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Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources

12 December 2019

**Name of Cabinet Member:**

Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources – Councillor J Mutton

**Director Approving Submission of the report:**

Deputy Chief Executive (People)

**Ward(s) affected:**

None

**Title:**

Agency Workers – Performance Management Report Q2: 1st July to 30th September 2019

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**Is this a key decision?**

No.

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**Executive Summary:**

The purpose of this report is to provide the Cabinet Member with performance information on the use of agency workers procured for the Q2 period 2019/2020.

**Recommendations:**

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources is requested to note:

1. The recruitment and retention challenges impacting and affecting the Service and strategies in place or working towards to support these.
2. The agency / interim spends for Q2 2019/20.
3. The cumulative spend for both agency workers via Reed and outside Reed (Table 2.1).

**List of Appendices included:**

None

**Other useful background papers:**

None

**Has it or will it be considered by Scrutiny?**

No

**Has it, or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?**

No

**Will this report go to Council?**

No

**Report title:**

Agency Workers and Interim Managers – Performance Management Report Q2, 1 July to 30 September 2019.

**1. Context (or background)**

1.1 Coventry City Council has a Master Vendor Contract with Reed for the supply of agency workers. Through the contract, Reed supply all suitable agency workers either through their own agency or via a 2<sup>nd</sup> tier arrangement with other agencies, using rates of pay based on an agreed pay policy and a negotiated mark-up rate with the Master Vendor. The information supplied by Reed gives detailed information on agency worker usage and expenditure. Spend is based on timesheets paid during the quarter.

Reed is not always able to supply the required agency workers and where this is the case, service areas will use other suppliers. However, where other suppliers are being used, the Council is engaging with Reed to bring other suppliers and or workers under the Master Vendor contract. Reed covers all agency workers required by the core council. The contract does not cover agency workers in schools.

1.2 This report highlights across the council several examples where agency staff is being used during service pressure or restructure/change and special projects. This has a cumulative impact across the business incorporating numerous internal and external factors that affect the context of the council and demonstrate why using agency workers is on occasions appropriate, but also provides detail around what measures are in place to ensure this doesn't drift.

Whilst the control of agency spend is managed locally within individual service areas, the internal and external factors that drive our workforce challenges lends itself to the whole of the organisation. Financial constraints, technology, political, local and legislative agenda's as well as the speed of change, high customer demand and more attractive offers add to the recruitment and retention pressures the organisation is faced with.

Services operate in a very tight labour market i.e. more jobs than candidates, the market is candidate led e.g. financially driven, which in turn creates both internal and external challenges and a highly competitive environment when recruiting and retaining staff. Coupled with skills and experience shortages, locally as well as nationally in qualified and specialist arenas specifically Adult social care, Children's social workers, planning and other professional services including surveyors, transportation and UTMC. An ageing workforce also contributes to the recruitment challenges as well as recruiting and retaining staff across 5 generations with differing needs, expectations and requirements, puts extra pressure on service areas to attract and retain the right people.

1.3 The apprenticeship levy has provided some leeway in creating opportunities to address some of these areas, however, unexpected staff cover has contributed to the increased pressure and demand on frontline services across both directorates. Local and national skills shortages and a sparse candidate labour market pool therefore requires reliance on agency workers to counteract the risk of not being able to provide a front-line service. In order to continue to make efficiencies through the organisation, dictates the use of a temporary workforce until such arrangements have been concluded.

1.4 Alternative options can be considered for example pools of workers are viable options, however, they require funding. In addition, to maximise the potential for both service and individuals and to allow for cross service working, would require skills sets in various disciplines across the service areas, which can present problems for regular updated training and maintenance of skills.

At the same time regular working could impact employee status as well as increase the temporary workforce; options need to consider the financial costs to manage and resource. Agency usage is on a pay as you use basis and incurs charges via pay rates (x) hours worked and agency fees. In comparison with financial obligations to resource a pool, will require a permanent resource – which will incur a fixed price e.g. to use and to source.

Career pathways, development opportunities and graduate placements as well as redeployment outplacements are activities currently being utilised and developed for maximum potential across the Council to enhance our candidate pools.

Following the appointment of a Recruitment Manager and the implementation of a new recruitment model, the Recruitment Service is providing and assisting more creative and innovative recruitment activity raising Coventry City Council's profile as an employer of choice on our social media platforms, as well as direct sourcing of candidates to recruit to vacancies as an alternative to agency usage. Additional improvements across the team have seen an increase in the number of application forms received as well as a reduction in the time to hire. The Recruitment Team are working closely with HR/OD, Universities and other local partners including the Job Shop to support more collaborative working and pooling of ideas and running events to address many of the recruitment and retention issues that all employers are facing in today's constant changing and challenging times.

1.5 The commentary throughout this report will provide more detail around the specific service area.

## 2. Directorate Commentary on Agency Worker Spend for Q2 2019/20

Table 2.1

The table below highlights the **overall cumulative spend** on the use of agency workers with Reed and outside Reed and compares Q1 2019/20 and Q2 2019/20.

	Q1 2019/20	Q2 2019/20	Increase/Decrease
Reed	£1,173,165	£1,075,527	-£97,638
Outside Reed	£127,325	£401,848	£274,523
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,300,490</b>	<b>£1,477,375</b>	<b>£176,885</b>

The below table provides a breakdown of the cumulative spend across the Directorates for the same periods.

	Q1 2019/20		Q2 2019/20	
	Reed	Outside Reed	Reed	Outside Reed
<b>PEOPLE</b>	£966,246	£77,675	£890,005	£239,242
<b>PLACE</b>	£206,918	£49,290	£185,522	£162,606
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£1,173,165</b>	<b>£126,965</b>	<b>£1,075,527</b>	<b>£401,848</b>

Table 2.2

Tables 2.2 below shows comparative expenditure for the **Master Vendor Contract** between Q1 2019/20 and Q2 2019/20 as well as Q2 2018/19 and Q2 2019/20. There has been a **decrease** of **£98k** in spend between Q1 2019/20 and Q2 2019/20 and a **decrease** of **£208k** compared to the same quarter in 2018/19. The Master Vendor Contract covers all agency workers required by the core Council, the Reed contract does not cover agency workers in schools.

	<b>Spend comparing Q1 2019/20 to Q2 2019/20</b>	<b>Spend Q1 2019/20</b>	<b>Spend Q2 2019/20</b>	<b>Increase / Decrease</b>
PEOPLE	Adult Social Care	£248,106	£233,391	-£14,715
	Children and Young People's Services	£580,141	£533,257	-£46,884
	Customer Services & Transformation*	£137,999	£117,144	-£15,897
	Human Resources	*Incl in CS & T	£4,958	
	Education and Skills	£0	£1,256	£1,256
	People Directorate Total	£966,246	£890,005	-£76,241
PLACE	Finance & Corporate Services	£57,874	£44,507	-£13,367
	Project Management and Property Services	£12,704	£4,207	-£8,497
	Streetscene & Regulatory Services	£105,648	£136,248	£30,600
	Transportation & Highways	£14,884	£0	-£14,884
	City Centre & Major Projects Development	£15,806	£560	-£15,246
	Place Directorate Total	£206,918	£185,522	-£21,396
	<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,173,165</b>	<b>£1,075,527</b>	<b>-£97,638</b>

	<b>Spend comparing Q2 2018/19 to Q2 2019/20</b>	<b>Spend Q2 2018/19</b>	<b>Spend Q2 2019/20</b>	<b>Increase / Decrease</b>
PEOPLE	Adult Social Care	£212,832	£233,391	£20,559
	Children and Young People's Services	£840,392	£533,257	-£307,135
	Customer Services & Transformation*	£58,576	£117,144	£63,526
	Human Resources	*Incl in CS & T	£4,958	
	Education and Skills	£0	£1,256	£1,256
	People Directorate Total	£1,111,800	£890,005	-£221,795
PLACE	Finance & Corporate Services	£28,524	£44,507	£15,983
	Project Management and Property Services	£9,682	£4,207	-£5,475
	Streetscene & Regulatory Services	£130,809	£136,248	£5,439
	Transportation & Highways	£2,009	£0	-£2,009
	City Centre & Major Projects Development	£911	£560	-£351
	Place Directorate Total	£171,936	£185,522	-£13,586

<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,283,736</b>	<b>£1,075,527</b>	<b>-£208,209</b>
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### 3. People Directorate

#### 3.1 Adult Services – Total Spend Q2 £233k

- IPS continues to reduce the use of agency staff. As part of establishing a more streamlined recruitment process for Support Assistants, a generic advert with a specifically adapted application form was recently shared on our jobs board and social media and attracted a very high number of applicants, as such, recruitment to council contracts should reduce any agency spend further.
- For Enablement and Therapy and Older People, engaged short term agency workers pending recruitment to permanent vacancies, following a recruitment drive to appoint OT recruitment in October 2019.
- Adult Social Care operational agency expenditure has been necessary in order to maintain operational services at optimal levels whilst permanent recruitment is underway. This secures statutory provision across Older People, Adult Disability and Mental Health services. It also reflects the temporary nature of some of the ASC budget.

#### 3.2 Children’s Services – Total Spend Q2 £533k

Recruitment and Retention initiatives within Children’s Services continues to yield positive results in relation to agency staff, with further reductions in spend during Quarter 2 since Q1, following an already positive downward trajectory of agency costs seen in previous quarters. This is alongside retention rates moving from 85% to 88% since the previous quarter, and vacancy rates reducing from 11% to 10% during the same period.

Children’s Services continues to hold recruitment events, assessment centre days and attends external recruitment events building on previous work undertaken to ensure a multi-channel method of recruitment, brand awareness and reputation building.

Children’s Services does not have any spend outside of the Reed contract

The table below shows the main areas that contribute to the Children’s and Adult’s spend in table 2.2 above:

	Q1 £'000	Q2 £'000
Children’s Services: Social workers (Inc. Senior Social Workers)	503	469
Children’s Services: Senior roles e.g. Social Work Team Managers, IR0’s (G9+).	19.5	45
Adults’ Services: Social workers (Inc. AMHP)	202	186
Adults’ Services: Support Workers & Drivers	2	2

### **3.3 Customer Services & Transformation (Q2 £117k)**

The **ICT & Digital** spend £10k relates to contract resource being used in the roll out of Skype for Business and decommission of Mitel. This contract has now come to an end and therefore there will be no future spend on this.

The spend of £61k within **Customer Services** relates to the following:

- A review of Business Services which has now concluded with work and resources now appropriately allocated to service areas and smaller volume of activity retain centrally. The project board supported the use of temporary resource during the project period which has now completed however the centralised activity is supported at the moment by a number of temporary team members while the team recruits to permanent positions.
- Agency cover has been provided via Northgate for Housing Benefit Online Forms. There has been a shortage of resource in this area however the team is in the process of recruiting.
- A PA review is due to commence shortly which will see changes in the team, in the interim period SMB have agreed that temporary resources should be utilised to avoid the potential for putting people at risk

### **Procurement (Q2 £13k)**

This temporary position provided cover for vacancies whilst recruitment process was carried out. The position came to an end on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2019.

### **Homelessness (Q2 £32k)**

The service has been reducing their reliance on agency staff and have just undertaken a successful recruitment exercise that will result in agency staff leaving the service in the New Year.

### **3.4 Human Resources (Q2 £5k)**

The Human Resources Directorate was established in July 2019 on the appointment of the HR Director. The spend ordinarily has been included within Customer Services and Transformation Directorate.

The spend within the HR Directorate is in relation to:

- An agency worker engaged within the Recruitment Team, has now cease following the recruitment to an individual on a fixed term contract.
- HROD are currently using Reed for 1 day per week to cover a team member who has recently returned from maternity leave and has reduced their working hours from 5 days to 4 days per week on a temporary basis.

## **4. Place Directorate**

### **4.1 Finance and Corporate (Q2 £44k)**

Agency staff in **Legal Services** is covering long term sickness and maternity leave. Costs have decreased since Q1 but there is still a need to cover vacant posts due to some delays in recruitment to permanent posts to support career development opportunities pending qualification.

### **4.2 Project Management & Property Services (Q2 £4k)**

The spend relates to providing much needed cover of an Assistant Market Manager following the post becoming vacant. There were two reasons why this post was and currently still is being covered by an agency post. Firstly, due to the nature of the work, this is a difficult to recruit to post. Secondly, for the Market to be able to operate and in a safe manner, it was essential that the post was filled quickly. We are now looking to recruit full time to this post which, if successful, this spend on agency will cease.

### **4.3 Waste Services & Fleet (Q2 £46k)**

The spend in domestic waste relates primarily to drivers & refuse collectors which have been used to cover for additional requirements during the peak summer garden staff sickness and cover for leave and sickness due to insufficient cover in the casual pool.

Recruitment into the casual pool was undertaken in October with all eligible agency staff being transferred into the pool and now directly employed by the Council.

Spend in fleet is to cover for vacancies which are currently being recruited to. Attracting fitters with the right level of skills to work on a diverse fleet continues to be a challenge and the service continues to offer apprenticeships to grow our own talent base.

### **4.4 Streetpride & Parks (Q2 £69k)**

Following a number of operational reviews the Service held up to 25 full time vacant posts. The main reviews were completed in April and May and since that time staff have been redeployed to vacant posts and several recruitment drives have been implemented. As a result of these exercises the service was successful in appointing to 22 posts reducing the demand for agency cover. A number of full-time posts however remained unfilled and covered through agency staff.

Since the recruitment exercise, 2 of the newly appointed full-time staff have since left the service and 10 have either been dismissed through the promoting health at work process, retired after long periods of ill health or resigned.

A further recruitment drive will be implemented in November and December to recruit to a number of the full-time staff vacancies. At present only 6 agency staff are employed 3 of which will be released at the end of November. Agency use will need to continue to cover full time staff vacancies and maintain service levels. Agency staff have not been used to cover seasonal staff vacancies.

### **4.5 Environmental Services (Q2 £5k)**

One agency post is currently being used to cover three long term sickness in the Council Control room at Jackson Road. The service is required to have a minimum number of officers on duty to meet accreditation requirements and emergency response duties.

#### 4.6 Planning Services (Q2 £16k)

Within Planning Services, the Development Management team currently employs 1 agency officer. The team has experienced various vacancies over the last couple of years and due to the level of workload in the team and difficulty recruiting to the vacancies it has been necessary to employ agency officers. We reported at Q1 that we had recruited to the last vacancy but now had a requirement for maternity leave cover which we would be trying to recruit to. Unfortunately, we have not been successful with recruitment to cover the temporary period and have therefore retained our current agency officer to cover the maternity leave period.

#### 5. Spend outside of the Reed Contract

Table 5.1 below shows comparative expenditure outside of the Reed contract between Q1 2019/20 and Q2 2019/20 as well as Q2 2018/19 and Q2 2019/20.

There has been **an increase of £275k** in spend outside of the Reed contract between Q1 and Q2 2019/20, as well as **an increase of £114k** in the same quarter Q2 2018/19.

Table 5.1:

a) Q1 2019/20 and Q2 2019/20

Directorate	Total Spend Q1 2019/20	Total Spend Q2 2019/20	Increase / Decrease
People: Children's	£20,996	£0	-£20,996
People: Education	£31,363	£157,883	£126,520
People: Cust. Serv.	£25,316	£81,359	£56,043
Place: Professional Services Contract	£27,621	£67,350	£39,729
Place: Waste & Fleet Services	£22,029	£85,631	£63,602
Place: Project Management	£0	£9,625	£9,625
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£127,325</b>	<b>£401,848</b>	<b>£274,523</b>

b) Q2 2018/19 and Q2 2019/20

Directorate	Total Spend Q2 2018/19	Total Spend Q2 2019/20	Increase / Decrease
People: Children's	£57,900	£0	-£57,900
People: Education	£42,056	£157,883	£115,827
People: Cust. Serv.	£63,690	£81,359	£17,669
Place: Professional Services Contract	£86,454	£67,350	-£19,104
Place: Waste & Fleet Services	£0	£85,631	£85,631

Place: Project Management	£37,156	£9,625	-£27,531
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£287,256</b>	<b>£401,848</b>	<b>£114,592</b>

### 5.1 People: Education (Q2 £158k)

The Extended Learning Centre has completed its restructure and will be able to recruit to permanent posts in the next stage and as such, will reduce agency spend. The additional spike in agency spend this quarter is also due to 12 staff resigning from the Pupil Referral Unit, following the planned restructure and the centre requiring improvements. The vacancies are out for advert currently.

The national shortage of HCPC registered Educational Psychologists, renders recruitment exceptionally difficult because of market competition. The Council's strategy to secure a hybrid model of permanent staff and associate staff is the only option to secure the required capacity. The Government has increased the number of doctorate places available through Universities, which will assist but this is a four-year course. The self-employed staff are paid at minimum market rate and the full cost is recovered through traded income.

In addition, the Council maintains two units, that deliver an intensive restorative education programme to primary age children experiencing significant social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Currently two key members of staff are on long-term sickness absence. Specialist supply staff is the only option to secure the provision and ensure the health and safety of pupils and staff. There is a plan in place to resolve this situation through HR processes.

### 5.2 People: Housing & Homelessness (Q2 £70k)

Due to the demand and priorities within Homelessness, the need to use an additional recruitment consultancy outside of the Reed contract has been sourced, however, a recent recruitment exercise will see a reduction in agency spend in the new year.

### 5.3 Place – Professional Services Contract (Q2 £67k)

The revenue spend in Q2 for Transport & Highways includes some invoices that were not sent in time but relate to Q1. There is also revenue spend of £1058.00 for Streetscene & Regulatory Services.

We have successfully filled a number of vacant posts using the Transport & Highways microsite and recruitment campaigns, we continue to recruit using these methods with a view to further reduce agency spend where possible.

For posts that prove difficult to recruit to, we continue exploring options such as career grading, career development opportunity and graduate placement. Where possible, we recharge relevant revenue costs to Capital projects and external funding to reduce the impact on core budgets.

### 5.6 Place – Waste & Fleet Services (Q2 £85k)

Spend outside the master vendor contract was initiated by the limited pool of specialist staff (mainly drivers) and for the same business reasons stated in the commentary for the Reed agency spend. To reduce and limit off contract spend, Reed has engaged the off-contract supplier Drive force. Drive Force is now part of the Reed MSP framework and therefore off contract spend should reduce considerably as future spend will be incorporated through the master vendor spend, or as part of the recent recruitment activity highlighted earlier in the report.

The only caveat to this moving forward is the potential requirement to utilise outside agencies over the Christmas period where Reed are unable to supply drivers due to the high levels of competition for agency drivers during this period.

### **5.7 Place – Project Management (Q2 £10k)**

**Repairs & Maintenance Service** initially had tried to recruit 2 x Electrician's unsuccessfully both through traditional recruitment methods and through the master vendor contract with Reed. The candidate market lacked the calibre skill set required coupled with candidate salary expectations, rendered no suitable candidates. Due to the demand on the service, other avenues were therefore explored and sourced candidates via a traded supplier agency framework. A quick turn around on these recruitments is vital to ensure that operation is not disrupted, and better rates were negotiated to accommodate value for money and reduced costs. Whilst we are continuing to explore recruitment methods to reduce our agency spend, we will continue to use the agency worker until the new year.

## **6. Overall Management Comment**

The Master Vendor contract is a planned strategy to work towards reducing the level of agency spends and to better understand where and how we use agency workers.

The current usage continues to cover extra workload, vacancy, sickness absence and short-term cover whilst Service Reviews are taking place and to cope with sudden surges of demand. This will require the need for scarce skills and workers during these reviews; organisational restructures and sudden peaks in demand.

In terms of the cost of using agency workers, it is important to note that not all the cost is in addition to normal staffing spend. Although agency cover associated with sickness absence in front line services is often an additional cost, in the case of agency cover for vacant posts the cost will be funded at least in part by the relevant staffing budget due to increase in demand of services.

Where opportunities exist for bulk recruitment campaigns to front line essential services, the Human Resources Recruitment Team will continue to work with service managers to identify workers, who are available for casual, temporary or permanent work in order to reduce the use of agency workers.

However, some roles continue to be hard to recruit particularly as we notice a skills shortage across the wider labour market which in turn creates a highly competitive employee led market place which is candidate driven. This is becoming more notable in areas that require legislative knowledge and experience as well as those of a specialist skill set. Although it should be noted with the further changes to IR35 which will extend to the private sector in April 2020, this may will improve recruitment/ and or candidates available through agencies.

In the case of children's social workers there has been some success with the current campaign which has been evolved to make extensive use of social media and other recruitment initiative to attract talent. Nevertheless, recruitment of experienced, high quality children's social workers continues to be difficult reflecting the national shortage of experienced social workers.

The new Master Vendor contract started on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2018 and is now embedded fully across the authority. The new contract is joint with Solihull and again is a hybrid Master Vendor.

The need for managers to ensure that the process of filling vacancies is undertaken at the earliest opportunity has been communicated to senior management teams and this has been reflected in the process to be used for the new contract.

The requirement that all engagement of agency staff be approved by senior management has been communicated to management teams. This requirement has been built into the set-up for the new contract. Combined with a consistent approach in the way data is recorded and collected should allow for governance and monitoring on the use of agency workers.

## **7. Results of consultation undertaken**

- 7.1 The report sets out the steps the Council is taking to reduce expenditure on agency workers, particularly in those areas where they are used most intensively.
- 7.2 Officers will continue to bring the monitoring information to the Cabinet Member and steps will continue to be taken to endeavour to reduce the level of expenditure.
- 7.3 Management Information has given the opportunity for the Recruitment Team to target large areas with high usage of agency workers to try and reduce the need for agency workers. This work is ongoing.

## **8. Timetable for implementing this decision**

Not applicable

## **9. Comments from the Director of Finance and Corporate Services**

### **9.1 Financial implications**

Quarterly monitoring of expenditure on agency workers will continue throughout the contract.

Reed operate a live management accounts system which places the cost of agency workers in the period the work took place rather than the period in which the Council was billed for or paid the related invoices. The system shows the volume of agency activity/usage in a particular quarter irrespective of when invoices are paid.

Reeds system only incorporates timesheets authorised by managers and therefore the costs for a particular quarter will have a small tendency to increase throughout the year as more timesheets are authorised. We actively work with the master vendor to keep outstanding timesheets to a minimum.

Spend outside of the Reed contract, relates to the invoices paid during the relevant period. This expenditure relates to both temporary workers supplied by agencies other than Reed and to interim workers who operate under a PSC (Personal Service Company) with whom we contract directly.

### **9.2 Legal implications**

There are no specific legal implications associated with this report.

## 10. Other implications

10.1 The Agency Worker Contract arrangement provides good value for money in relation to the procurement of agency workers. It also provides firmer controls on the use of agency workers and has in place sound management reporting to see where spend is taking place to target recruitment, maximise resources, and reduce spend on agency workers.

10.2 How is risk being managed?

There may be a risk to the Council where managers go outside of the Reed and contract directly with workers with the advent of changes to IR35 arrangements. There have been numerous communications across the Council to inform managers of changes and this will continue.

10.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

Through the rigorous monitoring of agency worker usage and alternative strategies for resourcing short-term work requirements, the dependency on agency workers should be reduced. The Council's Policy on the use of agency workers states that Agency Workers should only be used when:

- Proper recruitment processes have failed to secure an appointment and staff cover has become crucial to the delivery of services.
- Short-term temporary cover is required until proper recruitment processes have been completed and an appointment is made.
- Unplanned absences that require immediate cover to ensure continuity of services.
- Unplanned, short-term or peak workloads occur.

Human Resources are proactively supporting managers to reduce agency spend.

10.4 Equalities / EIA

The master vendor has made considerable efforts to ensure that the equalities monitoring form is completed.

No equality impact assessment has been carried out as the recommendations do not constitute a change in service or policy.

10.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

None

10.6 Implications for partner organisations?

None

**Report author(s):****Name and job title:**

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