

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR HR AND CUSTOMER SERVICE****VACANCY CONTROL – IMPACT ON WORKFORCE****Purpose of the Report:**

1. To provide Personnel Committee with the first quarter's update, as at 31<sup>st</sup> August 2013, on the implementation of the new Vacancy Control Process, approved by this Committee on 12th June 2013. This data has been drawn from the monitoring data held by the HR Service.

**Information and Advice:**

2. The revised Vacancy Control Process was introduced in June 2013 with an overall aim of helping to ensure that the Council can respond to the increasing financial challenges facing it over the next three years whilst minimising the need for compulsory redundancies as far as possible.
3. The intention is that the Council will be better able to plan for and achieve necessary future staffing reductions arising from the current programme of service reviews with the minimum of service disruption and risk, whilst also minimising the number and cost of redundancies arising.
4. Vacancy Control is one of a set of measures being taken by the Council (including redeployment and seeking expressions of interest in voluntary redundancy), intended to support the Council in minimising and mitigating against the impact of post deletions arising from the Council's response to its increasing financial challenges.
5. The Vacancy Control Process covers all permanent and temporary posts across the Council with a number of designated post exceptions predominantly in key front line service areas as detailed in paragraph 12 below.
6. Requests for agency workers or consultants should also be routed through the process.
7. The process requires managers to initially consider whether the post can be deleted as part of budgetary savings and aims to fill posts on a fixed term, temporary basis wherever possible.

**Monitoring of the Vacancy Control Process:**

8. As part of the process, managers are required to send all Vacancy Control Decision Records signed off directly by their Corporate Director or a designated Service Director, to the HR Service, prior to advertising or deleting the post.
9. All Decision Records are logged in HR and the HR Business Partner responsible for advising the respective service area will check the form to ensure it complies with the process endorsed by this Committee and provide challenge if it does not. The form requires HR sign-off before a copy is sent as approval to advertise together with the recruitment documentation.

**Outcomes to date:**

10. The data set out in the appendix to this report highlights the number of decision records that were received in the first quarter of the operation of the process, between 3rd June 2013 and 31<sup>st</sup> August 2013.
11. During this period 421 vacancies were processed with the following outcomes:
  - Permanent – 80 posts (19%)
  - Fixed Term – 315 posts (74.8%)
  - Agency workers – 24 posts (5.7%)
  - Deleted posts – 2 posts (0.5%)
12. It should be noted that in accordance with the Vacancy Control Process, decision records are not required for front-line posts in the following areas, but only if they are fixed term in nature and advertised by the BSC:
  - Front line qualified child protection social work and child protection social work team managers
  - Children's residential care
  - Regulated services in ASCH
  - School based catering and cleaning staff.
13. The higher number of decisions to appoint permanently to vacant posts in the Children's Social Care division of CFCS highlighted in the appendix relate predominantly to front-line Social Workers.
14. Under the provisions of the Vacancy Control Process, when a vacancy arises, the priority for managers is to determine if the post can be deleted, either now or in the future, to contribute to budgetary savings. The data set out in the appendix highlights that, to date, only a very small proportion, **0.5%**, of those posts considered under the process have been put forward for deletion.
15. This reflects the need to maintain continuity of service delivery whilst the proposals to restructure and redesign services to deliver savings set out in Outline Business Cases (OBC's), were under development.
16. An inevitable consequence of the on-going application of the Vacancy Control process over time is that the need to maintain service continuity whilst these service reviews are implemented will result in the Council's workforce becoming increasingly temporary and flexible in nature.

17. In addition, in critical service areas such as Children's Social Care, a further consequence will be a reliance on agency workers to maintain key specialist service provision.
18. Further work will therefore be undertaken to assess the on-going impact of the Vacancy Control process on the nature of the Council's workforce, particularly in light of any proposals to reduce staffing numbers as part of the service review and budget setting process.
19. A commitment has been given to elected members on Personnel Committee to provide them with updates on the outcomes from the vacancy control process on a quarterly basis, the next report to the 29<sup>th</sup> January 2014 meeting of this Committee will show the situation as at 30<sup>th</sup> November 2013.

### **Other Options Considered**

20. The potential to remove any form of vacancy control process and leave the management of this entirely at the discretion of individual managers was considered. It was determined that robust and consistent corporate control and monitoring is necessary to effectively manage and minimise the impact of increased financial pressures on staffing levels and the potential for compulsory redundancies and this was the model agreed by Personnel Committee on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2013.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

21. To monitor and review the effectiveness of the Vacancy Control measures put in place to ensure that the Council is able to plan for and achieve necessary future staffing reductions with the minimum of service disruption and risk whilst also minimising the number and cost of redundancies arising and the proportion of these that are compulsory; ensuring legal compliance with regard to the employers duty towards staff at risk of redundancy.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

22. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, the public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Human Resources Implications**

23. The human resources implications are implicit in the body of the report. A commitment has been given to the recognised trade unions to provide them, through the Central Joint Consultative and Negotiating Panel, with the data set out in this report, updated thereafter on a quarterly basis.

### **Equalities implications**

24. The proposals within this report will provide a structure and level of scrutiny to ensure consistency and fairness of process application across the whole Authority.

## **Financial Implications**

The proposals within this report will help to ensure that the Council can respond to the increasing financial challenges facing it over the next three years whilst containing the impact on redundancies as far as possible.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Personnel Committee:

1. Note the contents of this report and the impact on the profile of the Council's workforce.
2. Receive future vacancy control update reports on a quarterly basis.
3. Receive an update on the use of agency workers at the next Committee meeting.

**Marjorie Toward**  
**Service Director HR and Customer Service**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

Claire Gollin, Group Manager HR on 0115 9773837 or [claire.gollin@nottsc.gov.uk](mailto:claire.gollin@nottsc.gov.uk)

## **Constitutional Comments (KK 28.10.13)**

25. The proposals in this report are within the remit of the Personnel Committee.

## **Financial Comments (SEM 29.10.13)**

26. The financial implications are set out in the report.

## **Background Papers and Published Documents**

None

## **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All