

## TRAFFORD COUNCIL

**Report to:** Employment Committee  
**Date:** 14<sup>th</sup> September 2015  
**Report for:** Information  
**Report of:** Acting Director of HR

### Report Title

**Agency Spend for Q1 - Period 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2015**

### 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 is in place that ensures that posts are only filled where there is a compelling case to do so; where a post is to be filled, the aim is to match the vacancy in the first instance in a priority sequence; 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 approval initially by respective Directorate Management Teams and subsequently the Corporate Management Team (CMT), where the request is to recruit from beyond these groups e.g. wider internal recruitment. This is in order to minimise the number of compulsory

redundancies across the Council and reduce spend on external resources, including agency fees.

## **2.0 The Use of Agency Staff**

2.1 There will inevitably be circumstances whereby resourcing needs are short term in nature, urgent and require access to time-limited and/or specialist skills that cannot be found within the organisation. For these reasons, access to temporary agency support is essential to meet critical gaps in service provision.

2.2 The breakdown of agency spend for Q1 of 2015/16 (April – June 2015) is attached at Appendix 1. The number of active assignments by post title is provided for each month in the quarter, together with the number of people covering these assignments. An assignment is defined as a 'role'/piece of work and may either be for an agreed continuous period or may be on an ad-hoc, as required basis.

### **2.3 Children, Families and Well-Being Directorate**

2.3.1 For the first quarter of 2015/16, spend in this area totalled £248,372; as at June 2015, there were 37 active assignments across the Directorate. The majority of this spend was due to the service discharging its statutory responsibilities for providing social care services for vulnerable children and adults. The interim staffing need was 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.

2.3.2 Spend activity primarily relates to the procurement of interim qualified Children's and Adults' Social Workers and Support workers; these groups of workers represented 97% of the total spend for the quarter. The remaining spend primarily relates to the provision of business support to support these workers, in particular the Social Workers.

2.3.3 In order to significantly reduce spend on the use of agency children's social workers, a business case has been agreed whereby a peripatetic team of permanent social workers will be recruited, in order to reduce both the need for and the cost of some of the agency social workers and maintain continuity of service, in the future. These experienced social workers will be deployed on short-term/time-limited placements in response to service demand. Recruitment to this team is underway and the impact of this should be reflected in future spend and monitoring reports. In terms of addressing the

agency spend for adults' social workers, alternative arrangements/options are currently being explored.

- 2.3.4 In addition, agreement has just been reached across AGMA authorities to trial the introduction of standardised pay rates for children's agency social workers. 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.

## 2.4 Transformation and Resources Directorate (T & R)

- 2.4.1 For the first quarter of 2015/16, the total agency spend in this Directorate equated to £193,611 and as at June 2015, there were 16 active assignments. 60% of spend in the quarter specifically related to the need to bring in specialist skills to provide transformational, technical and consultancy support to services across the organisation as it reshapes. In addition, the remaining 40% spend also covered a number of interim resources required to support core services in this Directorate as they go through their own transformation and staffing restructures, which will support the realisation of Directorate savings.

## 2.5 Economic Growth, Environment and Infrastructure

- 2.5.1 For the first quarter of 2015/16, the total agency spend in this area equated to £41,259 and as at the end of June 2015, there were 5 active assignments. Spend during the quarter primarily relates to the interim technical and operational support that was required pending the transfer of services to Amey. This transfer took place on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2015 and as a result, it is expected that there will be a reduction in agency spend in this Directorate.

## **3.0 Comparator Data**

- 3.1 The total agency spend for the first quarter of 2015/16 equates to £483,241; for the same quarter in 2014/15, spend was £506,352. This represents a reduction in spend of £23,112.
- 3.2 In respect to how Trafford's spend compares with that across other AGMA and associate authorities, this information is currently being obtained and will be provided shortly.

## **4.0 Conclusion**

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