

**Committee: General Purposes Committee**

**Date: 12 March 2015**

Wards: All

Subject: Report on the use of temporary workers and consultants

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**Recommendations:**

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1. To note progress made to monitor and control the use of temporary workers and consultants.
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**1. Purpose of report and executive summary**

- 1.1. At its meeting on the 12<sup>th</sup> March 2014 the Committee received a report from the Council's external auditors Ernst and Young "Review of anonymous whistleblowing statement".
- 1.2. Further progress reports were considered at meetings in June, September and November 2014. This latest report provides Members with an update of key actions taken by officers and the monitoring data of all current interim appointments (attached as Appendix 1)

**2. Details**

- 2.1 Set out below are the recommendations made at the 12 March 2014 meeting of this Committee and an update on the actions taken since then.
- 2.2 **Original Recommendation 2 - that officers should report all prospective interim and consultancy positions to HR and that HR should be responsible for maintaining a central database of all prospective and live roles filled by interim and consultancy appointments; and that a mechanism is built in to allow monitoring of this register at Member level;**
- 2.3 Appendix 1 attached to this report sets out the latest central database for all types of interim placement across the Council, shown by department.

- 2.4 The database is updated on a monthly basis and double-checked with departments for accuracy.
- 2.5 **Original Recommendation 3 - HR should challenge departments on their use of long term interim appointments, the rates which are being paid and ensure that external recruitment is considered.**
- 2.6 The data about interim and consultancy placements is broken down by department and sent to each Department Management Team (DMT) on a monthly basis to review. HR attends monthly meetings of each DMT to review all the placements and to challenge on-going placements, especially where they are longer term.
- 2.7 **Original Recommendation 4 - HR should be involved in any recruitment process, including the recruitment of interim managers.**
- 2.8 Arrangements are in place for HR to be involved in all interim appointments and the single database provides a means of HR taking an overview of such appointments, together with the means to ensure compliance.
- 2.9 The new Temporary Worker Register has been compiled and is updated on a monthly basis in conjunction with DMT's to ensure accuracy of the data – see 2.6 above. A definition of interim and consultancy work has been signed-off by CMT to maintain the integrity of the data and ensure consistency of approach across the Council. The definition of roles has also been developed to assist managers in sourcing the most appropriate worker for the work to be covered
- 2.10 Comensura has agreed to develop their system (CNet) to record both temporary worker as well as consultant information in a complete and contemporaneous manner. The cost to use this facility will be £50 per consultant.
- 2.11 Assignment extension approval - Comensura will amend the extension rights across Merton so that extensions can only be completed by Comensura to achieve improved control. In order to extend, Comensura require written confirmation along with the signed recruitment form from either the HR Contracts Manager or the Comensura Relationship Adviser.
- 2.12 New order template - once an order has been submitted by a hiring manager, they are able to attach extra documents to the order. The manager can attach their business case (or the Recruitment Authorisation form) in this section, which is visible to the order approvers. It is the responsibility of the ordering manager to remember to attach the business case – CNet cannot mandate an extra document being attached to the order.

2.13 The trend continues with by far the largest group of interim workers being “on contract” agency and interim staff appointed through the Council’s corporate contracts for the supply of agency staff. These are all engaged with the involvement and oversight of the HR function with a data base that supplies monthly reports to Council managers.

2.14 As at the end of January 2015 the Council employed 153 interim workers at £30 per hour (or more) compared to 143 reported in November 2014 and 177 reported at the September meeting of the Committee, i.e. an increase of 10 (6%) from November although a 13% reduction from September 2014. Appendix 1 refers to the detail and composition of the interim workforce.

Whilst the overall number of interims engaged at £30 per hour (or more) has increased slightly the number that have been sourced on-contract through corporate contracts has improved since September 2014 with 126 on-contract placements (82%) reflecting work undertaken to ensure, where possible, corporate contracts are used as they provide better value for the Council. This represents a 7% improvement compared with 75% reported to Committee in September.

2.15 Running concurrently with the work to monitor and control interim placements is a Council-wide establishment exercise to be completed within iTrent to provide a comprehensive view of the workforce and is scheduled for 31 March 2015 completion.

2.16 **Original Recommendation 5 - The Council should review its interview process and its policy on the number of interviewers required, including in relation to the appointment of interim managers.**

2.14 Following Members’ approval at the 26<sup>th</sup> June 2014 meeting of the Committee the necessary procedural changes have been made and publicised.

2.15 **Original Recommendation 6 - The Council should review its policy on declarations of interest to include personal friendships.**

2.16 Members approved changes to the Council’s “Managing relationships at work” policy to ensure that an emphasis was placed on avoiding personal bias in the appointment of all interim positions and this revised policy defines appropriate actions for officers to follow.

2.17 **Original Recommendation 7 – The Council should communicate to all officers any revisions it makes to its procurement procedure.**

Interim measures, including the maintenance of the new database, and policy changes have been made. Further communications will be made to support the launch of the C-Net system changes set out under section 2.4 above for the 31 March 2015 go live.

### **3. Consultation undertaken or proposed**

- 3.1 CMT has been consulted on all the work associated with the interim workers' definitions and systems development

### **4. Timetable**

- 4.1 Work to develop a single, electronic database and authorisation process within the Comensura system, C-Net, will be completed for 31 March 2015

### **5. Financial, resource and property implications**

- 5.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from the actions contained in the report.

### **6. Legal and statutory implications**

- 6.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from the report

### **7. Human rights, equalities and community cohesion implications**

- 7.1 The amendments that have been made to the Council's HR policies and processes will improve confidence in the Council's HR recruitment procedure and the maintenance of the interim position database to provide the means to ensure compliance with Members' requirements.

### **8. Crime and Disorder implications**

- 8.1 None

### **9. Risk management and health and safety implications**

- 9.1 These are detailed in the Ernst and Young report of 12 March 2014.

### **10. Appendices – the following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report**

- 10.1 Appendix 1 - Summary data of the Council's current interim positions

### **11. Background papers**

- 11.1 Reports of 12 March, 26<sup>th</sup> June and 17 September and 6 November 2014 to General Purposes Committee