

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Employment Committee
Date: 22nd June 2015
Report for: Information
Report of: Acting Director of HR

Report Title

Agency Spend for Period 1st April 2014 to 31st March 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

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.

Vacancies will then be subject to approval initially by respective Directorate Management Teams and subsequently the Corporate Management Team (CMT), for advertisement to internal staff in order to minimise the number of compulsory

redundancies and the incurrence of additional spend on external resources, including agency fees.

Only after all internal processes have been exhausted and in exceptional circumstances only, e.g. the Council must fill the post in order to meet a statutory requirement, will DMTs/CMT approve the post to be advertised externally and/or an agency route will be explored.

1.1 Use of Agency staff

There will be exceptional circumstances whereby the resourcing needs are short term in nature 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 as outlined below. The breakdown of agency spend over the previous financial year (from April 2014 to March 2015 inclusive) is provided in the document accompanying this paper.

1.2 Children, Families and Well-Being 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.

Spend activity primarily relates to the procurement of interim qualified Social Workers and Adult Support workers, which represents 83% total spend for the Directorate. The remaining spend primarily relates to provision and support of childcare services where the Council has statutory obligation to meet minimum staffing ratios.

In order to significantly reduce spend on the use of agency children's social workers, a business case has recently 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.

In addition, agreement has just been reached across AGMA authorities to trial the introduction of standardised and sustainable pay rates for children's agency social workers, so where this interim need is required, there would be a reduction in costs to the authority.

1.3 Transformation and Resources Directorate (T & R)

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.

1.4 Economic Growth, Environment and Infrastructure

The agency spend in this area relates to interim technical support and the current position in terms of the impending TUPE transfer to Amey.

2. AGMA Agency Spend Position

In respect to how Trafford's spend compares with that across other AGMA and associate authorities, Rochdale's spend was £6.7m, Bolton's was £5.7m and the spend for Warrington, Oldham and Bury respectively all ranged between £2.5 - £3m.

3. Conclusion

Employment Committee is recommended to note the content of this report.