

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Employment Committee
Date: 5th March 2018
Report for: Information
Report of: Director of HR

Report Title

Agency Spend for Q3 - Period 1st October 2017 to 31st December 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.
- 1.2 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 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 2017/18 (October – December 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 31st December 2017.

2. Directorate Overview

2.1 Children, Families and Well-Being (CFW)

- 2.1.1 In Q3 2017/18, spend in CFW totalled £346,382 and as at 31st December 2017 there were a total of 77 active assignments across the Directorate. 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 The spend has reduced slightly as compared with Q3 2016/17 which was £349,977.
- 2.1.3 Spend activity primarily relates to the procurement of interim qualified Social Workers and Adult Support workers. 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, a permanent, peripatetic team of children's social workers is in place. These experienced social workers are being deployed on short-term/time-limited placements in response to service demand.
- 2.1.5 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.

2.1.6 A focused workforce review in CFW has recently been undertaken in order to explore how we can improve the health and wellbeing of staff in this directorate and in particular social care staff. The findings and 24 recommendations have informed an action plan. Existing and new work streams will progress the actions and an update report will go to CLT every two months. This ongoing work should have an impact on the requirement for agency staff.

2.2 Transformation and Resources Directorate (TR)

2.2.1 In Q3 2017/18, the total agency spend in TR equated to £105,696 and as at 31st December 2017, there were 12 active assignments. Agency spend in this Directorate continues to be due to the need to bring in interim specialist skills within Communications and Legal services whilst the Directorate goes through staffing restructures and to cover positions whilst they are being recruited.

2.2.2 The spend has reduced as compared with Q3 2016/17 which was £115,759.

2.3 Economic Growth, Environment and Infrastructure (EGEI)

2.3.1 In Q2 2017/18, the total agency spend in this area equated to £32,035 and as at 31st December 2017, there were 3 active assignments. Spend in this area was on the Building Control and Licensing services.

2.3.2 The spend has reduced as compared with Q3 2016/17 which was £38,964.

3. Summary Agency Spend Position

3.1 The total agency spend in Q3 was £484,111. This is a reduction on the corresponding period in 2017/18 when spend was £504,700. Spend has reduced slightly in each Directorate.

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.