

Public Report
Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board – 02 December 2020

Report Title

Progress Report on the recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on the use of agency staff – November 2020

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

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Judith Badger, Strategic Director of Finance and Customer Services

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

None

Report Summary

This report provides further details of progress made in implementing the recommendations from agency scrutiny review, specific actions related to the recommendations and outcomes arising from them.

Recommendation

That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board note progress and consider further actions it might recommend in order to ensure appropriate management and oversight of this issue.

List of Appendices Included

None

Background Papers

Use of Agency, Interim and Consultancy Staff Report February 2018 and update reports February and September 2019

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

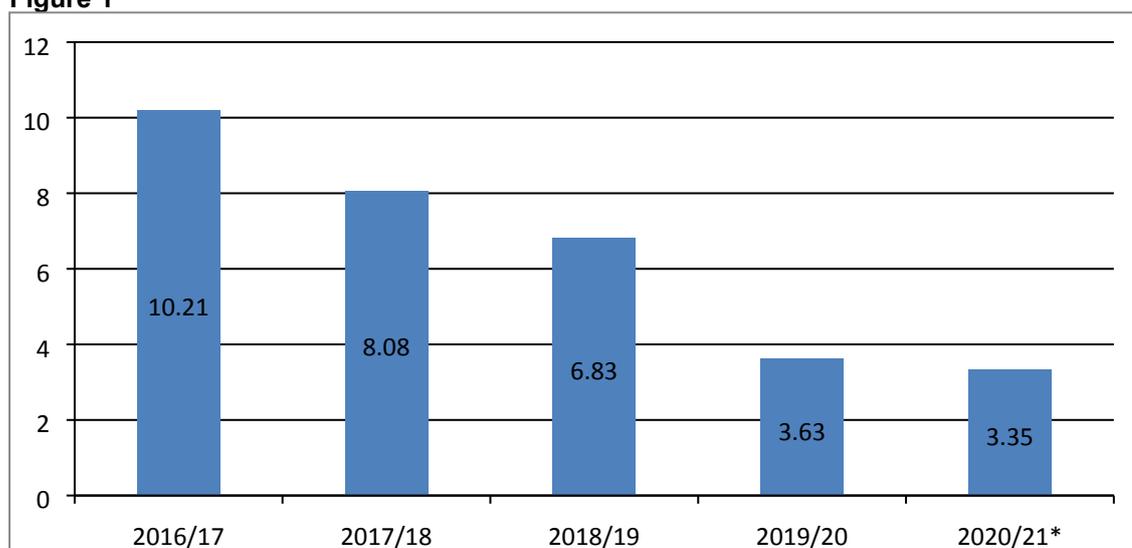
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Agency Recommendations November 2020

1. Background

- 1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board review of the use of agency, interim and consultancy staff on 21 February 2018 made twelve recommendations. These were supported by Cabinet in July 2018 and Officers were instructed to action the recommendations.
- 1.2 The Workforce Management Board (WMB) continues to monitor and control agency costs by challenging usage across the Council. In approving agency resource, WMB take into account several factors:
- What risks are associated with not filling the role – including safeguarding?
 - Is there budget available to fund the agency resource?
 - Is the agency resource required to deliver a statutory function?
 - Can the work be delivered in any other way?
 - Any other factors that are deemed critical for securing additional agency resource
- 1.3 Agency resource continues to be used to enable continuation of services for time limited periods. Directorates have been tasked with reducing agency usage and to seek alternative solutions to flexible resourcing to maintain service delivery. WMB is tasked with providing cross-Directorate challenge of any business cases requesting use of agency spend.
- 1.4 Agency expenditure has fallen 77% since 2016/17, figure 1, and for 20/21 is forecast to be a similar amount to the £3.63m incurred last year. Figure 2 provides a breakdown of current year expenditure to date and annual forecast by Directorate.

Figure 1



*annual projection

Figure 2

Directorate	Actuals Q2 2020/21	Grant Funded	RMBC Revenue Funded	Full Year Forecast
Assistant Chief Executive's	£0	£0	£0	£0
Adult Care Housing & Public Health	£197,177	£0	£197,177	£295,839
Children and Young People's Services	£489,692	£21,223	£468,469	£1,397,520
Finance & Customer Services	£199,633	£0	£199,633	£291,542
Regeneration & Environment	£868,854	£32,900	£835,954	£1,368,490
RMBC	£1,755,355	£54,123	£1,701,232	£3,353,392

2. Update on Recommendations from Scrutiny Review of Agency, Interim and Consultancy Staff

2.1 Recommendations overview

Nine of the twelve recommendations had been implemented in full at the time of last years report. This report provides an update on the remaining three recommendations.

2.2 Recommendation 6

That the transformation plans for ASC are carefully monitored to ensure that agency and consultancy use is delivering value for money and practice improvements.

The new Adult Social Care Pathway was implemented in October 2019. Agency usage in Adult Social Care continues to be monitored by WMB. Currently the Directorate has two Social Workers in Supported Discharge Pathways whose engagements are scheduled to finish at the end of the calendar year.

2.3 Recommendation 9

That further work be undertaken to lessen the requirement for seasonal agency staff. This should include annualising hours or ensuring operatives 'multi-task' and are able to share roles and functions. The review asks that a further report be provided exploring options.

Regeneration and Environment recruited 22 employees in Grounds Maintenance on seasonal contracts at the beginning of March. Permanent recruitment to lessen the requirement for agency workers further is due to take place next spring.

2.4 Recommendation 11

That the WMB should explore the feasibility with other councils and public sector partners of developing an in-house 'bank' system or employment agency to reduce cost and reliance on external agencies.

The new neutral vendor agency contract that commenced in April has increased the number of suppliers from across the market. The supply chains include the neutral vendors internal agency whose placements are not subject to agency commission rates, typically saving circa 8%.

The new agency contract has reduced agency commission costs by £48,915 in the first 6 months of operation.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 WMB continues to monitor and control agency costs

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 Regular consultation takes place with Trade Unions on the usage of agency workers at Directorate and Corporate Consultation meetings.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 All recommendations have been implemented.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications (to be written by the relevant Head of Finance and the Head of Procurement on behalf of s151 Officer)

6.1 WMB continues to play a key role in controlling the level of expenditure incurred through agency and consultancy engagements, ensuring that requests for new engagements, or extensions to existing engagements are effectively scrutinised. The board is attended by the Head of Corporate Finance to ensure that all requests received are within available budgets, and have been fully reviewed by Finance Business Partners ahead of the meeting, to ensure their financial implications are fully understood.

6.2 The new procedures for the raising of requisitions in relation to agency or consultancy expenditure direct users to utilise specific expenditure codes, this enables WMB to more effectively track and control this expenditure. Failure to follow these new procedures is reported to the WMB through the Head of Procurement.

6.3 Significant focus has been placed on the level of agency and consultancy expenditure through the Council's financial monitoring procedures, with a clear steer to reduce its use. Therefore, these areas of expenditure have become a key part of the regular dialogue between directorates and their Finance Business

Partners, when reviewing the Council's budget and forecast position. The continued presence of the WMB should have the impact of continuing to reduce levels of expenditure across agency and consultancy.

6.4 There are no direct procurement implications arising from the recommendations contained in the report. All procurement requirements are detailed in the main body of the report.

7. Legal Advice and Implications (to be written by Legal Officer on behalf of Assistant Director Legal Services)

7.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations within this report.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 Successful recruitment and retention strategies combined with the development of the workforce will improve flexibility, skills and capacity to allow resources to be matched to priorities and reduce reliance on external agencies.

8.2 The use of agency provides a flexible resource for short term solutions; longer term usage should be addressed through appropriate workforce planning.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 Agency workers engaged in both Adults and Children's Services to facilitate service transformation, remain compliant with the Care Act and deliver expected standards of service are subject to the same approval and monitoring processes as workers in other Directorates.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 The Agency Workers Regulations 2011 give agency workers the entitlement to the same basic employment and working conditions as if they had been recruited directly and if they complete a qualifying period of 12 weeks in the same or similar job.

11. Implications for Partners

11.1 There are no implications for partners.

12. Risks and Mitigation

12.1 Business cases are reviewed by the Workforce Management Board prior to agency workers being engaged

13. Accountable Officer(s)

Judith Badger Strategic Director of Finance and Customer Services

Lee Mann Assistant Director Human Resources and Organisational Development

Approvals obtained on behalf of:-

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive		Click here to enter a date.
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	18/11/20
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Stuart Fletcher	17/11/20
Assistant Director of Human Resources (if appropriate)		Click here to enter a date.

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