

## Consultants and Agency Worker Data – Q4 2020/2021 and Q1 2021/2022

To: Audit and Accounts Committee  
 Date: 28<sup>th</sup> September 2021  
 From: Janet Atkin, Assistant Director, HR Services

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

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### 1.0 Introduction

1.1 Information covering the Council's usage of consultants is presented to Audit and Accounts Committee on a six-monthly basis. This report outlines information on the use of consultants in Quarter 4 2020-2021 (January 2021 to March 2021) and Quarter 1 2021-2022 (April to June 2021).

### 2.0 Reporting on Consultants

2.1 OPUS People Solutions provide information on consultants that have been engaged through them. The Finance team have provided details of consultants paid via invoice and coded to the consultancy code (D4100).

### 3.0 Quarter 4 (January 2021 to March 2021) Consultant Summary

3.1 There were 2 consultants engaged via OPUS in quarter 4. This is the same as the number of consultants engaged via OPUS in quarter 3. Details of each of the consultants that have been engaged via OPUS are given in the table below.

<b>Consultants engaged via OPUS Q4 2020/2021</b>			
<b>Area</b>	<b>Output engaged to deliver</b>	<b>Spend in Q4</b>	<b>Ongoing/ended</b>
P&E	Joint Professional Services Procurement	10,230	Due to end September 2021
P&E	Development Management Officer (Planning)	17,186	Due to end in September 2021

3.3 Information on the spending coded to the consultancy code (D4100) is given in appendix A. In Q4 payments were made by invoice to 30 suppliers providing consultancy services. 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.

#### 4.0 Quarter 1 (April to June 2021) Consultant Summary

4.1 There were again 2 consultants engaged via OPUS in Q1, these are the same consultants that were engaged in Q4. Details are given in the table below.

<b>Consultants engaged via OPUS Q1 2021/2022</b>			
<b>Area</b>	<b>Output engaged to deliver</b>	<b>Spend in Q1</b>	<b>Ongoing/ended</b>
P&E	Joint Professional Services Procurement	4,373	Due to end September 2021
P&E	Development Management Officer (Planning)	16,402	Due to end in September 2021

4.2 Information on the spending coded to the consultancy code (D4100) in Q1 is given in Appendix B. In Q1 there were payments by invoice to 29 suppliers providing consultancy services. As stated above this number is not surprising considering the Council's size, its diverse range of services and the current working agendas.

#### 5.0 Agency worker/interims data in Quarter 4 (2020-2021) and Quarter 1 (2021-22)

5.1 The Audit and Accounts Committee also asked for information on the agency spend on a quarterly basis. This spend relates to agency workers and interims (an interim being an individuals engaged to cover a senior role on a temporary basis). Information on the amount spent on agency workers/interims in quarter 4 and quarter 1 is given in the tables below.

<b>Period</b>	<b>Total spend on agency workers/interims</b>	<b>Comparison to this quarter in the previous financial year</b>
Q4 of 2020/2021	2.85m	Increase of £0.68m when compared to Q4 of 2019/20
Q1 of 2021/2022	3.06m	Increase of £1.68m when compared to Q1 of 2020/21

5.2 Spending on agency workers/interims should be considered in the context of our overall workforce costs. Spending on agency workers in Q4 represents 7.6% of workforce spending. Spending on agency workers in Q1 represents 8.3% of workforce spending.

5.3 The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in the need for staff to remain off work self-isolating or unwell. This has resulted in higher spending on agency workers in Q4 and Q1 to cover for absent employees especially in front line social care roles.

5.4 We have recently had a number of senior roles in the Place and Economy directorate that are being temporarily undertaken by interims pending a restructure and recruitment to permanent roles, which also accounts for an increase in higher spending in this area.

5.5 We have also had a significant increase in spend on agency workers engaged by Public Health in Q4 and Q1 (£512,451 in Q4 and £761,245 in Q1). These agency workers were engaged to support the organisations ongoing Covid response.

5.6 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 the quarterly spending is on individuals engaged to undertake qualified social care roles covering front line positions. Proactive work is ongoing to decrease the need for agency social workers.