

Overview and Scrutiny Review – Cost of Consultants to the Authority

Equality Impact Assessment – screening.

Name of Strategy/Policy: Overview and Scrutiny Review: To investigate the costs of consultants and agency staff to the Authority.

Date of Assessment: **13 July 2009, updated on 5th August 2009**

Is this a new or updated Policy? New Updated

How is the Strategy/Policy finalised/adopted: Cabinet/Board Delegated

Lead Officer conducting the assessment: **Tracy Tiff** Job Title: **Scrutiny Officer**

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Others involved in the assessment (*this could include service users, front line officers, people with specialist knowledge or interest*):

Councillor Tony Clarke, Chair, Cost of Consultants Task and Finish Group

Rebecca Smith, Assistant Head of Finance,

Identify what the activity is trying to achieve – why is the Policy/activity¹ required (*is there a statutory duty, how was the issue identified, who was the originator of the activity, etc*).

A previous Overview and Scrutiny Review into Historic Buildings and Regeneration was undertaken which noted the use of consultants in Planning Services. At the work programming stage, Councillor Tony Clarke raised the issue of the employment of consultants by the Authority and asked that a Review of this issue be included onto the Work Programme. This request was agreed as was that the Review could commence in the summer 2009.

The expected outcomes of the Review are: -

- To establish the cost of consultants and Agency workers to the Authority as defined by the Task and Finish Group and whether value for money is provided.

¹ Policy/activity in this context includes policies, services, strategies, functions, projects, plans, restructures, major events, etc

- To make recommendations for improvement, as appropriate

Purpose of the Policy/activity. *(What does the activity entail? Consider how the activity relates to the council's equality and diversity duties and strategic priorities, etc).*

The purpose of the Review was agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Cost of Consultants Task and Finish Group as: -

- To investigate the reasons for the use of consultants at Northampton Borough Council
- To investigate the reasons for the use of agency labour at Northampton Borough Council
- To consider the alternatives to using consultants
- To consider the alternatives to using agency labour
- To assess the risks involved in implementing these alternatives
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the work undertaken by consultants within the authority and determine the impact on the existing staff base
- To consider the costs involved by the Council in using consultants and to compare these costs to other similar local authorities, department by department, for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
- To consider the costs involved by the Council in using agency labour and to compare these costs to other similar local authorities, department by department, for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
- To examine the procurement arrangements associated with consultants department by department, for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
- To examine the procurement arrangements associated with agency labour department by department, for the years 2005/06 and 2007/08
- To examine the procedure for the procurement arrangements associated with consultants and how this is budgeted for and financed
- To examine whether the use of consultants is a skilling or de-skilling process

Compliance with the procurement guidelines will also be investigated.

Identify the main beneficiaries or people affected by the issue *(who benefits or is affected - local residents and users of area, community at large, visitors to the town, contractors working in the area, people delivering the service etc).*

Main beneficiaries to the review are members, who will have more information available on the costs of consultants and agency staff and value for money in that area.

Main people who could be affected are managers, agency staff and consultants.

What information exists already?

The meeting of the Task and Finish Group of 12 August 2009 will be furnished with baseline data - detailed information for all NBC departments regarding spend in relation to consultants and Agency employees for the periods 2005/06 and 2007/08.

A copy of the minutes of that meeting [insert link when meeting taken place and minutes then produced](#)

The Scrutiny Officer carried out desktop research and found that guidance is available to Local Authorities regarding the employment of consultants and agency workers. *Transforming the procurement of temporary, agency and interim staff: your toolkit for success* was commissioned by the London Centre of Excellence (LCE) who gave grant funding to the London Borough of Havering in 2005/06 to analyse the use of agency staff, and to find ways of achieving cashable and non-cashable savings in the procurement of this element of the workforce. A briefing note detailing the salient points contained the Toolkit has been produced and can be located [insert link when finalised and published on Intranet](#)

The Assistant Head of Finance will provide to the Task and Finish Group, at its meeting on 12 August 2009, base line data - detailed information for all Northampton Borough Council (NBC) departments regarding spend in relation to consultants and Agency employees for the periods 2005/06 and 2007/08.

Request have been issued to a number of Local Authorities for details of their Agency Staff and Consultant, department by department; spend over the periods being investigated by the Review.

. The Council has a Procurement Strategy which was formally adopted at Cabinet at its meeting on 3 March 2008

Which parts of the activity have the potential for adverse impact or to discriminate unlawfully? (*Factors or issues that could contribute to inequality, consider risks and opportunities*).

The review itself has limited potential for adverse impact or unlawful discrimination, but there is a risk that any recommendations generated by the review could have an impact.

This activity was generated because there it was felt that there was a need to investigate the use of consultants and agency staff at the Council. This could have a potential adverse impact on permanent staff, currently employed agency staff and consultants, local residents (i.e. local jobs for local people), Small to Medium Enterprises (SME) and Black and Minority Enterprises.

The London Centre of Excellence (LCE) gave grant funding to the London Borough of Havering in 2005/06 to produce guidance: *Transforming the procurement of temporary, agency and interim staff: your toolkit for success* asks the Local Authority to consider, amongst other questions:-

How important is the issue of supporting Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and Black and Minority Enterprises in your authority? It is recognised in the Toolkit that many Employment Agencies could be SMEs or Black and Minority Enterprises and any changes to the employment of consultants and agency staff could have an impact on these.

If, as part of the evidence gathering, this is found to be the case, this would have to be investigated.

Equality and diversity – The Toolkit stresses that it is important that Agencies use policies that treat candidates and workers fairly. The database can track diversity issues and also compare that to the candidates not selected for posts to ascertain whether there are any trends.

From the evidence received **add further information as Review starts to evidence gather**

This Overview and Scrutiny Review is being undertaken to identify the evidence that will help to make recommendations for improvement. The evidence should also help to identify whether certain diverse sectors are not included in....

Could a particular sector of the community be disadvantaged by the strategy/policy.

Yes No (give details of any evidence you may have)

It is possible that those people, with multiple characteristics, that have been employed as an agency worker or consultant outside the period of time being investigated may feel disadvantaged. The actual time periods were suggested by the Task and Finish Group so that they sampled periods of time from two separate Administrations. This was the period of time that the Overview and Scrutiny Review therefore concentrated upon. It is hoped that the report will provide data to inform Cabinet and follow any recommendations that may arise

If no, then have this confirmed by the Corporate Equalities Steering Group representative for your area and signed off by your Service Head / Corporate Director/ Board. In the event of any queries, check with a member of the Policy team.

Action points (please make this SMART-state what/who/how/when See action plan below)

See Action Plan

1. The data gathered would be reviewed and appropriate recommendations made.

2. If it is found that it is difficult to obtain evidence due to a lack of data, it may be necessary to consider monitoring to improve data intelligence. If required this will be undertaken using the principles set out in the EIA Toolkit.
3. It is possible that a recommendation contained in the final report could be that further work be undertaken at a later date. If this were the case a recommendation would be made to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee in this respect.
4. It is possible that some groups, for example SMEs and Black Minority Enterprises, may be disadvantaged from some of the recommendations contained in the final report.

I agree that this policy/activity should not proceed to a full Impact Assessment (If appropriate, date equality impact assessment will commence)

Confirmed by:

Signed by:

Please attach a copy of this screening to the document it relates

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Copy to be sent to Policy Team Leader at policy@northampton.gov.uk

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