

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board – 28 March 2018

Report Title

Seasonal and Agency Workers in Community Safety and Street Scene Services

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Paul Woodcock, Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

This report outlines the work that has already been undertaken to reduce agency usage within Community Safety and Street Scene Services for the 2019/20 financial year.

It outlines the ongoing resource demands within the service, both for cover, and for seasonal work, and presents options for further reductions in agency usage. In doing so, the report outlines the potential additional costs associated with these options.

Recommendations

1. That Overview and Scrutiny Management Board note the progress made on reducing agency use across Street Scene Services.
2. That Overview and Scrutiny Management Board comments on the content of this report.

List of Appendices Included

None

Background Papers

No

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

No

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

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1. Background

- 1.1 Officers have been working on reducing agency spend for some time with a particular focus on Street Scene services as high users of agency staff. In addition, on the 3rd October 2018, Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) requested that further work be undertaken to seek to reduce the Council's reliance on seasonal agency staff.
- 1.2 For Community Safety and Street Scene, OSMB asked that the service considered options including annualised hours and the multi-skilling of operatives, to enable more flexibility across roles and structures.

2. Key Issues

Progress to Date

- 2.1 A number of actions have already been taken within Community Safety and Street Scene Services to reduce agency usage over the last year and into 2019/20. They can be summarised as follows:
 - More permanent staff have been recruited in Waste Management Services;
 - New arrangements for seasonal working hours have been introduced in Grounds Maintenance Services. Employees now work more hours in the summer months and fewer in the winter months.
 - More permanent staff have been recruited in Highways Services, including a successful apprenticeship programme. As an example, five highway apprentices are about to successfully complete their apprenticeships and approval has been granted to offer them road worker posts. Approval has also been granted to recruit apprentices into the five posts which will be vacated by the current cohort.
- 2.2 Collectively, these actions mean that in 2019/20 the service projects to spend £881k on agency staffing, compared to £1.758 million in 2018/19.
- 2.3 The Street Scene service has been working with Finance and Human Resources colleagues to better understand the current operating model and to start looking at options for alternative delivery, for example through more workers who are employed in-house.

Requirement for Cover (either in-house or via agency)

- 2.4 Grounds Maintenance, Street Cleaning, Waste and Highways Services are driven by frontline operational staff resources. If resources are not available, there is a direct, and immediate, impact on service delivery.
- 2.5 Refuse and recycling collections are delivered on a scheduled basis, with a clear service commitment to residents. There is therefore a requirement for resources to be covered at all times in order to fulfil this commitment.
- 2.6 Whilst other services, such as street cleaning, grounds maintenance and highways are more flexible, any resource reduction has an immediate effect on

the programme of works, and consequently has an immediate impact on the quality of the street environment.

- 2.7 Cover arrangements therefore need to be flexible to cover holidays, absence or sickness, which the service is often not aware of until early morning on the day of operation. On these occasions, there is a requirement for staff resources to be sourced at very short notice, in particular within the waste service.
- 2.8 The challenge for the delivery of cover is greater for HGV drivers, especially those in waste services; mainly due to the introduction of the driver Certificate of Professional Competency (CPC). This has meant that the pool of available drivers in the employment market has reduced significantly, and the recruitment and retention of staff can therefore be difficult.
- 2.9 Cover for annual leave and sickness is therefore required in the service and is budgeted for, generally through the use of agency resources.
- 2.10 The total projected expenditure for the financial year 2018/19 is £1.758 million.

Seasonal Demand

- 2.11 The demand for staff across Street Scene and Highways Services varies, on a seasonal basis, dependent on the service:
 - Grounds Maintenance & Street Cleansing
 - Grass cutting - March to October
 - Weed spraying - April to September
 - Leaf clearance - October to December
 - Waste
 - Garden waste seasonal peak - April to October
 - Christmas collections - December to January
 - Highways
 - Short term capital programme work which is often weather dependent.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

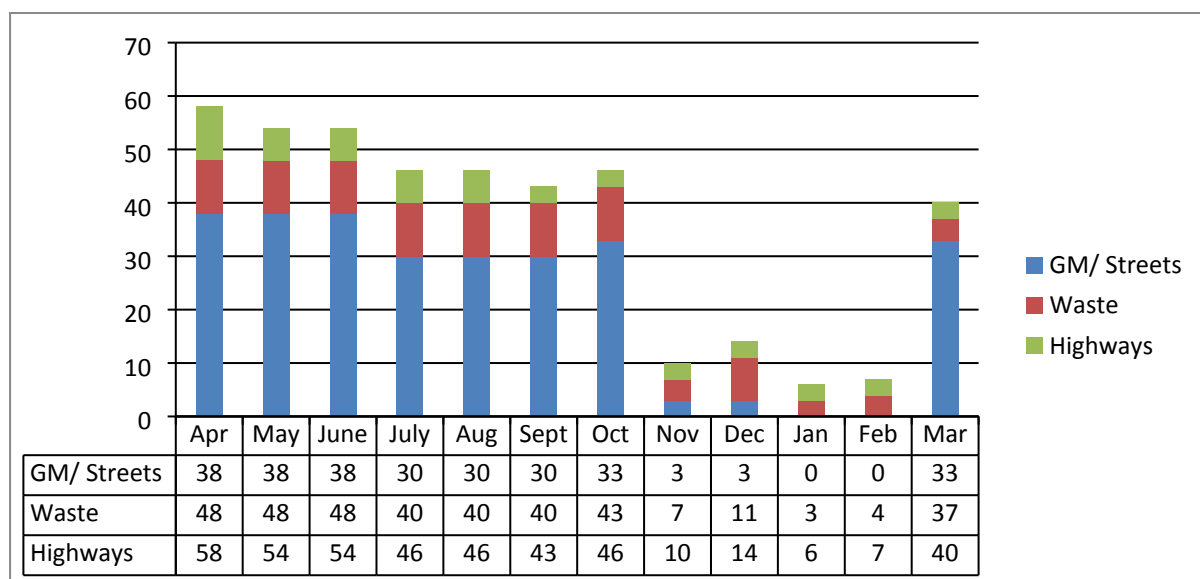
- 3.1 The current model in 2019/20, whilst seeing a reduction in spend and use of agency staff from previous years, maintains a predicted use of £881k of agency spend. As requested by OSMB an option to employ more in-house staff on a permanent basis and move to a more multi-skilled workforce, in order to meet seasonal demands and reduce agency, has been modelled and is described below.

Seasonal Resource Demand

- 3.2 The total projected seasonal resource demand, in hours, for 2019/20 is:
 - Grounds Maintenance / Street Cleansing 43,995 hours
 - Waste 14,911 hours
 - Highways 7,310 hours

3.3 Chart 1 outlines the FTE resource requirement at different points in the year. At the peak (April) the service requires 58 additional FTEs to deliver services effectively. During January this requirement falls to six FTEs.

Chart 1 - Agency Requirement Profile – FTEs per month



Cost Comparison – Permanent to Agency Staffing

3.4 The projected cost of agency in 2019/20 is £881k.

3.5 Table 2 below shows the cost comparison between agency rates and hourly rates for RMBC employed staff, for the projected delivery hours for 2019/20:

Table 2 – Cost Comparison – RMBC Employed versus Agency Staffing

	Grade	Total Hours	Agency Rate £ per hour	Agency Cost £	RMBC Rate £ per hour	RMBC Cost £	Additional Agency Cost / Saving
Grounds Maintenance / Street Cleansing	Band D / C	43,995	12.75	560,936	14.24	626,489	-65,553
Waste (Loader)	Band C	14,911	13.00	193,843	14.39	214,569	-20,726
Highways	Average Band	7,310	17.33	126,690	18.40	134,512	-7,822
Total		66,216		881,469		975,570	-94,101

3.6 As can be seen from Table 2 the use of agency employees is cheaper than permanent employment, mainly due to pension contributions.

Employ Multi-skilled Staff on a Fixed Term Basis

- 3.7 Officers have considered whether staff could be recruited on a variety of fixed short-term contracts to cover the seasonal variations in the service. Staff would be recruited on a multi-skilled basis, so that they could be deployed across all services that require cover. Assuming that the service could employ staff on temporary fixed term contracts to cover the seasonal need, employing staff rather than using agency would cost the service an additional £94k per year. This assumes that any staff could be employed solely for the hours required. Should staff be employed for more hours than required above, this would obviously increase the costs.

Employ Additional Multi-Skilled Permanent Staff

- 3.8 Initial modelling has been undertaken for the service to employ further in-house staff, on a permanent basis. This model would allow a flexible workforce of additional staff across the services and a vastly reduced number of seasonal employees being required at peak times April to June. This would provide cross service skills and increased employment opportunities within the Council. Permanent employees have additional employment security and could benefit from development plans, bolstering our talent pipelines and enabling us to more effectively plan workforce requirements over the medium to longer term. In addition, the Council could also benefit from higher engagement levels, flexibility, and productivity levels.
- 3.9 The initial modelling indicates this would cost more than the currently budgeted £881k to meet the service requirements detailed in this report. This modelling is in the early stages and would require further work if required.

Other Options

- 3.10 A review of the Council's resourcing processes is currently being undertaken, including options for the management of agency engagements and the development of a central 'bank system' for casual/temporary workers.
- 3.11 Work is underway to assess options for the 'bank system' but are likely to involve rolling recruitment for high volume, high turnover roles with a reserve list system. This would allow recruiting managers to draw from a pool of successful candidates as vacancies arise, and would be refreshed on a regular basis. Options for deployment will be considered at Workforce Management Board in Quarter 1 of 2019/20. These options could also provide an opportunity for targeted recruitment, such as the long term unemployed, ex-offenders and those transitioning back in to employment. However, any solution would need to take into account that these roles often need a continuity of employment, as they require training in the use of equipment and the building up of knowledge and productivity. These roles do not therefore lend themselves to these very short-term cover options.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 Cabinet Members have been briefed on actions and progress being made to reduce agency usage in the services.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 As stated in this paper the Street Scene service has already introduced a number of measures to reduce agency use and spend. This leaves a current model of use of agency and seasonal workers as described in the paper above, to a forecasted budget of £881k.
- 5.2 An alternative option has been modelled, which would enable the recruitment of additional in-house, permanent workers into the Council as an alternative to agency use. This initial modelling does highlight additional costs to the Council for this option.
- 5.3 At present, given the additional costs of this option, and the necessity to undertake further work to develop job descriptions, no decision has currently been taken to implement this approach. Any additional expenditure that results from proposals to reduce agency usage would need to be considered as part of a future budget setting process.
- 5.4 The service will therefore undertake further work across the new financial year, to fully assess the potential operational model that would support this approach, and to fully understand the additional costs.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 6.1 There are no current financial implications of this report.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

- 7.1 There are no current legal implications of this report.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

- 8.1 Given the further work that would be required to implement any proposed changes stemming from this report, there are currently no Human Resources implications of this report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 9.1 There are no current implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults of this report.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

- 10.1 There are no current Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications of this report.

11. Implications for Partners

- 11.1 There are no current implications for partners of this report.

12. Risks and Mitigation

12.1 There are currently no specific risks identified from this report.

13. Accountable Officer(s)

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Martin Raper, Head of Street Scene Services

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