

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

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

Report Title

Agency Spend for Q2 - Period 1st July 2017 to 30th September 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 is in place that ensures that posts are only filled where there is a compelling case to do so and that where a post is filled, the aim is to match to the vacancy in the first instance in a priority sequence; employees on notice from redundancy (redeployees), "at risk" staff (those employees where there is a real risk of redundancy) and apprentices.

1.1.1 Vacancies will then be subject to approval initially by respective Directorate Management Teams and subsequently the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT), for advertisement initially to internal staff in order to minimise the number of compulsory redundancies and the incurrence of additional spend on external resources, including agency fees.

- 1.1.2 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.
- 1.2.2 The breakdown of agency spend over Q2 of 2017/18 (July – September 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.
- 1.2.3 Appendix II provides information on the length of tenure for those assignments that were still active as at 30th September 2017.

2. Directorate Overview

2.1 Children, Families and Well-Being (CFW)

- 2.1.1 In Q2 2017/18, spend in CFW totalled £332,715 and as at 30th September 2017 there were a total of 75 active assignments across the Directorate. This is an increase from Q1 this year of 12 assignments when there were 63 active assignments however represents an overall decrease in spend of £29,624 from a Q1 spend total of £362,339.
- 2.1.2 In 2016/17 there were 58 assignments in the same period and agency spend for Q2 was £342,945 so there is an overall decrease in spend of £10,230 this year for comparison purposes. Agency workers are predominantly working in residential homes and day centres and 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.
- 2.1.3 Spend activity primarily relates to the procurement of interim qualified Social Workers and Adult Support workers, which represents 91% 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.
- 2.1.4 In order to reduce both the need for and the cost of agency social workers and maintain continuity of service, the permanent, peripatetic team of children's

social workers continues to be in place. These experienced social workers are being deployed on short-term/time-limited placements in response to service demand and a similar model is being considered in the area of adult social work.

- 2.1.5 Moreover, the AGMA-wide adoption of standardised pay rates for children's and adults' agency social workers, which was led by Trafford Council, continues to be effective at controlling costs and the principle of a rate 'cap' has now been broadened to 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.

2.2 Transformation and Resources Directorate (T&R)

- 2.2.1 In Q2 2017/18, the total agency spend in TR equated to £62,730 and as at 30th September 2017, there were 11 active assignments. This is an increase from Q1 this year of 9 assignments and an overall increase in spend of £41,969. Data from the same period last year shows a decrease of 1 assignment as there were 12 active assignments and a reduction in spend of £41,331 – the overall total in the same period was £104,061. 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.

- 2.2.2 During Q2, there has been a need to bring in additional temporary legal capacity whilst recruitment to permanent posts takes place and an interim Head of Communications and PR Officer to lead all communications and PR activities to cover a number of vacancies in the service and to support the service as it is reviewed and transforms.

2.3 Economic Growth, Environment and Infrastructure (EGEI)

- 2.3.1 In Q2 2017/18, the total agency spend in this area equated to £29,571 and as at 30th March 2017, there were 3 active assignments. This is a reduction from Q1 on this year of 2 assignments, although a slight increase in overall spend of £1,311. Data from the same period last year shows that in Q2 of 2016/17, the total agency spend in this area equated to £41,670 and as at 30th September 2016, there were 7 active assignments. There is therefore a reduction in spend of £12,099 and 4 assignments.

- 2.3.2 Spend in this area primarily relates to interim technical support roles and in the Licensing team, there has been a particular need for short term additional

support to work through changes in taxi driver license policy, the work for which is due to be completed by December when permanent resources will be in place.

3. Summary Agency Spend Position

- 3.1 The total agency spend in Q2 was £425,016 which is an increase from Q1 of £13,656, however an overall reduction of £101,337 from the same period in 2016/17.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 Agency spend will continue to be monitored on a regular 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.