

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES DIVISION - STAFF COSTS

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 To seek approval to the continued use of contract staff to cover critical vacancies within the Information Technology Services Division and to note the budget implications of this action.

2. Summary

- 2.1 The continued provision of Information Technology services is critical to the delivery of day to day Council services. In order to provide these Information Technology services it is necessary to cover vacant posts within the Information Technology Division by employing contract Information Technology staff.
- 2.2 Information Technology recruitment difficulties are not specific to Local Government, but are being experienced by a wide range of companies across the country. It is hoped that as the peak of work caused by the millennium subsidies it will become easier to recruit to the vacant posts.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 The Committee is recommended to:
- (a) approve the continued use of contract Information Technology staff to cover critical vacancies within the Information Technology Services Division subject to the budget issues being resolved at Section (B1) of this agenda;
 - (b) note the £600,000 additional budget required to fund the implications of this report and that this has been taken into account at Section (B1) on this agenda; and
 - (c) note that officers are continuing to make every attempt to fill vacancies in order to reduce these costs if at all possible during the year.

4. **Background**

- 4.1 It has been difficult to fill Information Technology posts since Local Government Reorganisation and whilst posts remained vacant the service that the Information Technology Division provided to the Council was inadequate and caused serious operational difficulties in delivering Council services.
- 4.2 At the meeting of this Committee held on 15/29 September 1998 (Minute PR84/99 refers), the Committee approved a payment of 10% per annum for two years to assist in recruiting and retaining Information Technology staff during the time leading up to the millennium.
- 4.3 Whilst the rate of turnover has not been excessively high there has been very limited success in attracting new staff. The Council is heavily dependent upon its Information Technology services and in order to maintain these services it has been necessary to cover vacant posts with contract staff. The cost of contract staff is considerably higher than the cost of permanent staff and if the current vacancy level and use of contract staff were to continue through the rest of this financial year the Information Technology staffing budget would overspend by an estimated £600,000.

5. **Issues and Choices**

- 5.1 Officers have not been able to identify any Information Technology Services that could be suspended or ceased without major impact on the day to day operation of the Council's services.
- 5.2 A significant amount of Information Technology staff resource was assumed to be available when planning the Information Technology preparations for the millennium. The preparations can not be continued as planned without the availability of Information Technology staff that was identified.
- 5.3 Officers are continuing to make every effort to recruit to the vacant posts and there has recently been an improved level of interest following the use of local radio for advertising. The post which was advertised in this way has been upgraded as a result of re-evaluation and more competitive salary is now being offered. A number of other posts will be re-evaluated shortly.
- 5.4 The Information Technology skills market has been and continues to be difficult, causing recruitment problems not just for Local Authorities, but for many private companies also. It is hoped that as the peak of work created by the millennium issue subsides skilled staff, who currently have their pick of contract work, will start to seek permanent employment again.

6. **Implications**

- 6.1 Environmental
None.

6.2 Equalities

None.

6.3 Financial

The table below shows the estimated out turn figures for 1999/2000 assuming the current vacancy level and the current level of cover continues.

	£	
Permanent employee costs estimated out turn 1999/2000	1,426,560	Assumes current staffing levels continue.
Contractor costs estimated out turn 1999/2000	893,000	Assuming continuation of current levels of cover.
Staff costs total estimated out turn 1999/2000	2,319,560	
Total approved budget	1,719,560	
Estimated additional budget requirement	600,000	

6.4 Legal

None.

6.5 Staff and Accommodation

Credit is due to staff within the Information Technology Services Division who are working very positively alongside the contract staff in spite of being very conscious that levels of pay are different for permanent and contract staff.

7. **Conclusions**

7.1 The continued provision of Information Technology services is critical to the delivery of day to day Council services. In order to provide these Information Technology services it is necessary to cover vacant posts within the Information Technology Division by employing contract Information Technology staff. Information Technology recruitment difficulties are not specific to Local Government, but are being experienced by a wide range of companies across the country. It is hoped that as the peak of work caused by the millennium subsidies it will become easier to recruit to the vacant posts.

Background Papers: None