



Operational Officer Decision Record

Where the decision has a financial value of between £100k - £350k and does not have a **significant** impact on two or more wards

1. Subject and details of the matter (to include reasons for the decision and detail of any previous cabinet decision)

Award of a Contract for Recruitment of Permanent Staff

The Council has been trying to recruit permanent social workers since 2019 to fill a significant shortfall. However, they have had limited success due to well documented national issues. As a large number of vacancies are being covered by Agency Workers, the Commissioner appointed to assist the transformation of Children's Services has highlighted that there is now an urgent need to fill the shortfall of permanent workers, and that work needs to commence on filling the shortfall in July 2022. As a result, the Council is looking to follow the learning of other local authorities by recruiting and relocating social workers from overseas to fill the current vacancies.

Recruiting permanent social workers will present a saving to the Council, compared with the costs of continuing to use agency social workers to manage the vacancies.

The aim of the contract is to recruit up to 30 permanent social workers from overseas.

The Whole Life Value of the contract is £165,000

The maximum duration of the contract is 24 months.

The requirement to have a contract in place by July means that there is a need to directly award the contract. Therefore, the intention is to directly award the contract for Recruitment of Permanent Staff via the ESPO Strategic HR Services (3S_18) Framework to Tripod Partners Limited who best meet the Council's requirements and represent best value for money.

2. Decision being taken

That the Executive Director for People, Health and Care, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children and Education, awards the contract for the Recruitment of Permanent Staff to Tripod Partners Limited for a maximum of 24 months.

3. Anticipated outcome(s)/benefits

The contract for Recruitment of Permanent Staff is awarded to Tripod Partners Limited via a direct award under the ESPO Strategic HR Services (3S_18) Framework for a maximum of 24 months.

4. Details of any alternative options considered and rejected by the officer when making the decision

Attempts to recruit to permanent vacancies through regional and national campaigns has been unsuccessful. When discussing the issues with other local authorities and their approach to overseas recruitment, Tripod Partners were consistently named as a successful provider. Upon completing a cost analysis for current arrangements vs overseas recruitment opportunities, significant cost savings can be attained.

5. Background documents considered (web link to be included or copies of documents for publishing)

None.

6. Does the taking of the decision include consideration of Exempt information? If yes, specify the relevant paragraph of Schedule 12A and the reasons

No

7. Details of any conflict of interest declared by any Cabinet Member who was consulted by the officer which relates to the decision (in respect of any declared conflict of interest, please provide a note of dispensation granted by the Council's Chief Executive)

No conflicts of interest have been identified.

8. Monitoring Officer Comments (Monitoring Officer or nominee)

Children's social work functions and recruitment thereto are core operational functions of the Council. The approach recommended is a framework contract which has the benefits of approved suppliers already meeting certain benchmarks and flagging agreement in advance to appropriate terms and conditions. Further, the Council may achieve better terms by combining its volume with the other public bodies also taking part.

There are further advantages of assurance in that any such framework by necessity must be compliant with Public Contracts Regulations 2015. A framework approach is considered good practice and comes with its own efficiencies.

9. Section 151 Officer Comments (Deputy S151 Officer or nominee)

In terms of budget for the funding of this contract there is no specific budget available for this. However as stated in the report the Council has a considerable number of social worker vacancies and spends a significant amount on agency social workers. Recruiting 30 social workers would present a considerable cost saving based on current salary levels even after factoring in the contract value.

10. Human Resource Comments (Head of People and Culture or nominee)

Specific advice will be provided in respect of remuneration levels, process and contractual arrangements when recruiting and will comply with the Council's policies and procedures and relevant legislation.

11. Risk Assessment (in accordance with the Report Writing Guide)

Social Worker vacancies and quality of service for our service users is currently a high risk area for the Council and we need to explore every opportunity to improve this situation with pace and urgency.

This direct award approach allows us to operate with pace and urgency to establish a stable Social Care workforce quickly through the recruitment of large numbers of Social Workers. This will improve the quality of care for local children and families in need and present a significant saving to the Council.

If this award is not approved, it will have a direct impact on our ability to safeguard children and will make it difficult to meet the improvement plan which was developed to address the issues raised by Ofsted following their visit in 2021.

12. If the decision links to a previous one taken by Cabinet, has the Cabinet Tracker been updated?

N/A.

Name: Joanne Hewson

Title: Deputy Chief Executive

Signed: REDACTED

Dated: 29.06.22

13. Decision Maker(s):

14. Consultation carried out with Portfolio Holder(s):

Name: Cllr Margaret Cracknell

Title: Portfolio Holder for Children and Education

Signed: REDACTED

Dated: 29th June 2022