

Consultants and Agency Worker Data – Quarter 4 2021/22 and Quarter 1 2022/23

To: Audit and Accounts Committee

Date: 24th November 2022

From: Tom Kelly, Service Director Finance and Procurement

Recommendation: The Audit and Accounts Committee is asked to note the current data on the use of consultants and agency workers/interims.

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Information covering the Council's usage of consultants, agency workers and interims is presented to Audit and Accounts Committee on a six-monthly basis. This report outlines information on the use of consultants, agency workers and interims in Quarter 4 2021-2022 (January, February and March 2022) and Quarter 1 2022/23 (April, May and June 2023).

2.0 Consultancy Expenditure

- 2.1 Consultancy spending is monitored in two ways, firstly by monitoring the number of consultants engaged through OPUS and secondly through the spend coded to the consultancy code (D4100).
- 2.2 OPUS have confirmed that no consultants have been engaged through them during the period covered by this report.
- 2.3 Previously the spend reported to this Committee has not included the consultancy spend through the contract with Milestone PR. However, this report does include that expenditure and so the totals will be higher than in previous reports.
- 2.4 In quarter 4 2021/22, the Council spent £404,617 through the consultancy account code of which £154,742 was with Milestone PR. In quarter 1 2022/23, the Council spent £565,455 of which £154,995 was with Milestone PR.
- 2.5 Taking out the Milestone expenditure, for comparison purposes, the average spend across the two previous quarters was £224,676. The average spend in the two quarters reported here is £330,167, an increase of 47%.
- 2.6 A summary of the spend is available in Appendix 1 to this report.

3.0 Agency worker/interims

- 3.1 Information is also presented to Audit and Accounts Committee on agency spend on a quarterly basis. This spend relates to agency workers and interims (an interim being an individual engaged to cover a senior role on a temporary basis). Information on the amount spent on agency workers/interims in quarter 4 2021/22 and quarter 1 2022/23 is given in the table below.

Period	Total spend on agency workers/Interims	Comparison to spending in the previous quarter	Comparison to spending in these quarters in 2020/2021
Q4 2021/2022	£3.42m	Decrease of £800,000 compared to Q3 of 2021/2022	Increase of £0.57m when compared with Q4 of 2020/21
Q1 2022/23	£2.49m	Decrease of £930,000 compared to Q4 of 2021/22	Decrease of £0.57m when compared with Q1 of 2021/22

- 3.2 Spending on agency workers/interims should be considered in the context of our overall workforce costs. Spending on agency workers in quarter 4 represents 8.6% of workforce costs and in quarter 1 2022/23 it represents 6.5% of workforce spending.
- 3.3 The highest level of agency worker use continues to be within services providing frontline social care in the Adults & Safeguarding and Children & Safeguarding services. This is in line with the position in all of the previous quarters considered and reflects the position in other local authorities.
- 4.0 Improving Governance
- 4.1 We are currently updating the approval processes in relation to employees, consultants, interims and agency workers. Approval will be sought via an eform which will be reviewed by finance and the relevant senior manager. This will allow increased scrutiny of spending prior to the engagement of consultants, agency workers or interims.