

Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee  
13 March 2013

**Follow up of Task Group Report on the Management of  
Vacancies**

**Purpose of the report:** Scrutiny of Services

To provide an update following the recommendations made by the Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 1 February 2013 regarding the management of vacancies.

**Introduction:**

- 1 At its meeting on 1 February 2013, the Committee considered the report of the Task Group investigating the management of staff vacancies in the County Council. This report is an update on the implementation of the recommendations.

**Detail:**

- 2 The Task Group made the following recommendations:
  - (a) That a policy is formulated to define what constitutes a vacant position in the organisation structure.
  - (b) That criteria are established which vacant positions must meet in order to remain in the organisation structure together with the operating budget allowance.
  - (c) That the definition and criteria be consistently applied in all services in the management of their business plans.
- 3 The responses to the recommendations are set out below.

#### 4 Recommendation (a)

Definitions (see also the definitions set out in Annexe 1 of the Task Group report):

<b>Establishment Budget</b> - The budget for the staff needed to provide the service. This comprises the budgeted Full Time Equivalent (FTE) positions.
<b>Filled Position</b> – This is a position filled by a member of the contracted staff
<b>Occupied Position</b> – A position unfilled by contracted staff may, nonetheless, be occupied by, for example, an agency worker
<b>Vacancy</b> – A vacancy is a position which is being actively recruited to and where authority to recruit has been granted. A vacancy may arise in a filled position where a hiring manager is recruiting whilst a leaver is working their notice, or in an occupied position where we are trying to displace an agency worker, or in a position within the establishment budget that is unoccupied.
<b>Authority to recruit</b> – A hiring manager has authority to recruit when they have both Head of Service approval and available establishment budget

#### 5 Recommendation (b)

##### 5.1 Control of Staffing Costs

The key overall control for staffing costs is the establishment budget. In setting the establishment budget the number of FTE's required to deliver the service is considered as well as the Council's ability to afford that cost. Establishment budget will be spent on a mix of staff of the types described in Annexe 1, and are intended to comprise both Filled and Occupied Positions but, inevitably, there will be occasions when positions are unoccupied and some of this is potential underspend is budgeted for by the use of the 'vacancy factor' described in the Task group report.

- 5.2 The key operational control is the 'Authority to Recruit' which requires a hiring manager to have both available establishment budget and Head of Service approval.
- 5.3 In conducting budget monitoring and forecasting budget managers review filled, occupied and unoccupied positions.
- 5.4 Should there no longer be a requirement for a position it would have a zero forecast for the rest of the financial year.
- 5.5 In Quarterly forecasting, such forecast underspends of establishment budget may be removed from a cost centre and transferred to another part of the Service or the Directorate or held as a projected Directorate underspend. In such cases hiring managers would no longer have Authority to Recruit and any such positions could be delimited in the Organisation Management structure.

## 6 Recommendation (c)

- 6.1 This should be applied by identifying the forecast underspends using the forecasting tool in the new Finance Dashboard. Detailed roll out plans for the Dashboard within the next financial year are yet to be confirmed.
- 6.2 The Authority to Recruit process should be implemented within the recruitment system (applicant tracking system –ATS).
- 6.3 In many instances it would not be possible to identify on the Organisation Management (OM) structure which agency or Bank staff are occupying a position due to the volumes and very short term nature of the contracts. The practicality of identifying any long term agency contracts on OM should be investigated further.

<b>Recommendations:</b>
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- (a) That the Committee reviews progress on the proposals to meet the Task Group's recommendations.
- (b) That, if the Committee feels the proposals would fulfil the recommendations, the proposals be explored with Directorate leadership teams to confirm their feasibility.

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**Report contact:** Neil Bradley, HR Group Manager

**Contact details:** 020 8541 9624

**Sources/background papers:** Council Overview & Scrutiny - Task Group Report, 1 February 2013