



Cabinet

October 2016

Item
7(ii)

Report of	Assistant Chief Executive	Author	Matt Sterling
Title	Rural skills training		☎ 282577
Wards affected	All.		

This report concerns the progress made providing rural skills training in Colchester using section 106 funding.

1. Decision(s) Required

- 1.1 To note the progress providing rural skills training through section 106 funding in Colchester.

2. Reasons for Decision(s)

- 2.1 The Council's Strategic Plan includes a priority to support people to develop their skills for employment.
- 2.2 In 2009, Northumbrian Water Group Ltd was granted planning permission to extend the Abberton reservoir to meet increased demand for water supplies. As part of this agreement, the Council signed a 'Section 106' agreement with Northumbrian Water requiring them to provide financial and other forms of support for the provision of training for people from the borough in rural skills.
- 2.3 Since then the Council has been working with partners to implement this agreement and to secure the desired training.

3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 The principal alternative to this decision would be to cease to support this work. However, the section 106 funding can only be used for this purpose and so this money cannot be redirected to other priorities.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015 includes a measure of educational attainment and skills in the population broken down to small neighbourhoods ('Super Output Areas'). The Index shows that 35 out of Colchester's 105 small neighbourhoods fall into the top 40% of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the county for educational attainment.
- 4.2 In response to this need of some residents to improve their employability skills, the Council included a 'section 106' requirement relating to rural skills in the planning agreement for the extension of the Abberton Reservoir. In it, Northumbrian Water is required to provide funding to enable rural skills training to be offered to local people.
- 4.3 Section 106 agreements, agreed alongside large-scale planning permissions, make financial and other provisions to mitigate the effects of developments.
- 4.4 Alongside rural skills training, this Section 106 agreement also provided £64,000 to successfully enable the provision of broadband in rural areas of the borough including Peldon, Salcott-Cum-Virley, Great and Little Wigborough, Winstred Hundred and Layer Breton.

- 4.5 Since the agreement was signed, the Council has been working with Essex County Council, Northumbrian Water, Essex Wildlife Trust, and the Rural Community Council for Essex to implement this initiative.
- 4.5 To deliver the training, a charitable organisation (recently awarded registration with the Charity Commissioners), was created. This organisation, known as Abberton Rural Training or ART, provides training and support suited to the needs of rural communities, enabling routes into further training and employment. Courses include land-based skills, construction, horticulture and employability programmes.
- 4.6 ART has been very successful at attracting other sources of finance to supplement the section 106 funding. Investment has been secured from several sources including the Department of Work and Pensions and the NatWest Skills & Opportunities Fund.
- 4.7 ART has now delivered two academic years of training to students. In these first two years, ART has given training to over 200 participants with many going on to further education or employment. A typical case study of an ART student is shown below:
“One of our youngest participants, TJB had been in the social care system for many years and struggled through the traditional education system. Suffering with ADHD with autistic traits, and being a carer for his mum, he has not had an easy life, yet we could see that he was bubbly and bright underneath. He became a core part of the project, volunteering on extra days, and wanting to do more to support the project which was giving him so much back. He attended events with us, coming across exceptionally well. He has now found part time work and is continuing on the course until he finds a full time position.” (Source: ART Second Year Overview).
- 4.8 Outcomes from the first years include 16 students into employment, 2 into self-employment, 28 into volunteering and 35 into further education.
- 4.9 ART has now started their third academic year. To date they have been temporarily housed in a building at the Abberton Reservoir site but are about to move to space on the Alderman Blaxhill School site. During the coming months they will be looking to identify a new academic strategic partner institution, as well as permanent accommodation. It is likely the remaining section 106 funds will be used to help secure this accommodation.

5. Proposals

- 5.1 To note the progress providing rural skills training and support the further development of this initiative.

6. Strategic Plan References

- 6.1 The initiative contributes to the achievement of the Council’s strategic goal to: “Support people to develop the skills needed by employers in the future to take advantage of higher paid jobs being created”.

7. Consultation

- 7.1 Interested parties were consulted as part of the process to determine the initial Abberton Reservoir planning application. Since then, partners and stakeholders have been involved through a steering committee and through ART’s management structure.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 The funding the Council has provided for this scheme has been from the Abberton Reservoir Extension section 106 agreement. To date £210,000 has been provided for start-up and core costs. This funding has supported ART to enable them to attract

considerable external funding. The remaining funding (approx. £100,000) is likely to be used to help secure ART permanent accommodation.

9. Standard References

- 9.1 There are no particular references to publicity; equality, diversity and human rights; community safety; health and safety or risk management implications.