

HR Committee

2nd February 2017



Report of: Interim Service Director Human Resources, Change & Communications

Title: Use of agency staff

Ward: N/A

Officer Presenting Report: Mark Williams (HR Business Partner)

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Recommendation

That the Committee notes this report.

Summary

The report updates the Committee on the Council's progress towards getting better value from its use of agency staff.

The significant issues in the report are:

- A new contract between the Council and Guidant Group started in April 2016. The expectation is that all agency staff are sourced through this contract in order to reduce spend on agency fees and improve the monitoring of how agency staff are used.
- Agency staff are used for a variety of reasons. Used well, they can be a good quality and flexible resource – and an important talent pipeline that can help to address longstanding inequalities in the Council's directly-employed workforce, particularly around age and gender.
- The Council aims to scale back its use of agency staff from current levels in order to reduce spending and to give priority wherever possible to existing staff to cover absence/vacancies or undertake project work as development opportunities.



Policy

1. A new contract between the Council and Guidant Group started in April 2016. The expectation is that all agency staff are sourced through this contract in order to reduce spend on agency fees and improve the monitoring of how agency staff are used.

Consultation

2. **Internal**
None because this report is for information only.
3. **External**
None because this report is for information only.

Context

4. Spend through Guidant totalled £8.5m over the period April to December 2016 inclusive. Month-to-month spend dropped by 29% between October and November and by a further 16% between November and December.
5. 175.3 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff were employed through Guidant during the month of October 2016. This fell by 22% to 137.5 by the end of December 2016.
6. In December 2016, 41% of Guidant agency staff had been on assignment for less than 13 weeks. 55 (22%) had been in place for more than one year.
7. The highest-spending directorate so far in 2016/17 is Resources (£4.1m); the lowest spending is Place (£1.3m). People and Neighbourhoods have each spent £1.5m in the current financial year.
8. In the vast majority of cases, the reason given for the use of agency staff is to cover vacancies.
9. In Resources ICT contractors are the most used; in People it is Social Workers; in Neighbourhoods it is housing officers and customer services staff; and in Place it is technical staff in transport, planning and energy.
10. A project has been underway to audit and reduce the number of long-term (52+ week) agency staff. As of January 2017, spend on this group has reduced by 56% since October 2016. Spend is forecast to reduce further to 90% of October 2016 levels by the end of the current financial year.
11. During the period 1st October to 31st December 2016, the equalities profile of agency workers was as follows:

Protected characteristic	Agency workers	Bristol City Council*	Bristol**
Disabled	2%	6.67%	7.4%
Black Minority Ethnic	22%	11.71%	12.8%
White Minority Ethnic	7%	4.90%	7.65%
Women	50%	60.21%	46.77%
Christian	45%	43.17%	48.21%
Other religion	10%	8.68%	6.64%

No religion	45%	48.15%	45.15%
Lesbian/gay/bisexual	4%	4.36%	1.94%***

* Excludes staff in schools

** Economically-active population, Office for National Statistics 2011

*** South-West, Office for National Statistics 2015

Proposal

12. That the Committee notes this report.

Other Options Considered

13. None because this report is for information only.

Risk Assessment

14. None because this report is for information only.

Public Sector Equality Duties

15a) Before making a decision, section 149 Equality Act 2010 requires that each decision-maker considers the need to promote equality for persons with the following “protected characteristics”: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Each decision-maker must, therefore, have due regard to the need to:

- i) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010.
- ii) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to --
 - remove or minimise disadvantage suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic;
 - take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it (in relation to disabled people, this includes, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities);
 - encourage persons who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
- iii) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to –
 - tackle prejudice; and
 - promote understanding.

15b) No equality impact assessment has been undertaken because this report is for information only.

Legal and Resource Implications

Legal

None requested because this report is for information only.

Financial

(a) Revenue

None requested because this report is for information only.

(b) Capital

Not applicable.

Land

Not applicable.

Personnel

Personnel implications are included within the report.

Appendices:

None.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers:

None.