Report to:	**The Executive**		
Date:	9 January 2012		
Report of:	The Chief Executive	**Report No:**	
Contact Officer:	Lynne Ridsdale Assistant Director People & Transformation	**Tel No:**	1201
Report Title:	**Apprentice Scheme**		
Confidential:	***Non Confidential***		
Purpose:	This document sets out the proposed scope of an apprentice scheme to enable the council to fulfil its social employment obligations within the current climate of financial constraint		
Recommendations:	The Executive is asked to approve the proposed apprentice scheme for implementation		
Decision:			

Proposed Apprentice scheme 2012

Background

Apprenticeships and other trainee posts (eg graduate trainees) offer a framework for people to access employment experience whilst undertaking a structured programme of development through which they gain the skills and knowledge required to carry out a specific role. Apprentice schemes typically run for a two year period on a fixed term contract basis, but without the guarantee of a job or redeployment at the end.

The council established a clear strategy for the appointment of apprenticeships and other training placements in 2008. Since that time we have successfully operated around 60 apprenticeships in areas including administration, neighbourhood management and sports work.

The provision of apprenticeships and other trainee posts helps us to address the worklessness agenda locally; is an important way for us to demonstrate leadership around the social employment agenda and a central plank of our workforce planning strategy to help us to recruit into "hard to fill" posts. Further, apprenticeships are a key part of the strategy to retain and improve income levels from external contracts, many of which are beginning to include social clauses requiring bidders to demonstrate a commitment to tackling worklessness and the training and development of staff.

Current key issue

It is necessary for us to take an organisational view about how appropriate it is to continue to appoint to apprentice and other trainee positions at a time when the council is making significant numbers of mainstream posts redundant, especially as most existing apprentice posts are funded from mainstream budgets.

The issue has been discussed with the recognised Trades Unions who are supportive of the council maintaining apprentice positions as part of our community leadership role

Recommendation
It is recommended that the council retains its commitment to apprenticeships and other training schemes, eg graduate trainees, but that:

- the scope of such opportunities is managed carefully to ensure they are proportionate to the size and shape of the established workforce and
- posts are funded from reserves rather than revenue budgets, to ensure that the costs of training posts do not place additional pressures on the funding for the established workforce

Specifically, it is recommended that all existing apprentice posts are deleted if they are vacant or, if occupied, concluded at the end of the current post holder's contract. In future the following arrangements are proposed:

- A maximum of 25 training placements are operated at any one time. This is consistent with the typical number of live placements that have been operated successfully over the past 3 years. Of this number, we will aim to place around 10 people each year from the 16-18 year age group. We will also try to use this opportunity to provide some placements for clients referred

through the Work Programme

- In addition to the core number of apprentice placements, a small number of apprentice opportunities specifically for our looked after children are operated each year

- An annual corporate allocation of £700 000 is made to fund apprentice and other training posts, which will be met from the corporate redundancy fund. All appointments will therefore be made and overseen corporately

- Placements are not made in services that are forecasting significant numbers of redundancies over the two year period

- Apprentice opportunities are created with specific reference to actual or anticipated skills gaps in the future workforce.

  In practice, it is likely that this may include a requirement for training positions in the following areas:

  - Skilled manual roles, eg horticulture and other grounds maintenance roles and vehicle fleet management;
  - Trainee generic professional roles eg finance, property and HR
  - Trainee technical roles eg social work, planning and environmental health

Next steps
The Executive is asked to endorse the approach proposed in this paper, for work to begin on implementation.