

To: PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE		Subject: TRAINING OF STUDENT ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICERS
From: DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT		
Date: 1 May 2002	Ref: CM/CM	

1. Purpose of Report/Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to explain the need for North Lanarkshire Council to contribute to the training of Student Environmental Health Officers in Scotland.

2. Background

- 2.1 North Lanarkshire Council currently has no Student Environmental Health Officer placements, although the Council and the predecessor authorities have trained a significant number of students in the past. The Environmental Health degree courses at the University of Edinburgh and the University of Strathclyde have reducing student numbers. The University of Edinburgh course was closed two years ago to new students. The Society of Chief Officers of Environmental health in Scotland (SOCOEHS) produced a report in November 2001 which indicated that the supply of qualified Environmental Health Officers would not meet demand in the coming years.

3. Proposals/Considerations

- 3.1 The SOCOEHS questionnaire survey sought to establish information on the projected needs for qualified Environmental Health Officers to the year 2004. This survey was conducted last year and indicated that there were 608 established Environmental Health Officer posts in Scotland, 25 of which were vacant. The anticipated demand to 2004 was estimated at 47 posts and the prospective supply at 39 posts. North Lanarkshire Council currently makes no contribution to training of Environmental Health Officers, but as a large local authority employer should make an appropriate contribution, in order to help reduce the prospect of future staffing shortages.
- 3.2 In addition to obtaining the Bachelor of Science Degree in Environmental Health, in order to obtain a practising diploma as an Environmental Health Officer, students also require to successfully complete 48 weeks of practical training and pass a series of oral examinations set by the Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland. The practical training can be undertaken either during holiday vacation periods from University, or after graduation. The SOCOEHS survey indicates that the current proportion of students undertaking training utilising these two different methods is 30% and 70% respectively.
- 3.3 The number of students enrolled on the first year of the Environmental Health degree course at the University of Strathclyde between 1992 and 2002 is shown in the appendix. The number of students enrolled in the current year is 10. The viability of this course is under scrutiny and the SOCOEHS

is recommending that local authorities should sponsor students to undertake the University course, rather than train students after they have graduated from University.

3.4 It is recommended that three student Environmental Health Officers be employed by North Lanarkshire Council at any one period in time, for as long as there is a reasonably foreseeable need to support student training. In order to stagger when students would qualify, it is recommended that during the current year one student be employed direct from secondary school, one student be employed following completion of the first year of the University course and one student be employed following completion of the second year of the University course. It is proposed that, where possible, following qualification of the students as Environmental Health Officers, a full-time post would be offered, assuming satisfactory performance and a post being available on the establishment of the department.

3.5 The salary grades proposed for the students are:-

- First year student - GS1
- Second year student - GS2
- Third year student - GS3
- Fourth year student - AP1
- Graduate* - AP2

* Before obtaining the REHIS Diploma in Environmental Health

In addition it is proposed that the Council funds the course fees of the students and any additional expenses which may fall to be met in terms of personnel policies and procedures, as amended from time to time.

The average total cost of the proposal is around £20,000 per annum and would be met from the existing Planning and Environment Department revenue budget.

4. Corporate Considerations

4.1 The recommendation is consistent with policy and the financial and personnel implications of the proposal have been discussed with the Head of Personnel.

5. Recommendations

5.1 It is recommended that three student Environmental Health Officers be employed by North Lanarkshire Council at any one period in time, for as long as there is a reasonably foreseeable need to support student training.

5.2 It is recommended that during the current year one student be employed direct from secondary school, one student be employed following completion of the first year of the University of Strathclyde Environmental Health degree course and one student be employed following completion of the second year of this course.

5.3 It is recommended that, where possible, following qualification of the students as Environmental Health Officers, a full-time post would be offered, assuming satisfactory performance and a post being available on the establishment of the department at that time.

C. Morgan

PP David M. Porch
Director of Planning & Environment

Appendix

Students on First Year of Environmental Health Degree at Strathclyde University 1992 - 2002

