANT SCHEME

Joint Report by the Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Corporate Support / Executive Head of Finance & Asset Management

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The report seeks Cabinet approval of a revised graduate trainee accountant scheme, which has been updated to incorporate the changes to the pay and grading structure of the Council, as well as aligning its conditions with other professional training plans across the Council.

2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The Council has operated a trainee accountant scheme since April 1996, at which point it amalgamated the schemes which existed in the three previous authorities.
- 2.2 Following the decision of the then Corporate Governance Committee at its meeting on March 22 2006 to implement the revised pay and grading scheme it is now necessary to align the salary grades within the trainee accountant scheme to it. These have been discussed and agreed with the Head of Personnel.
- 2.3 The opportunity has also been taken to revise the scheme in order that it fully reflects the current syllabus of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA) which is the preferred qualification for participants on the scheme and is also aligned with current practices throughout the Council.

3 CONTENTS OF SCHEME

- 3.1 The objective of the trainee accountant scheme is to produce a required number of qualified accountants with extensive experience of all aspects of the services provided by East Ayrshire Council's Finance Service.
- 3.2 The scheme relates salary placing and progression to both academic progress and satisfactory work performance. It also details the opportunities that will be provided to trainees during their training programme.

4 CIPFA ACCREDITATION SCHEME

- 4.1 The aims of the CIPFA accreditation scheme is to:
- (i) act as a means of recognising good practice amongst employing organisations
 - (ii) improve the services which CIPFA currently provide employers
 - (iii) establish minimum and best practice standards for the level of support employers provide CIPFA members and student members.

4.2 The East Ayrshire Employee General Employee Review (EAGER) has previously been assessed by CIPFA and it was determined that it meets their Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirement.

4.3 It is proposed that accreditation is now also sought from CIPFA in respect of the revised trainee accountant scheme. At present CIPFA operate within 3 levels of accreditation aimed at assessing employers training schemes. To achieve accreditation Employers are required to submit a self assessment, following which, one of the following categories will be assigned to the Council.

❖ **Best Practice Employer:** - This is the level achieved by the best employers to which all organisations can reasonably aspire. Students receiving support at this level will have a substantially better chance of success.

❖ **Registered Employer:** - For organisations that are providing the level of support that should help to ensure the student has a good foundation to their career, and has a good chance of passing their CIPFA exams.

❖ **Not Accredited:** For those organisations that do not meet the basic criteria.

4.4 In order to achieve designation as a Best Practice Employer organisations require to complete a self assessment questionnaire responding positively to at least 19 of the 21 questions set. The draft submission is attached at Appendix 2 and it is considered that East Ayrshire Council could meet the criteria required. It is therefore recommended that accreditation is sought from CIPFA and that attainment of Best Practice status should be the outcome target set.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The costs of the trainee accountant scheme are contained within the overall budget allocation for the Finance and Asset Management Service.

5.2 The Council has agreed a revised pay and grading scheme and the proposed changes to the Trainee Accountant scheme are set out in paragraph 5 of the attached appendix. This shows the previously approved grade under the former APT&C conditions and the corresponding grade proposed under the revised scheme as at April 2007. These have been considered and agreed by the Head of Personnel.

6 POLICY / LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The trainee accountant scheme contributes to workforce planning within the Finance Service by providing a source of suitably qualified employees.

7 TRADE UNIONS

7.1 The proposal is subject to consultation with Trade Unions.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

- i) approve the revised graduate trainee accountant scheme subject to consultation with the Trade Unions.
- ii) Agree that Best Practice accreditation is sought from CIPFA
- iii) Otherwise note the contents of this report

Elizabeth Morton
**Depute Chief Executive/
Executive Director of Corporate Support**

Alex McPhee
**Executive Head of Finance
and Asset Management.**

18 January 2008

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Appendix 1 - Graduate Trainee Accountant Scheme – November 2007
2. Draft CIPFA Scheme Accreditation Submission

Anyone wishing further information should contact Robin Baker, Financial Controller
(tel 01563 576331)

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE – FINANCE & ASSET MANAGEMENT SERVICE

GRADUATE TRAINEE ACCOUNTANT SCHEME

1 OBJECTIVE

The Finance & Asset Management Service of East Ayrshire Council seeks to promote the highest professional standards in all aspects of financial management. It is the objective of the Finance & Asset Management Service, through the Trainee Accountant Scheme, to produce a required number of qualified accountants with extensive experience of all aspects of the services provided by Finance, to ensure the continued delivery of these throughout the Council.

2 NUMBER OF POSTS

Two posts of Trainee Accountant have been identified within the approved staffing establishment of the Finance & Asset Management Service.

3 ENTRANCE QUALIFICATIONS

Trainees will be graduates or equivalents who possess the necessary entrance qualifications to register for The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) professional accountancy qualification.

4 PREFERRED QUALIFICATION

Trainees will undertake studies and examinations for membership of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA). Each employee will be assigned a mentor and follow placements within the Finance and Asset Management Service over a maximum four year training programme.

5 SALARY GRADES

Trainee Accountants will be placed on the pay and grading scale according to qualification and satisfactory progress in examination and workplace performance. The current and proposed grades are set out in the following table.

STAGE OF QUALIFICATION / STUDY	SALARY GRADE – Previous APT&C Grade (April 2007)		PROPOSED SALARY GRADE – Revised Pay & Grading Scheme (April 2007)	
	Grade	£15,828 - £16,932	Grade	£16,052 – £17,053
Graduate Entry to Scheme	AP1	£15,828 - £16,932	Grade 5	£16,052 – £17,053
Completion of Certificate Examinations & at least 1 Year relevant experience	AP2	£17,352 - £18,783	Grade 6	£17,563 – £19,201
Completion of Diploma Examinations & at least 2 Years relevant experience	AP4	£21,861 – £22,560	Grade 8	£22,259 - £24,352
Completion of Final Test of Professional Competence and at least 3 years relevant experience.	AP5	£24,942 - £27,165	Grade 9	£24,716 - £27,446
Completion & Approval of Portfolio of Experience; Election to Accountant Member of CIPFA	SO3	£29,232 - £31,821	Grade 11	£30,885 – £32,796

6 TRAINING PROGRAMME

6.1 New Trainees

The period of traineeship will be related to the time required for each Trainee to complete the appropriate professional qualification. This is currently assumed to be a maximum of 4 years; this includes a period of 12 months to allow for any examination resits that may be required.

Failure to progress satisfactorily within the Trainee programme or to complete the programme in full will result in termination of employment. However, prior to this decision being reached the Council will consider the opportunity for suitable alternative employment if available, via the normal redeployment procedures. If no such alternative employment is available or the Trainee refuses the offer of alternative employment then the employment will be terminated.

6.2 Development Programme

A structured development programme will be provided for each Trainee. This will provide for placements within each Division of the Finance and Asset Management Service, together with placement within internal audit.

Specific duties will be set for each Trainee while they are in a particular Division which will reflect their grade and experience. All personnel matters e.g. holidays, discipline, grievances etc, in respect of Trainees will be dealt with by the Manager of the Division they are working in at any particular time.

6.3 Study

Trainees will be expected to study through a supported programme of day release - to attend Glasgow Caledonian University (or an equivalent provider); supported learning within the workplace; and personal study by the Trainee out with normal working time. The mode of study will be agreed with the Financial Controller and the appointed Mentor for each Trainee and may be subject to change during the training period according to individual needs.

Attendance at other courses provided by CIPFA or other providers will be at the discretion of the Financial Controller/Executive Head of Finance & Asset Management. The cost of approved attendance will be met from existing budgets within the Finance and Asset Management Service.

6.4 Study Leave

Paid study leave for examinations of 1 day per annum will be allowed. In addition, time off for examinations will be allowed.

7 FEES & EXPENSES

Course, College and examination fees will be paid by the Council. Trainees will be responsible for payment of any fees associated with resitting examinations. Trainees will also be responsible for paying any registration or annual membership fees levied by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy.

The cost of Open Learning Materials will be met in full by the Council. The Finance Service will also reimburse 50% of the purchase cost of textbooks which are agreed are essential to the course; this should be discussed in advance with the Financial Controller. The cost of excess travel above the Trainee's normal journey from home to workplace and from home to college will be paid at public transport rates.

The Council will meet the cost of exemptions that may be available to Trainees due to the qualifying content of their first degree.

8 MENTORING AND SUPPORT

Each Trainee will be allocated a Mentor to assist in their progression within the training scheme. The Financial Controller will be responsible for ensuring that the training scheme operates in accordance with the objectives and principles described above. Quarterly meetings will be held with Trainees where they will require to present a report on their progress. Access will be available at all times to all senior Finance staff to discuss any area of concern or to discuss any element of course work.

Each mentor will meet formally with the Trainee at least every 6 months. This meeting should be used to review progress against the agreed work plan; review and verify the Initial Professional Development Scheme (IPDS); discuss any other issues arising as part of the training programme.

Each trainee will take part in the Council's employee review process – EAGER. It is expected that this will identify any specific training and development requirement outwith the CIPFA trainee accountant programme.

9 REVIEW OF SCHEME

The Trainee Accountant scheme will be reviewed on an annual basis to reflect any changes to the CIPFA Professional Development Scheme.

Alex McPhee
Executive Head of Finance and Asset Management

18 January 2008



Employer Accreditation Scheme self-certification form

Your name: *Robin Baker*

Telephone number...*01563 576331*

Name of organization: *East Ayrshire Council*

Email address: *robin.baker@east-ayrshire.gov.uk*

Name of Training Principal: *Alex McPhee, Executive Head of Finance
& Asset Management*

Name of Training Manager: *Connie Kerr
Training & Development Manager*

Address of organization: *East Ayrshire Council, Greenholm Street, Kilmarnock, KA1 4DJ*

How to complete the form

For every question, highlight or indicate clearly which of the three answers most closely matches your organisation. In each case, space has been left for you to add notes. The final two pages allow you to include specific examples to support the answers you have given. Where applicable, sample records, forms, policies and statements should be included.

Where to return the form

When completed, please return the form to Ray Foley, Quality Assurance Manager;

- By post to CIPFA, 3 Robert Street London WC2N 6RL
- By email to ray.foley@cipfa.org

You will be contacted with your result within 10 working days.

You can contact Ray on 020 7 543 5698 if you have any queries about the Employer Accreditation Scheme.

Q	Questions on Your Policies	Not Accredited	Registered	Best Practice Employer	Notes
1	Do you have a written policy setting out the detailed support you provide to CIPFA registered students?	No	Yes, although not in the form of a single document which is CIPFA specific	<i>Yes, in a regularly reviewed (at least annually) document, which specifically addresses CIPFA education and training issues</i>	Written Trainee Accountant Scheme agreed by Cabinet on 6 Feb 2008, this is subject to annual review by Executive Head of Finance & Asset Management
2	Is a copy of the policy given to each student as part of his or her induction (or is it readily available on your organisation's intranet)?	No	Yes	<i>Yes, and they receive advice/training on it as part of their induction</i>	Yes – departmental induction incorporates introduction to scheme.
3	For each registered CIPFA student you employ, what percentage of the cost of the CIPFA Open Learning Materials and required textbooks do you meet (or reimburse)? [This may include an element which is dependent in the student's success in the relevant examination]	Under 35%	35% - 74%	75% or more	Council will meet 100% of the cost open learning materials
4	For each registered CIPFA student you employ, what percentage of the cost of the CIPFA's examination (first time attempts) and student fees do you meet (or reimburse)? [This may include an element which is dependent in the student's success in the relevant examination]	Under 35%	35% - 74%	75% or more	Council will meet 100% of first attempt exam fees, together with student membership fees of CIPFA during traineeship. The Council reserves the right to recover these costs should the employee fail to remain in the employment of the Council for the period of the traineeship.

Q	Questions on Your Policies – cont.	Not Accredited	Registered	Best Practice Employer	Notes
5	For first examination re-sits, what percentage of the cost of CIPFA's examination and student fees do you meet (or reimburse)?	No policy	<i>0% - 74%</i>	<i>75% or more</i>	Council policy is that students are responsible for the costs associated with the resit of any exam.
6	What type of induction do you provide to each student?	None	Introduction by mentor, including explanation of CIPFA and workplace training programme	<i>Formal induction course including an introduction to the organization, CIPFA, work experience and the training policy and programme</i>	Formal Corporate Induction to the Council, together with Departmental induction including the trainee scheme.
7	What study leave do you allow CIPFA registered students to attend Added Value courses at an accredited provider and attendance at relevant revision courses?	Under 35%	35% to 74%	<i>75% or more</i>	Attendance will be permitted for courses that address either a clear business need or contribute to the overall training needs of the employee.
8	Are students given paid leave to attend CIPFA examinations?	No, students must take annual leave for the relevant days	Yes	<i>Yes, and for first re-sit of each paper</i>	Yes
Questions on Mentoring					
9	Do you assign a mentor to each student?	No	Most students	<i>Yes</i>	Yes – each trainee will have a specific named individual from within the Finance Service
10	Are all mentors/supervisors CCAB qualified?	No	Most of them	<i>Yes</i>	Yes all are qualified accountants with several years post qualification experience

11	Are mentors given specific training before becoming a mentor or do they work to your organisation's best practice guidelines?	No specific training	<i>Some training on an ad hoc basis</i>	Full training given	Trainees are made aware of the requirements of the IPDS. Any additional training needs will be identified through the internal employee review process (EAGER)
12	What is the maximum number of students assigned to any one mentor/supervisor?	5 or more	4 - 5	<i>3 or less</i>	2 (although in practice this will be on a one to one basis due to the limited number of trainees participating in the scheme at any given time.
13	Does your organisation regularly attend employers meetings?	No	Sometimes	<i>Yes</i>	Yes – Glasgow Caledonian University organize annual meetings.
14	Do you devise a work programme for each student which is designed to achieve the IPDS Requirements in the shortest time.	No	Yes	<i>Yes – detailed programme is discussed individually with each student</i>	Programme of work within each section of the department is agreed.
Questions on student support					
15	Are students required to regularly update their IPDS?	No	Yes	<i>Yes, and this is monitored by their mentor</i>	Yes – subject to quarterly review meetings.
16	Who verifies the IPDS?	Student only	Mentor	<i>Mentor and Training Manager or Principal</i>	Mentor – Bi annual review meetings with Financial Controller and mentor and student.
17	How often is the IPDS verified?	Once the student has passed all professional examinations	Annually	<i>More often than annually</i>	Subject to quarterly review with Mentor.

18	Is there a formal appraisal of each student's work performance?	If required	Yes, annually	<i>Yes, at least once every six months</i>	Yes – quarterly review with Financial Controller and Mentor.
Q	Questions on student support – cont.	Not Accredited	Registered	Best Practice	Notes
19	Do training mentors/supervisors review student performance at university/college?	No, this is left to the university/college	<i>Reports from the university/college are considered</i>	We meet with the university/college to discuss performance, which is followed up by an individual performance interview with each student	At present only feed back from university is considered. It is proposed that a formal review meeting is established and that the output of this will be incorporated into the annual student review.
20	Do you have a policy of support for Continuing Professional Development (CPD)?	No	Yes	<i>Yes, and all CIPFA members are encouraged and supported in achieving the required standards</i>	Yes. The EAGER process (East Ayrshire General Employee Review) has been accepted by CIPFA as a means of establishing and monitoring the training needs of CIPFA qualified accountants employed within East Ayrshire Council.
21	Do you actively support participation in CIPFA regional events or other voluntary activities (for example acting as a class representative at college)?	No	Yes	<i>Yes, and CIPFA members and students are allowed time off to attend recognised events</i>	Yes – Employees will be encouraged and supported to participate in these events if they are identified with their individual EAGER review.

Innovative Practices

Please give details of any examples of innovative practice that your organisation has implemented in the field of CIPFA education and training. (Note that these examples may be shared with other employers or published in CIPFA's general guidance to employers. In such cases there will be an acknowledgement and, with your prior permission, contact details given.)

1. Trainees will be seconded to the Best Value and Policy Unit for a minimum period of 3 months. This section is responsible for co coordinating all aspects of the Council's response to the Best Value and Improvement agenda. During their secondment it is expected that they will complete a discrete piece of work contributing the development of corporate strategies and will be responsible for advising Senior Management of the organizational implications.
2. As a result of management restructuring Finance, Technical Services and Property Services have combined to form a single Finance & Asset Management Service under the management of the Executive Head of Finance & Asset Management. As a result it is proposed that the Trainee Programme will now include secondments within the Asset Management division. This should increase their awareness of corporate and strategic activities whilst also strengthening their overall awareness of capital planning budgeting and project management arrangements.

Additional comments

Please note below any further comments which you consider would help CIPFA interpret the answers you have given above.

Clarification of any points arising from the above submission can be obtained from Robin Baker, Financial Controller.