

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Employment Committee
Date: 6th March 2017
Report for: Information
Report of: Deborah Lucas, Acting Director of HR

Report Title

Agency Spend for Q3 - Period 1st October 2016 to 31st December 2016

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.
- 1.2 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.

- 1.3 That said, it is 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 Q3 of 2016/17 (October – December 2016) 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 2 provides information on the length of tenure for those assignments that were still active as at 31st December 2016.
- 1.6 Appendix 3 provides comparator data across AGMA authorities.

2. Directorate Overview

2.1 Children, Families and Well-Being

- 2.1.1 In Q3 2016/17, spend in CFW totalled £349,977 and as at 31st December 2016 there were a total of 60 active assignments across the Directorate. This is a slight increase in assignments by 2, from the end of Q2 when there were a total of 58 active assignments. This increase has generated an increase in spend of £7032. 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, Adult Support Workers and Care Assistants, which represents over 90% of the total spend for the Directorate. The spend primarily relates to provision and support of services where the Council has a statutory obligation to meet minimum staffing ratios.
- 2.1.3 In order to reduce both the need for and the cost of agency social workers and maintain continuity of service, a permanent, peripatetic team of children's social workers has been established. These experienced social workers are being deployed on short-term/time-limited placements in response to service demand.

2.1.4 In addition, 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 Q3 2016/17, the total agency spend in T&R equated to £115,759 and as at 31st December 2016, there were 12 active assignments which is consistent with the position as at the end of Q2. However, due to a shift in the value of job roles that have been covered by agency staff, the spend has increased slightly by £11,698 from Q2, when spend totalled £104,061.

2.2.2 The increase in 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; in particular, additional resource has been required during this quarter in order to support the transformation to the Trafford Council/Greater Manchester Police HR Shared Service ("Greater Manchester Shared Services") collaboration.

2.2.3 In addition to the core T&R services, there has previously been agency spend in T&R to support the CFW Transformation Programme. In Q2, this equated to £37,677, however, as at the end of Q3 there were no active assignments in this area as the work being undertaken had in part reached a conclusion and in part been mainstreamed.

2.3 Economic Growth, Environment and Infrastructure

2.3.1 In Q3 2016/17, the total agency spend in this area equated to £38,964 and as at 31st December 2016, there were 4 active assignments. This is a reduction in spend of £2,706 from Q2 when spend was at £41,670 and a reduction of 3 active assignments. Spend in this area primarily relates to the use of agency staff to cover interim technical support roles, which are essential to cover statutory duties and support income generation.

3. Summary of Agency Spend Position

3.1 The total agency spend in Q3 equated to £504,700 which is an overall reduction in spend of £21,653 from Q2, when spend equated to £526,353. This reduction primarily relates to a reduction in spend on agency workers to support the transformation programme.

- 3.2 It should be noted that in terms of agency spend across AGMA authorities, Trafford is in the lower quartile, as illustrated in Appendix 3.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 Agency spend in Trafford is on a downward trajectory and is in the lower quartile when compared with AGMA authorities. It will continue to be monitored on a regular basis and regular reports will continue to be presented to Employment Committee for information.
- 4.2 Employment Committee is recommended to note the content of this report.
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