



<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>UPDATE ON COMMONWEALTH SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME MARCH-MAY 2020</b>
<b>Committee Report Submitted To:</b>	<b>ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>11<sup>th</sup> August 2020</b>
<b>For Decision or For Information</b>	<b>FOR INFORMATION</b>

<b>Linkage to Council Strategy (2019-23)</b>	
Strategic Theme	Leader and champion
Outcome	Provision of Experience in the delivery of Environmental Health & other services
Lead Officer	Head of Health & Built Environment

<b>Budgetary Considerations</b>	
Cost of Proposal	NIL
Included in Current Year Estimates	<b>YES/NO</b>
Capital/Revenue	Revenue
Code	N/A
Staffing Costs	N/A

<b>Screening Requirements</b>	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

## **1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is provide members with an update on the placement provided to the Commonwealth Scholarship Programme and student Gomezgani Nyasulu (Gome) who spent time with the section between February and June 2020.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 Gome, an Environmental Health Officer from Zomba in Malawi has recently returned home after spending three months on work placement with Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council. He arrived in the area at the beginning of March, just weeks before coronavirus restrictions came into force.
- 2.2 The placement aimed to provide a valuable insight into all aspects of Environmental Health along with Building Control and Waste Management which Gome has responsibility for in his role with Zomba City Council. Whilst the overall principles of Environmental Health are the same all over the world, the issues affecting us in Northern Ireland along with the way we work are very different to those faced by Gome on a daily basis.
- 2.3 The placement began with Council's Food team, where he accompanied officers to a variety of different establishments including cafés, fish and chip shops, primary school kitchens, a wholesaler and a manufacturer of charcuterie, where he got to sample some of the produce. He found this very interesting and informative and was impressed with the standards in the premises and the way in which officers carried out their work. In particular he was surprised at how much detailed paperwork both the inspecting officers and the food business operators have to complete and how we focused in depth on all areas of food hygiene and standards, not just on how clean the building was.
- 2.4 Part of Gome's programme was to report back on a weekly basis to his management team in Zomba sharing his experiences and how the learning outcomes could be developed and applied on his return to work. As well as the practical aspect of shadowing the officers, Gome also carried out a review of the various policies, procedures and codes of practice used by the food team on a local and national level. Through this, he identified many areas where similar documents would be beneficial. In particular he was impressed with the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme and thought this would be very influential in driving forward standards for businesses in Zomba.
- 2.5 As lockdown took effect, the Environmental Health Team moved to working from home as per Government advice, re-configuring service delivery to virtual inspections, and embracing tele and video conferencing following a pre-prepared Business Continuity plan. As a result, Gome's training plan had

to be tailored to meet new ways of working and to experience Council's response to the worldwide pandemic on a local level. His focus switched from routine to crisis response and how emergency response and business continuity is critical to ensure service delivery. He was able to gain invaluable experience in the identification of critical services and how they were adjusted to accommodate government guidance and social distancing to help contain and control the spread of the virus throughout the population.

- 2.6 On the ground he was given the opportunity to participate first hand at a household recycling centre re-introducing a managed safe and legitimate way for the disposal of multiple waste streams. This was all during a backdrop of Gome, as a first time visitor to the country being 1000's of miles from home and the anxiety of not knowing when he might be able to return to his family due to the cessation of global air travel.
- 2.7 Through the Commonwealth scholarship programme which funded his placement and travel he eventually returned safely home in mid-June. He is currently contemplating a return trip in 2021 with the hope of a more/new normal experience next time around. Should he wish to do so, the section would welcome his return so that he may complete the scheduled programme that had been prepared.