

HR Committee

3rd August 2017



Report of: Interim Service Director Human Resources

Title: Use of agency staff - update

Ward: N/A

Officer Presenting Report: Jacquie McGeachie (Interim Service Director Human Resources)

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Recommendation

That the Committee notes the report.

Summary

This report responds to the Committee's request for an update and further information on the Council's use of agency staff and interim managers.

The significant issues in the report are:

- Spend on agency staff and the number of agency staff employed continues to reduce.
- A number of Council services already have "bank" arrangements in place in order to minimise their use of agency staff.



Policy

- 1.** The Council currently has a contract with Guidant in respect of the supply of agency staff.

Consultation

- 2. Internal**

Not required because this report is for information only.

- 3. External**

Not required because this report is for information only.

Context

- 4.** During 2016/17 the Council spent £10.26m via Guidant. Recent and total spend by directorate was as follows:

	January 2017	February 2017	March 2017	2016/17
Neighbourhoods	£89,757	£60,864	£74,148	£1,728,061
People	£132,352	£127,694	£105,734	£1,873,967
Place	£144,104	£116,412	£93,397	£1,675,534
Resources	£326,266	£258,506	£266,621	£4,984,866
TOTAL				£10,262,428

- 5.** Further detail on spend in the Resources directorate will be tabled at the meeting. For information, the equivalent costs of employing staff directly are shown in Appendix A.
- 6.** Numbers of agency staff (full-time equivalents) over recent months by directorate were as follows:

	January 2017	February 2017	March 2017
Neighbourhoods	25.1	23.8	27.6
People	29.5	28.9	29.7
Place	27.3	26.3	21.2
Resources	42.7	45.0	43.3
TOTAL	124.6	124.1	121.8

- 7.** The main reason given for the use of agency staff during the period was to cover vacancies. The Place and Resources directorates also cited project work as a major reason for using agency staff.
- 8.** During 2016/17, tenure was as follows:

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
0-13 weeks	172	TBC	100	88
14-52 weeks	118	TBC	92	64
53-104 weeks	41	TBC	33	24
104+ weeks	23	TBC	22	16

9. At its meeting of 2nd February 2017 the Committee raised the question of Council services operating their own “bank” arrangements so as to avoid/minimise their use of agency staff. These are currently in place in the following teams:
- 0-25 Integrated Services (Escort)
 - Adult & Community Learning (Learning Centre Assistant; Tutor)
 - Building Regulations & Standards (Dangerous Structures)
 - Care & Support, Adults (Assistant Officer In Charge; Care Assistant; Care Officer; Care Worker; Driver; Domestic; Home Care Assistant; Night Care Assistant; Social Worker)
 - Children & Families (Residential Childcare Worker; Social Worker)
 - City Docks (Assistant Duty Officer; Duty Officer)
 - Cleaning (Cleaning Operative)
 - Community Meals (Helper Driver)
 - Culture (Archaeological Assistant; Box Office Assistant; Front of House Team Leader; Museum Assistant; Project Officer; Retail Assistant; Visitor Assistant)
 - Electoral Services (Canvasser)
 - Emergency Control (Emergency Control Officer)
 - Facilities Management (Receptionist)
 - Hospital Education (Learning Support Assistant)
 - Learning & Development (Victim [First Aid Training])
 - Outdoor Education (Cook/Cleaner)
 - Parks (Catering Assistant; General Support; Sous Chef)
 - Registration Service (Assistant Registration Officer)
 - Sports & Play (Guide Escort; School Crossing Patrol)
 - Translation & Interpreting (Translators/Interpreters)
 - Transport (Survey Worker; Trainer)
10. Committee members have also asked officers to comment on the feasibility of offering bank/casual work to employees who are leaving or have left the Council. For those leaving for other jobs/commitments, they may not have scope to work additional hours and others may have restrictions associated with pensions/state benefits. In addition, the Council’s current position is that someone who takes voluntary severance may not work with the Council (either directly or via a third party) for 12 months after their leaving date.
11. The Mayor has written to those leaving since August 2016, inviting them to express interest in becoming “alumni” of the Council, to which there has so far been a modest response, and subject to his and others’ views on the purpose(s) of the alumni there may be a role for them in filling occasional temporary gaps, but this would require some (paid) resource to administer. The advantage of engaging recent leavers (ie, because of their knowledge of the Council and their former roles) will erode fairly quickly with time, and there is a risk of challenge from those who are not former staff who may successfully argue that they should have equal access to these temporary opportunities.

- 12.** Finally, members have also raised the question of resurrecting the Council's former in-house agency, which operated for many years prior to the tendering of the agency contract (awarded to Randstad in the mid-2000s; now succeeded by Guidant). Whilst there may be some advantages to this arrangement for certain administrative roles, the Council would struggle to recruit for more highly-skilled/specialist roles (hence the decision to tender the agency contract). Also, an in-house arrangement would require skilled management, which would need to be funded and resourced appropriately. The Council's contract with Guidant to deliver agency workers runs until 2019 with the option to extend until 2020. Therefore, the option of re-establishing an in-house agency is not considered viable at the moment.

Proposal

- 13.** That the Committee notes this report

Other Options Considered

- 14.** None.

Risk Assessment

- 15.** Not required because this report is for information only.

Public Sector Equality Duties

- 16a) 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.
- 16b) Not required because this report is for information only.

Legal and Resource Implications

Legal

Not required because this report is for information only.

Financial

(a) Revenue

(b) Capital

Not required because this report is for information only.

Land

Not applicable.

Personnel

Not required because this report is for information only.

Appendices:

A – Bristol Grades and employer costs 2017/18

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers:

None.