

CONSULTS AND AGENCY REVIEW QUARTER 3

To: Audit and Accounts Committee
Date: 24th March 2020
From: Martin Cox
Electoral Division(s): All
Purpose: This paper provides information on the spending on consultants and agency workers in Quarter 3 (October to December 2019).
Recommendation: The Committee are asked to note the information provided.

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1.0 Introduction

Following an update to the consultants policy in 2019 officers have committed to providing information on the use of consultants on a quarterly basis. This report outlines information on the use of consultants in quarter 3, from October to December 2019.

2.0 Reporting on Consultants

OPUS LGSS have provided information on consultants that have been engaged through them. LGSS finance have provided details of consultants paid via invoice and coded to the consultancy code (D4100). Human Resources (HR) has followed up with services to provide further details for each consultancy placement.

3.0 Quarter 3 (October to December 2019) Consultant Summary

3.1 The information available indicates that there were 18 consultants engaged in quarter 3. This is not in itself a significant number considering the size of the Council, its diverse nature of services and the shared working agendas that exist. This compares to 12 consultants identified in Q2.

3.2 Details of each of these consultant placements and the expected end dates are provided in the tables below.

Consultants engaged via OPUS LGSS

Area	Output engaged to deliver	End Date	Spend in Q3
LGSS IT	Network Firewall Consultant	June 2020	£15,082
Major Infrastructure Delivery / Infrastructure & Growth	Engaged to deliver the Joint Professional Services procurement for the County Council (CCC), Peterborough City Council, (PCC) Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) and the Combined Authority. The GCP and Combined Authority are funding this procurement. Associated costs fully covered externally through recharge.	March 2020	£11,992

LGSS IT	Lead Developer Work on project delivery where there is a skills shortage, Artificial Intelligence work and develop own internal understanding of this work. Skills transfer underway in team. Cost neutral as Milton Keynes Council (MKC) grant funded.	October 2019	£3,300
Infrastructure and Growth	Project Manager. Engage to work closely with Highways England in relation to the A14.	December 2019	£25,054
Commissioning	Resource identified to bring specialist skills for CCC and PCC savings reviews. Focussing on improving outcomes and value for money for services provided for people with exceptionally high, complex needs. A process is underway to transfer the necessary skills to CCC employees.	March 2020	£39,867
LGSS IT	Technical Project Manager IT Consultancy - Mosaic work	March 2020	£33,000
Environment & Commercial	Development Management Officer (Planning)	Feb 2020	£14,957

Consultants identified via finance data

Area	Output engaged to deliver	End Date	Spend in Q3
Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Partnership	Independent evaluation of all aspects of project work to support Children Affected by Domestic Abuse (CADA).	March 2020	£1,625
Education	Engaged to undertake a large complex investigation for a school involving multiple witnesses (17 days in total).	October 2019	£21,675
Greater Cambridge Partnership	Programme Management for Smart Cities and Intelligent transport	July 2021	£33,880
Greater Cambridge Partnership	Quality Assurance, data analysis, mapping and procurement assurance	July 2021	£20,188
Highways	Provision of expert advice in relation to highway construction, in particular in relation to surfacing materials and the development and monitoring of a materials specific to Cambridgeshire	Ongoing	£5,800
Strategy and Estates	Consultancy in relation to the Shire Hall Relocation (Scoping work for Noble House car park extension, asset Management Support and interior design services)	To be confirmed (TBC)	£19,702

Strategy and Estates	Planning consultancy for 3 individual sites. Provision of planning advice and submit planning applications.	October 2019	£4,198
Environment and Commercial	Specialist support for work in relation to the Waterbeach planning appeal challenge and Public Inquiry	November 2019	£7846
Environment and Commercial	Specialist support for the Waterbeach planning appeal challenge and Public Inquiry in relation to landscape matters.	November 2019	£28,382
Environment and Commercial	Specialist support for the Waterbeach planning appeal challenge and Public Inquiry in relation to heritage matters.	November 2019	£9,750
Public Health	Engaged to work on a large procurement of sexual health and contraceptive services across both Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Councils with potential joint commissioning with NHS England and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). Consultant has specialist expertise in this field.	March 2020	£15,829

4.0 Accuracy of consultant data

There are a large number of payments coded to D4100 (the budget code for consultancy) that do not relate to the provision of consultancy. For a significant number of payments it has been necessary to contact budget holders to check whether payments do/do not relate to consultants. We are dependent on managers using the account codes correctly. We are currently working with finance to challenge the inappropriate use of this code to ensure that spending that does not relate to consultancy is coded correctly going forward. If consultancy spend has been coded to other finance codes the reporting process followed will not have identified this spending.

5.0 Approval to engage a consultant

An approval to engage a consultant form was introduced in June 2019 to ensure that a business case is considered prior to engaging any consultant. The consultants policy directs managers to follow this process. One new approval to engage a consultant form has been received/approved for engagements in Q3. This has highlighted some instances where managers have not gained the required approval prior to engaging consultants. In February 2020 we reminded Joint Management Team (JMT) of the need for managers to comply with this approval process. We have drafted a briefing note for managers highlighting key points around use of consultants that will be issued.

6.0 Frequency of reporting

Officers have made and continue to make improvements to the process for identifying consultant engagements over the last 3 quarters. Based on the increased compliance and the amount of work involved in producing the consultants data we are proposing that we move to reporting on a 6 monthly basis. This will also allow more time to follow up with engaging managers where there are questions or issues in relation to consultants use.

6.0 Agency worker spending

- 6.1 The Audit and Accounts Committee also asked for information on the agency spend on a quarterly basis. In Q3 £1.95 million was spent on agency workers engaged via OPUS LGSS or with employment agencies outside of the OPUS LGSS contract.
- 6.2 Spending on agency workers should be considered in the context of our overall workforce costs. Agency spending is equivalent to 6% of the pay bill total pay bill for employees this quarter. Agency spending in Q3 has reduced by £1.15 million when compared to Q3 of 2019.
- 6.3 For agency workers engaged via OPUS the highest level of agency worker use is within services providing social care, particularly children's social care. This is in line with the position in other local authorities. The majority of this quarterly spending is on individuals engaged to undertake qualified social care roles covering front line positions. Proactive work is ongoing to fill qualified social worker vacancies on a permanent basis and to decrease the need for agency social workers.

7.0 Recommendations

Audit and Accounts Committee is asked to:

- a) Note the current data on the use of consultants and agency workers.
- b) Note work that is taking place with finance and JMT to improve the accuracy of consultants data and to ensure compliance with the approval process.
- c) Agree to reviewing data on the use of consultants on a 6 monthly basis.

Source Documents	Location
None	