

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Employment Committee
Date: 11th September 2017
Report for: Information
Report of: Deborah Lucas, Acting Director of HR

Report Title

Agency Spend for Q1 – Period 1st April 2017 to 30th June 2017

Recommendations

That the content of this report is noted.

Relationship to Policy Framework/Corporate Priorities	These proposals align with the council's Corporate Priorities in respect to 'Low Council Tax and Value for Money' and 'Reshaping Trafford Council'.
Financial	The cost of using agency workers is carefully managed and monitored through existing budgets and budget management frameworks.
Legal Implications:	Agency assignments are carefully monitored to ensure that they are legally compliant and any employment liability is mitigated.
Equality/Diversity Implications	None
Sustainability Implications	None
Staffing/E-Government/Asset Management Implications	The use of agency workers supports critical resourcing gaps.
Risk Management Implications	See Legal Implications section.
Health & Wellbeing Implications	None
Health and Safety Implications	None

1. Background

- 1.1 A robust vacancy clearance process has been in place for over two years now; this process ensures that posts are only filled where there is a compelling case to do so; it also ensures that where a post is to be filled, it is matched in the first instance to employees on notice of redundancy (redeployees), "at risk" staff (those employees where there is a real risk of redundancy) and apprentices.
- 1.2 Vacancies are subject to initial approval by respective Directorate Management Teams and then final approval by the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT). The routine practice is for vacancies to be advertised internally

in the first instance in order to minimise the potential for future workforce reductions and make savings on external recruitment spend.

- 1.3 It is however recognised that there will be circumstances whereby there are immediate resourcing needs that are predominantly short term in nature and require access to time limited and/or specialist skills that cannot be found within the organisation, or where cover is required for day-to-day absences. For these reasons, access to temporary agency support is essential to meet critical gaps in service provision as outlined below.
- 1.4 The breakdown of agency spend over Q1 of 2017/18 (April – June 2017) is attached at Appendix I. It should be noted that the agency costs for the quarter have been met from within existing staffing budgets, whilst services have been restructuring, reshaping and recruiting to resultant vacant posts and ensuring that statutory obligations are met on a day-to-day basis.
- 1.5 Appendix II provides information on the length of tenure for those assignments that were still active as at 30th June 2017.

2. Directorate Overview

2.1 Children, Families and Well-Being

- 2.1.1 In Q1 2017/18, spend in CFW totalled £362,339 and as at 30th June 2017 there were a total of 63 active assignments across the Directorate. This is an increase from Q1 last year of £26,805 when we had 56 assignments. The majority of agency spend is due to the service discharging its statutory responsibilities for providing social care services for vulnerable children and adults. The interim staffing need is primarily required to cover staffing resource gaps, created as a result of short-term staff absences or whilst recruitment to permanent posts is underway and cover is critical to ensure that service users receive the appropriate level of care and support.
- 2.1.2 Spend activity primarily relates to the procurement of interim qualified Social Workers and Adult Support workers, which represents over 65% of the total spend for the Directorate. The remaining spend primarily relates to provision and support of childcare services where the Council has a statutory obligation to meet minimum staffing ratios. There has been a particular need for very short term agency 1-1 support for children during this period. 9% of CFW spend relates to two senior managers who are performing much needed strategic roles in the service.
- 2.1.3 In 2016, the permanent, peripatetic team of Children's Social Workers was established and embedded into the organisation; this has helped to reduce some pressure in agency demand as experienced social workers are able to

be deployed on short-term/time-limited placements in response to service needs. Learning from the Children's model, a similar exercise is being explored for the Adults Social Worker role to enable better resource utilisation and potential reduction on agency demand. It is recognised, however, that this alone is not enough and further work needs to be undertaken across the social work area to understand what additional interventions can be put in place to improve the employment position relating to social workers and thus drive down agency spend.

2.1.4 The AGMA-wide adoption of standardised pay rates for children's and adults' agency social workers which was led by Trafford Council in 2016 continues to be effective at controlling costs and the principle of a rate 'cap' has been extended across the North West. This collaborative arrangement avoids authorities competing for agency social workers, which previously resulted in prices being driven upwards and ensures the market is managed / controlled.

3.2 Transformation and Resources Directorate (T & R)

3.2.1 In Q1 2017/18, the total agency spend in T&R equated to £20,761 and as at 30th June 2017, there were 2 active assignments. This is a reduction from Q1 last year when spend was £64,083 for 5 active assignments. Agency spend in this Directorate is due to the need to bring in specialist skills to provide transformational, technical and consultancy support to the organisation as it reshapes; and for those interim resources required to support core services in this Directorate whilst they go through their own transformation and staffing restructures, which will support the realisation of Directorate savings.

3.3 Economic Growth, Environment and Infrastructure

3.3.1 In Q1 2017/18, the total agency spend in this area equated to £28,260 and as at 30th June 2017, there were 5 active assignments. Spend in this area primarily relates to interim technical support roles. This is a further reduction from Q1 last year when spend was at £31,309 with 5 active assignments.

4. **Summary Agency Spend Position**

4.1 The total agency spend in Q1 equates to £411,360 and is an overall reduction of £77,741 from last year's position of £489,101 and a further reduction of £100,275 from Q1 in 2015/16 when agency spend for this period was £511,635. It should be noted that the spend in Q1 is also a significant reduction in the spend at Q4, which equated to £505,533.

4.2 We continue to work closely with Service Managers to ensure that the demand for agency staff is balanced with the need for short term cover and specialist/technical skills as required.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 Agency spend will continue to be monitored on a regular basis and regular reports will be presented to Employment Committee, for information.
- 5.2 Employment Committee is recommended to note the content of this report.