

STAFFING COMMITTEE

DATE OF MEETING: 4 APRIL 2023

TITLE OF REPORT: NATIONAL GRADUATE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Report of Chief Executive

PURPOSE

1. The purpose of this report is to consider recommending to Cabinet that Cabinet considers the Council joining the Local Government Association (LGA) flagship management trainee programme – the National Graduate Development Programme for local government (NGDP).

RECOMMENDATION

2. Cabinet is recommended to agree to the Council, subject to budget availability, joining the Local Government Association (LGA) National Graduate Development Programme for local government (NGDP).

BACKGROUND

3. The National Graduate Development Programme for local government (NGDP) has been developing new talent for over 20 years. It is the LGA's flagship management trainee programme. It offers councils an opportunity to grow their own local government leaders. Every year it provides the sector with high quality graduates ready to work on strategic projects which contribute to the delivery of their council's goals.
4. It is a two year programme, where graduates are employed by councils and undertake a minimum of three placements. Alongside their employment, the LGA provides a complementary learning and development offer. This is carried out in parallel so the graduates can implement their learning while working on real projects.
5. The Council will have full control over what placements to offer the trainees, based on where the need is most prevalent, and their skills can be developed and used. The LGA can provide advice and guidance on suitable placements to ensure that trainees work at a high competency level.
6. At the end of their two-year programme the graduates will have developed skills across various services. The NGDP acts as an opportunity for talented graduates to fast track their local government career and gives councils the opportunity to nurture and develop their own talent.

CONSIDERATIONS

7. The NGDP helps councils to build capacity in their workforce. Being part of the NGDP allows councils to start thinking earlier about longer-term succession planning and future leadership potential. Growing their own talent is less costly than recruiting higher up in the management structure, and taking on a graduate through the NGDP ensures that council's will have additional

corporate capacity and capability at a senior level. In among success stories there are chief executives, directors, senior managers, and others leading transformational change across the sector.

What is s expected of the council?

8. The NGDP ask councils to:
 - Help the LGA to promote to raise the profile of the programme locally and attract a diverse and talented pool of candidates.
 - Conduct a local interview at the end of the recruitment process. At this stage the candidates will have been through a rigorous series of assessments, but LGA want to give participating councils the opportunity to ensure they are the best fit for their council.
 - Employ national management trainees on a minimum two-year fixed term contract
 - Pay national management trainee salaries at NJC spinal column point (SCP) 20 (this is £28,371 but may be subject to increase pending pay negotiations).
 - Nominate a member of staff to be the placement coordinator for the programme, once the council's national management trainee(s) is in place.
 - Organise a minimum of three placements for each national management trainee over the two years.

What the LGA will do

- Annually subsidise the programme on behalf of councils in England.
- Market the programme to high-calibre graduates across the UK.
- Assess candidates' suitability through a rigorous and established multi-stage recruitment process.
- Embed the values of equality, diversity and inclusion at every step of the process.
- Support councils to access and market themselves to candidates.
- Fund and organise a national programme of learning, development and networking.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9. The host authority is expected to pay the salary for the graduate, set at the SJT payscale spinal column point 20 (this is currently £28,371 but may be subject to increase pending pay negotiations). This is competitive with other graduate programmes. The authority will also be asked to pay a one-off fee, paid per graduate only on their successful appointment (this is currently expected to be £3,200 for 2022/23 subject to confirmation of the LGA budget). This covers the bespoke, multi-stage recruitment, plus the whole learning and development programme and ILM qualification.

NGDP TIMETABLE

10. The application process for the exiting 2023/2024 cohort (cohort 25) has now closed. However, assuming the 2024/2025 cohort follows a similar timetable:
 - **September 2023:** The NGDP's applications process open for graduates. Councils can start signing up to take part in the NGDP.

- **January 2024:** Applications close. Graduates who pass the first stage begin video interviews.
- **March 2025:** Top graduates complete an assessment centre and those who pass will have an opportunity to meet with participating councils.
- **The LGAs deadline for councils to sign up for the NGDP is 31 March 2024**
- **May/June 2024:** Candidates who have passed the assessment process are matched with councils for interview processes based on the candidates' preferences. Councils conduct interviews and offer places to their preferred candidates. Candidates accept council offers and prepare to join the organisation in the autumn.

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Background Paper

National Graduate Development Programme: <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/councillor-and-officer-development/national-graduate-development-programme>