

## SUPPORTED INTERNSHIPS AT SEVENOAKS DISTRICT COUNCIL

People and Places Advisory Committee - 1 October 2019

Report of Chief Officer People & Places

Status For information

Key Decision No

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**Executive Summary:** This report outlines the background and operational model for a Sevenoaks District Council supported internship project that commenced on 9 September 2019.

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This report supports the Key Aim of the Community Plan

Portfolio Holder Cllr Lesley Dyball

Contact Officer Alan Whiting, Ext. 7446

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**Recommendation to People and Places Advisory Committee:** That Members note the contents of the report.

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**Reason for recommendation:** The report outlines progress for the supported internship project at Sevenoaks District Council.

### Introduction and Background

- 1 In January 2019, Senior Management Team agreed to pilot a supported employment initiative based on pioneering work done at the National Grid.
- 2 The National Grid's Supported Internship model involves a partnership with a local Special Educational Needs School. The school employs a full-time Job Coach who is based at the National Grid. The National Grid then appointed a Site Lead for the project from within the National Grid who helps to support and promote the project, and liaise between managers and the Job Coach.
- 3 The National Grid model has operated for over five years and supports an intake of around five students a year. From recent visits to the National Grid, it was clear that the scheme had created a talent pool that helped the Interns to transition into employment, including appropriate employment opportunities at the National Grid. Managers at the National Grid spoke about the positive impact on staff and the culture of the organisation. Interns spoke about improvements to confidence and quality of life

- 4 Following meetings with the National Grid, the Council's Enterprise Co-ordinator facilitated a partnership with Broomhill Bank Foundation Special School based in Tunbridge Wells and who have a satellite base in Hextable.
- 5 The concept was to use experience at the National Grid to carve out meaningful internship opportunities at Sevenoaks District Council, for students at Broomhill who had such opportunities identified within their Education and Health Care Plan.

### **The Supported Internship Model at Sevenoaks District Council**

- 6 Broomhill Bank School have successfully appointed a full-time Job Coach, and office space has been set aside for the project on the first floor. The Council has also now designated an Officer to be the Site Lead between the project and the Council.
- 7 Three students from Broomhill were selected for the scheme. The Site Lead invited senior managers to express an interest in hosting a supported internship. A job matching process took place looking at suitability of placements alongside students, their needs and aspirations. As a result the following placements were agreed:
  - IT Development
  - Facilities Management/Post Room and Asset Maintenance
  - Private Sector Housing
- 8 The interns started their placements on 9 September 2019. In line with the National Grid scheme, they are working school hours and during term-time only. The Job Coach works closely alongside interns who spend the first hour and last half hour of their day with the Job Coach. This provides essential support and reflection of their experience. Interns are also working to complete qualifications alongside their work experience as supported by the Job Coach.
- 9 Senior managers have already received autism awareness training and this will be rolled out more broadly to teams working with interns and across the Council. It is hoped that the project will also lead to improved understanding of the customer experience for people with autism and provide an evidence base for the Council to apply for Disability Confident status.

### **Key Implications**

#### Financial

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

#### Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

There are no legal or human rights issues relating to this report.

### Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

### Resource (non-financial)

Work connected with the programme is undertaken through existing resources.

### **Conclusion**

The Supported Internship programme at Sevenoaks District Council has been established to improve employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities, and create a talent pool which will assist the Council in improving diversity of the workforce, develop talent and fill future vacancies. It is hoped that it will create a two-way learning experience and that the Council will be able to use the experience to improve the customer experience for people with learning difficulties.

**Appendices:** None

**Background documents:** None

**Lesley Bowles,**  
**Chief Officer People & Places**