

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held remotely on Tuesday, 23 March 2021

Commenced 5.00 pm
Concluded 6.35 pm

Present – Councillors

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT AND INDEPENDENT GROUP
Azam D Green Watson Tait	Bibby Riaz	Reid

Observers: Councillors Winnard and Pollard.

Apologies: Councillor Kamran Hussain and Councillor Mohammed Shafiq

Councillor Azam in the Chair

1. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest in matters under discussion.

2. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

No request to remove the restriction on a report or background paper was made.

3. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no referrals to the Committee.

4. AWARD OF A CONTRACT FOR TEMPORARY AGENCY AND EXECUTIVE INTERIM STAFFING

The Strategic Director of Corporate Resources submitted a report (**Document “AC” – which included Not for Publication Appendix 2**) which advised members of a forthcoming procurement from a national framework agreement for the award of a contract for a temporary agency and executive interim staffing contract. The value of the proposed contract was in excess of £2 million and in

line with the requirements of Contract Standing Orders, (CSO 7.2.1), a report had to be produced to allow members to consider matters prior to the commencement of the procurement process.

Members were advised that the approach recommended in the report would mean a saving to the Council to an amount of £371,000 based on current usage, with the opportunity for additional future savings, which was the reason for its recommendation. It was also reported that a change to the neutral vendor could mean increased risk and uncertainty for the Council, which was why that was not recommended.

It was also reported that the proposed contract provided an improved opportunity for top management recruitment and would also mean savings could be made and that benefits of the proposed contract could also be offered to schools. Members were advised that HMRC was pleased with the Council's approach.

Officers also reported on the number of agency workers who had been with the Council for over a year and for which department they principally worked. The success that had been achieved with day care staff in Adult Services was also reported.

It was expected that the proposed contract would be extremely helpful in recruiting to hard to fill posts.

In conclusion, it was stressed that the current neutral vendor offered a great deal of flexibility and that changing that risked high levels of upheaval and uncertainty, while the new contract would offer good commercial benefits. It was hoped that the number of temporary staff could be reduced over time, which would then allow the Council's options to be reconsidered.

The chair of the Committee asked questions in respect of:-

- How long the current contract had been in place ?
- Was cost based on usage ?
- The value of the current contract
- How value for money was ensured
- Was there any flexibility in terms of the length of the contract ?
- Was it the intention to aim to reduce agency staff numbers to zero ?

In response, he was advised that the current contract had been in place for four years, which was the usual term; that volume of use did not form part of the terms of the contract; that the average spend was detailed in appendix 1 of the report and was a significant sum; that the contract was monitored closely to ensure value for money in terms of salaries offered; that although there would be a commitment to a new contract, it offered a good deal of flexibility in terms of how staff were engaged and that it was not the intention to have no agency staff as they has a valuable part to play as part of the overall Council workforce.

It was further explained that each Strategic Director must sign off any agency staff requests and that part of that process included justification of why it was required. Without that justification, recruitment could not proceed.

The high level of agency staff within Children's Services was discussed in some

detail and it was explained that it was part of a natural cycle of events following on from the recent OFSTED inspection. The specific issues around recruiting and mentoring newly qualified social workers and the national picture of recruitment were explained. It was particularly highlighted that Bradford was successful at retaining students and newly qualified social workers.

A member also asked if COVID had made an impact on agency recruitment and was advised that it had made things very difficult as it was not known how long restrictions would continue for nor how long additional funding would be in place.

A member expressed some concern that this report should have been presented to members much earlier in the process and was advised that the report represented a strategy for members to comment on. In response to further questions, he was advised that the savings described did include the YPO dividend and that officers would provide the total spend figure for YPO after the meeting.

He was also advised that “off contract” spend indicated instances where managers had attempted recruitment without following the proper process and which then caused problems with payment of those staff.

The same member then went on to query the use of this process for recruitment to top management positions and was advised that it would mean that there were no tender costs for such recruitment in future and that the neutral vendor could engage with a wide variety of agencies on the Council’s behalf.

In response to another question, officers undertook to provide a breakdown of introduction fees in previous years.

It was also confirmed that the e-learning package would be ready in mid-April and would provide a handy refresher for managers. It was also stressed that improved checks and balances would also mean greater compliance and reduce irregularities in recruitment in future.

Resolved –

- 1. That the report and that the option that the Council should make a direct call off from the National ESPO, (Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation) framework: MStar 3 653F_19 Managed Services for Temporary Agency Resource Lot 1A, be noted.**
- 2. That this Committee requests that officers take into consideration the comments raised by members, during this procurement process.**

Action: Strategic Director, Corporate Resources.

5. HATE CRIME SCRUTINY REVIEW

The Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee submitted a report (**Document “AD”**) which contained the findings from the Hate Crime Scrutiny Review.

The Chair opened the discussion by regretting that there had been an increase in hate crime. He stressed the need to speak up about hate crime and to tackle it in conjunction with key partners. He thanked everyone who had given their time to the review.

A member noted that some reporting centres had high levels of crime reported while others had none at all. He was advised that all centres were used for other purposes so it was not clear why some had no results at all. The Community Co-ordinator, Prevent undertook to raise the matter with the Alliance. Members also noted that the cost of training staff in the centres in respect of hate crime was an issue when those staff then left their posts.

A member also expressed concern about possible underreporting of hate crime, especially among particular groups such as people with disabilities. He stressed the need to support victims and challenge views which lead to hate crime.

The Chair concurred with that and stressed the need for members to be fully involved in such efforts.

A member considered that a good way to encourage member participation would be to publish the statistics on a ward by ward basis.

Members also considered that it was important to present the finding of the review to full Council at the next possible meeting to inform all members.

Resolved –

- 1. That the findings contained within the Draft Hate Crime Scrutiny Review Report, be adopted.**
- 2. That the Hate Crime Scrutiny Review report be referred to Council to be endorsed, at its next business meeting.**

Action: Overview & Scrutiny Lead

Chair

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

THESE MINUTES HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ON RECYCLED PAPER