

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE – 24 AUGUST 2004

CONSTRUCTION SKILLS PROJECT

Joint Report by the Acting Director of Corporate Support and the Executive Director of Development & Property Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT.

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek Committee approval to participate in a new Construction Skills Project.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 It is widely acknowledged that there is a growing skills gap within the construction sector, primarily as a result of the following:
- Companies not willing to take on the burden of the training associated with trades which are for a period of 3 years.
 - The poor perception with young people of the sector generally.
 - The high number of people who are now 'retiring' from the sector, ie it is anticipated that there will be a need for 4,000 new workers to replace those leaving the sector (2003-2011 (SLIMS)).
 - The high value of construction projects that are in the local economy ranging from the Education PPP project to general house building within East Ayrshire
- 2.2 The new schools PPP project could see £35 million of capital works over the next 2-5 years and taken with the consents on general house building this could take capital works within the area to well above £50 million, which will be an enormous boost to the local economy creating considerable employment opportunities.
- 2.3 Currently Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire (SEA) operates a 'Modern Apprenticeships' training programme, part of which is targeted at the construction sector. At present 337 construction apprentices are active in Ayrshire with 126 within East Ayrshire.
- 2.4 In addition Ayr College provides 'Access To Construction' training programmes but, like other similar support measures, these are not connected to other support programmes available resulting in an uncoordinated approach to this sector.
- 2.5 Given the level of future capital works that will roll out in East Ayrshire over the next 2-5 years, the current information on skill gaps on trades, both current and forecast, East Ayrshire's Community Planning Partners (Improving Opportunities) have recognised there is a need to increase the level of construction apprenticeships training in the area.

3. PROPOSED PROGRAMME

- 3.1** In order to cope with these demands and opportunities a more flexible and innovative programme of training is being proposed by the Council which has received the support of the Community Planning partners.
- 3.2** The proposed East Ayrshire Construction Skills Project (EACSP) will build on the existing support training programmes operated by partner organisations by 'gluing' them together more effectively thereby making them more integrated and coordinated.
- 3.3** At present there is little mentoring of the recruits on the existing programmes which results in the drop out rate being high, given the length of the training.
- 3.4** As well as providing a more integrated approach, the new programme will provide extensive mentoring and monitoring to improve trainee retention and to continue liaison with companies participating in existing programmes. (A project map is attached).
- 3.5** It is proposed therefore to begin the programme by identifying 10 'Get Ready For Work' young people currently in training with the Skills Training Unit. The Skills Training Unit delivers the Vocational Skills, Personal Skills and Lifeskills strands of the Get Ready for Work (GRFW) programme. This national programme is funded by Scottish Enterprise through Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire.
- 3.6** On completion the young people will progress to Ayr College's 'The Scottish Progression Award in Building' course in August 2004. The course is designed to provide 24 hours per week college learning for 34 weeks. The qualification introduces basic construction skills such as 'General Appreciation of Trowel Skills', 'General Appreciation of Interior Finishes' and 'Working with Wood' etc. Specific additional units related to specific trades can be included where appropriate. Funding for this element of the programme is the subject of a European Social fund application.
- 3.7** On completion of their College course it is hoped that the young people will be placed, where appropriate, with contractors who hold a Public/Private Partnership (PPP) contract with East Ayrshire Council. Discussions are currently underway between the PPP Unit, who are supportive of the proposal, and potential contractors regarding this element of the project. The focus is on PPP contractors because it is likely that they will possess the size and resources to take on trainees at the end of their training period. Whilst it is unlikely that the terms of this Project can be included in the formal PPP contracts, discussions will be held at the earliest opportunity with the contractors and sub-contractors appointed by the Council in order to reach agreement on the placement of trainees. However, even if this is not possible the trainees will have gained experience and accredited training during their College course and will be better placed to access the labour market generally. The placement of young people will be undertaken by East Ayrshire Employment Initiative utilising its 'Short Job Focused Training' project.

- 3.8** The Short Job Focused Training is an 8 week 'on the job' training programme designed to assist the young person integrate into new employment. This element of the programme is funded by Jobcentre Plus (New Deal).
- 3.9.1** The main innovative feature of the programme is that the young people participating in the programme will have a 'mentor' who will guide them through each stage of the programme, assisting where required with support, encouragement and guidance. The mentor, who will be one of the current members of staff within the Skills Training Unit, will provide continuity of support for the young people and will ease their transition from unemployment to the world of work. The mentor will provide assistance with work ethic, attitude to work and attitude to learning and behaviour.
- 3.10** It is also proposed that PPP employers who provide places for the young people will be encouraged to release them during their training for a 1-2 month period to form a supervised squad that will undertake one community project per year. Communities within East Ayrshire may submit proposals to the Skills Training Unit for consideration. The costs associated with these community projects must be found by the communities themselves or by the apprentices employers providing materials etc. This could make a significant contribution to local environmental projects that have been difficult to fund from the public agencies.
- 3.11** The costs associated with this proposal are, in the main, already in place. The 'Get Ready for Work' project is currently funded by Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire; the College element is the subject of a European Social Fund application by Ayr College and the 'Short Job focused Training' is funded by Jobcentre Plus (New Deal).

4. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1** To facilitate the programme it may be necessary to review the current staffing arrangements and this will be discussed with Personnel Services. Any additional costs will be met by Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** There are no financial implications for East Ayrshire Council within this project; the cost of any personnel implications arising from these proposals will be met from the 'Construction Skills Project' funding which has been agreed by Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire. Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire will contribute 50% of the mentors' salary costs from 2004 - 2008. The fund will also provide candidates with construction tool kits. In total SEA will provide £44,600 over 3 calendar years.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** There are no legal implications regarding the operation of this project.

7. TRADE UNIONS

7.1 The proposal is subject to consultation with Trade Unions.

8. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The 'Construction Skills Project' is in accord with the aims of the Community Plan in that it will impact on 'Improving Opportunities'.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) approves the implementation of the Construction Skills Project; and
- (ii) otherwise notes the content of the report.

David Mitchell
Acting Director of Corporate Support
17 August 2004

James Lavery
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Development & Property
Services

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

For further information on the contents of this report contact Robert Paton, Head of Economic Development and Property. Telephone 01563 576142.

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Project Map

