

Questions from Finance & Resources Scrutiny Review to Heads of Service – Legal, Licensing & Registrars

Question	Response
1. How would you define the term consultant ?	A consultant is usually an expert or a professional in a specific field who has a wide knowledge of the subject matter. A consultant usually works for a consultancy firm or is self-employed, and engages with multiple and changing clients. Use of consultants enable the City Council to have access to deeper levels of expertise than would be feasible for it to retain in-house, and to purchase only as much service from the outside consultant as desired. Consultant costs include all externally purchased intellectual services such as advice, reports and consultation. Consultants usually work on specific projects to deliver a specific outcome.
2. What distinction do you use to define between consultant, agency and temporary staff?	Temporary or agency staff are usually employed for the short to medium term to cover a particular situation eg a vacant post cannot be filled because the salary offered is well below market rates, to cover for a member of staff on long term sickness, or to cover a vacancy pending the outcome of a structural review. Generally, agency staff would be used in preference to consultants because they are usually cheaper and the higher skill levels of a consultant are not always necessary for every post.
3. How many temporary/agency or consultant staff have you employed for: More than 6 months over the last 2 years More than 12 months over the last 2 years	11 5
4. Please list all those at 4 above and provide reasons for their employment	Legal Services - 11 people see Appendix A Register Office - 5 people see Appendix A

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	It should be noted that in 2010/11 temporary staffing has been reduced.
5. How do you budget for temporary/agency/consultant staff?	Legal Services has specific budgetary provision for agency and temporary staff. The engagement of consultants for specific projects would be directly recharged to the requesting client department. The use of agency staff would be to cover for vacant posts and were either unable to fill them or wanted to avoid making a permanent appointment until a structural review had been completed so that we could protect existing staff from the threat of redundancy by offering redeployment. The costs would be funded from the savings on the vacant post.
6. How do you evaluate the cost-effectiveness of using such staff rather than employ to these posts?	Preference would be to appoint permanent staff but in the current economic situation when the number of posts is contracting it may be more cost effective in the short term to use temporary staff and avoid redundancy payments. The Members Panel who review requests to advertise vacant posts will sometimes instruct managers to appoint temporary staff rather than permanent ones even though it is often more expensive. Legal Services also utilise preferred specialist suppliers to maintain the integrity of the required service to clients e.g Barristers.
7. What is the impact on staff morale from using consultants or agency staff?	The use of consultants is recognised as filling a requirement for specific expertise that cannot be provided in-house. In many cases staff are pleased to have temporary or agency staff to cover vacancies rather than having to struggle to cover their own tasks as well as those of the vacancy. Over the last twelve months Legal Services have reduced the use of legal consultants and built up its own in-house team.
8. What other options do you consider or are available?	The in-house agency is used wherever possible for administrative staff because the rates charged are cheaper than external agencies. However specific skill sets are sometimes not

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	available and the use of external agencies with wider skill pools would be utilised.
9. How do you determine the skills and abilities of your own staff to assist with providing cover for gaps in service provision, where you employ temporary/agency/consultant staff ?	The service has a workforce plan and all staff now have regular one to ones with their line manager and an annual PDR when training requirements are discussed. Line managers are aware of the abilities and potential of staff in their team and would be able to identify people who could be used to cover specific skill shortfalls. Secondments are also offered to staff as development opportunities. Temporary staff will only be employed by the service as a last resort. Skills analysis and recruiting to bridge knowledge gaps to build up the in-house team.
10. How do you determine the skills and abilities of staff across PCC to assist with providing cover for gaps in service provision, where you employ temporary/agency/consultant staff and are there any barriers to this ?	Each Head of Service is responsible for their own staff and should be using workforce planning and skills audits to identify gaps within their service. Opportunities for secondments to other services are advertised on IntraLink.
11. How much does it cost your service to provide cover for sickness/absence? (excluding the cost of SSP)	Generally we do not cover the posts of staff that are sick by taking on temporary staff, unless the post holder is on long term sick leave. There is no budget provision for this.
12. What time and money is spent on training and developing your own staff to fill "hard to fill" posts from within existing resources?	There is a staff training budget to be used for the development of staff. The service also has trainee positions and when they are qualified will be used to address such skill shortfalls. Legal Services also utilise free courses from the Solicitors in Local Government network. Content is then cascaded to other staff on return.
13. How many temporary/agency/consultants do you engage who cost more than £5k during the lifetime of their contract ? Please list and advise of reasons for employment	This has already been listed at Appendix A in answer to question 4.
14. Have you ever employed as a consultant – a member of staff from PCC who had previously been made redundant	No

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<p>or retired ? If so please provide details of contract and reasons</p>	
<p>15. Please provide a breakdown of consultant and agency staff costs for 2008/09 and 2009/2010 for <u>your service</u> and a summary of how these were funded</p>	<p>2008/09 Agency £348,681 2008/09 Consultancy £0 2009/10 Agency £153,438 2009/10 Consultancy £0</p> <p>This expenditure was funded by the General Fund.</p> <p>It should be noted that Legal Services does not employ consultants for its own service. Consultants, Barristers etc are engaged on behalf of other services and charged directly to that service.</p>

Please complete and return the above questions to;

Anthony Quinn

Senior Local Democracy Officer
 customer, community & democratic services

Tel: 02392-834002 (ext 4002)

The completed returns will be submitted to the scrutiny panel for your work area who will invite you to attend a formal scrutiny meeting in early September to discuss your response and answer any supplementary questions. All responses will be considered by Scrutiny Management Panel at their meeting on 15 September.