

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

9TH FEBRUARY 2017

THE USE OF AGENCY WORKERS

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES, IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR M WEBBER

1. PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Cabinet with details of agency worker engagement across the Council.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note the information in respect of the use of agency workers within the Council.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To ensure that Members are fully briefed on the use of agency workers within the Council.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Previously information was received by Cabinet in respect of the Maximising Attendance initiative. As part of the discussion at that time, it was identified that absences are sometimes covered by a mixture of casual and agency worker arrangements. As a consequence of that discussion, the Leader subsequently asked that further information be provided to Members on the use of agency workers.
- 4.2 In regard to agency working, previously a procurement exercise was carried out for a Managed Service Provision of Agency Workers to Rhondda Cynon Taf Council. The procurement of the contract followed an EU process and complied with the authorities Contract Procedure Rules through the use of the National Procurement Service (NPS) Framework for Provision of Agency Workers.
- 4.3 As part of the process, a thorough review of the contractual strategy was undertaken by the Corporate Procurement Unit and Human Resources. The

review was carried out in accordance with principles of the Supply Chain Efficiency Project in order to produce a strategy which encouraged a positive market response and reduction in cost (both direct and indirect cost).

5. THE USE OF AGENCY WORKERS

- 5.1 Through the use of the NPS framework, the Council has access to pre-approved agency arrangements which ensure that when called upon, the Council is able to make best use of workers who have already been cleared to work within our organisation at short notice.
- 5.2 The use of agency workers can take a number of forms, which are detailed below:
- i) Short term cover for the absences of Council staff where casual arrangements are not available;
 - ii) Seasonal work, e.g. grass cutting.
 - iii) Time limited projects (either through external funding or one off funding sources) where the delivery outcomes are dependent upon a readily available workforce.
 - iv) Longer term cover arrangements in occupational groups where nationally it is hard to recruit to e.g. Social Workers, Engineers, and some technical roles;
- 5.3 . The use of agency staff allows the Council to respond very quickly to either short term need or time limited projects. Without the ability to use agency workers, the Council would potentially be quite hamstrung and perhaps unable to undertake certain projects..
- 5.4 The detail on the use of agency staff in terms of agency numbers, service area usage and costs for the last three financial years are detailed below:

Agency Numbers

Number of Agency Staff Engaged Across the Council	2015-16	2014-15	2013-14
	658	595	804

Number of Agency Staff Engaged Across Council Departments	2015-16	2014-15	2013-14
Chief Executives	4	5	9
Community & Childrens	408	391	541
Corporate & Frontline	240	184	227
Education & Lifelong Learning	6	15	27

Agency Usage – Service Area Examples

Groups	Service Areas Examples
Chief Executive	Human Resources
	Regeneration and Funding
	Theatres and Public Entertainment
Community & Childrens Services	Accommodation
	Adoption Services
	Assess and Care Plan Teams
	Bereavement Services
	Business Support
	Communities First
	Community Leisure
	Community Safety Partnership
	Early Response ACP
	Contact Service
	Early Years & Family Support
	Environmental Health
	Housing Operations
	Family Placements
	Long Term Care & Support
	Parks and Countryside
	Prevention & Early Intervention
	Principal Parks
	Purchasing & Commissioning
	Regional Training Unit
Registrar	
Safeguarding and Standards	
Supporting People	

Groups	Service Areas Examples
	Vision Products
Corporate and Frontline Services	Accountancy
	Central Print Unit
	Claims Assessments
	Construction Projects
	Contact Centres
	Corp Estates Man - Department
	Facilities Cleaning Operations
	Fleet Workshop
	Highways Infrastructure Admin
	Integrated Transport Unit
	Payroll and Payments
	Procurement
	Residual Waste
	Street Cleansing Operations
	Waste Awareness and Publicity
Road Safety & Transport Strategy	
Education	Administration SEN Statements
	Nursery Transport Ynyscynon
	Translation Service
	Educational Development Primary

Agency Cost

	2015-16	2014-15	2013-14
Total Paid (exl VAT)	£3,584,013	£4,095,784	£4,960,080

5.5 In terms of the information detailed in paragraph 5.4 above, it should be noted that:

- i. The agency staff numbers listed above are not Full Time Equivalent (FTE) roles within the Council. As a general guide using the average FTE salary of the Council's grading system (including on-costs) of £28.7k, the 2015/16 agency spend equates to approximately 120 FTE's. This figure represents less than 2 % of our FTE workforce;
- ii. The numbers and costs above will include posts which are funded from external or one off funding sources, many on a short term basis, and this

has enabled the Council to deliver visible and real outcomes to the communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf;

- iii. The overarching financial position is that during this time period, the Council has continued to provide improving services within our overall budget, and continued to proactively manage our workforce to meet any service need.

5.6 In terms of scrutiny of the agency process, any long term agency engagement is monitored and approved by the Council's Change Control process. To support this process, a guidance document and pro-forma were produced that managers have to complete for any agency engagement of over two weeks. This Change Control process ensures that any such engagement falls either under the difficult to recruit area or meets the nature of the short term project requirements. The Change Control process has been reviewed by Internal Audit and a HMRC Inspector and they have indicated that this is a robust process that has been put in place by the Council.

5.7 Nevertheless, we are seeking to reduce the use of agency workers through:

- **Improving sickness absence across the Council.** Our sickness rates are at the Welsh average rate for local authorities, but they are still too high. Action has been taken to improve the sickness management processes and to enhance the occupational health services we provide to ensure staff receive the support they need to return to work as quickly as possible after a sickness absence;
- **Proactive workforce management** – where the Council has skill gaps in certain professions and where we struggle to recruit, we have employed apprentices and graduates, and provided relevant training qualifications, to ensure we “grow our own”. This is an approach we will continue to develop over the next few years;
- **Flexible working opportunities** – rather than lose experienced staff to retirement or to a change in lifestyle, we proactively offer flexible working opportunities to try and accommodate the member of staff's wishes yet retain their knowledge and experience. This is a useful tool to ensure we retain experienced staff in key areas where we struggle to recruit, and allows us to improve our workforce planning.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 This would have been addressed via the NPS framework.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

7.1 The financial detail in respect of the use of agency workers is detailed at paragraph 5.4 above.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Any consultation requirement would have been incorporated as part of the NPS framework.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1 The legal implications would have been incorporated as part of the NPS framework.

10. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/ SIP

- 10.1 The report seeks to demonstrate the flexibility used in addressing key Council roles, delivering short term projects and ensuring that the services the Council currently provides continue, all within its existing resources. As a result, it is consistent with the requirements and aspirations of the Council's Corporate Plan.

11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1 The review and use of agency workers will continue, to ensure that we continue to monitor both its usage and spend moving forward and continue to deliver on key projects and business continuity.