

Agenda Item No 3

Special Sub-Group

23 November, 2011

Report of the Management Team

Council Office Accommodation – Project Management

1 Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the available options for procuring a Project Manager for the Office Accommodation Project and to ask Members to agree which procurement method they wish officers to adopt.

Recommendation to the Sub-Group

That Members note the report and agree their preferred method for procuring a Project Manager

2 Background

- 2.1 At the Special Sub-Group meeting held on 24 October, 2011, Members approved the proposed timetable for procuring a specialist contractor to project manage the design, tendering and delivery of the project.
- 2.2 The initial stages of the procurement process involved scoping the work, evaluating existing and available resources and expertise and researching the available procurement routes and options. Those stages have now been completed and officers have moved on to the task of drawing up the specification for the project manager role.
- 2.3 While scoping the work and evaluating the various options, it has become clear that the appointment of the Project Manager is a critical one. Advice has been sought and received from a number of partner organisations within the Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Property Officers Group and this advice has been fed into the procurement process.
- 2.4 Before finalising the specification and tendering for the post, consideration needs to be given to the procurement route to be taken and the type of individual or organisation which will ultimately be engaged. Although it is envisaged that the Project Management role will be filled by a specified individual, it is anticipated that the services of a larger organisation will be commissioned in order to ensure that sufficient levels of resilience and a suitably wide range of skills are available to the Council throughout the life of the project. It had originally been envisaged that a private sector consultancy would fulfil that role, but several large public sector organisations within the sub-region have made it clear that they too have the skills,

resources and capacity necessary for the task and would like to be considered in any procurement exercise.

- 2.5 The Council must now make a decision on the type of organisation it wishes to appoint to the Project Manager role and, therefore, the procurement path that should be pursued.

3 Procurement Options

- 3.1 There are essentially three options open to the Council:

- Go through a full, advertised, open tender process inviting applications from both the public and private sectors
- Restrict the procurement to a select list of specialist private sector contractors, probably picked from an appropriate public sector framework
- Approach a number of public sector partners from within the sub-region

- 3.2 The first option is the most comprehensive and therefore the costliest and most time-consuming. Open tendering is likely to lead to a high volume of submitted tenders, all of which will have to be assessed in terms of cost and quality before shortlisting and then appointment. It is possible to curtail the process by completing the PQQ assessment at the shortlisting stage, but the initial specification will need to be quite detailed in order that appropriate and fair comparisons can be made between submitted responses and also to avoid lengthy discussions as to the full nature of the required work. This method is, however, the most thorough and will allow officers and Members to compare the costs and methodologies of the widest range of potential service providers.

- 3.3 The second and third options are similar, but aimed at two distinct groups. The Council has access to a number of frameworks from which suitable private sector consultants could be chosen based on their previous experience and expertise. In terms of public sector support, a fairly brief specification could be sent to those organisations which have already expressed an interest. In either case, a mini tendering exercise would be undertaken to obtain detailed cost proposals, ideally fixed and certainly reflecting the total cost for the whole project, rather than hourly rates.

- 3.4 It is anticipated that public sector partners would charge less than private sector consultancies. Any work commissioned through the third option would have to be done on a not-for-profit basis and it is anticipated that their overheads would also be lower. Larger authorities such as Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire County Council have the full range of necessary project management, design and engineering skills within their organisations and currently have sufficient spare capacity due to the recent reductions in major project work resulting from budget constraints. They also have significant experience of similar local authority projects and are used to working with Members and officers. Conversely, the private sector are likely to be more expensive, but will potentially have access to a greater range and depth of ancillary and specialist services.

4 Report Implications

4.1 **Financial Implications**

- 4.1.1 Should Members agree to a partnership approach with a public sector organisation from within the sub-region, it is expected that the project management costs will be kept well below the estimated expenditure on this aspect of the project. If a wider procurement exercise is required, there would be additional costs associated with finalising a more detailed specification (which may be as much as £4,000), but which would be met from established budgets.

The Contact Officer for this report is Richard Dobbs (719440).

Agenda Item No 4

Special Sub-Group

23 November 2011

**Report of the
Assistant Director (Housing)**

**Cover for 24/7 Community Support
Service**

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides information for the Sub-Group about the staffing cover required for the Council's Community Support Service, suggests that additional hours are required and that a part time, temporary post be created. This proposal will allow for the review of the Community Support service to be completed and other options to cover the service be considered.

Recommendation to the Special Sub-Group

- a That a part time (18 hours), temporary Community Support Officer (18 months) be appointed; and**
- b That the review of the Community Support service consider how to effectively cover the 24/7 requirements of the service from the current staffing establishment.**

2 Consultation

2.1 Portfolio Holder, Shadow Portfolio Holder and Ward Members

- 2.1.1 The Housing Portfolio Holder, Councillor Winter and the Shadow Housing Portfolio Holder, Councillor Johnston, have been provided with this report and their comments requested.

3 Background

- 3.1 Over the last few years the Community Support Section has experienced issues of long term sickness.
- 3.2 The nature of the business means that when someone is off sick in the Control Centre their hours have to be covered by bringing other staff in to cover (In other areas of the Council the service would usually manage to cover the work from the reduced level of workforce that is at work and only after it becomes long term sickness, at over 6 weeks, would additional resources be employed.). The additional cover comes from either the relief staff pool of officers (6 contracted for 24 hours a week) or the rota staff pool of officers (9 contracted for 37 hours a week).

- 3.3 In addition to time required for training and team meetings cover for sickness is built into the amount of hours available to the Section to cover the shifts required. Unfortunately over recent years this has been insufficient.
- 3.4 Having to ask staff to do additional hours to accommodate sickness cover means that there are no hours left to allow them to attend team meetings or training sessions. This means that management messages are largely conveyed by e-mail and training is squeezed. This is not conducive to good team working.
- 3.5 The team have worked hard to accommodate the needs of the service. However there are now concerns that being asked to do additional hours is becoming the norm rather than the exception.

4 Detailed Overview of Issue

- 4.1 The number of staff and hours they are expected to work is established in a way that means that the needs of the Council's 24/7 service can be covered and the critical work it does to support elderly tenants remain independent and act in an emergency is not compromised. The following shows the hours available and from what source:

Rota staff = 14787 total available hours (9 staff, contracted 37 hours)
Plus Relief staff = 6393 available hours (6 staff, contracted 24 hours)
Gives a total of = 21180 available

Required hours to cover shifts = 20704 (this takes into account annual leave)

This leaves 39 shifts to cover sick leave, training and team meetings

- 4.2 The relief staff are asked to do a 12 hour shift as part of the rota every week. Their other 12 hours are used flexibly either during the same week if cover is required or future weeks. The flexibility means that if they are not required during a particular week the hours are banked and used as the service requires. This leaves a degree of uncertainty for staff about when they might be called on to cover the work. The reality is that over the last few years when relief staff have been required to provide cover constantly for sickness they have banked a lot of hours but because they are still needed to cover in normal circumstances they are paid for those hours rather than being able to take them as leave/ enjoy a slack period.
- 4.3 This year to date the Relief Staff team has covered an additional 89 shifts over and above their contracted 24 hours a week. This indicates the commitment of the staff to the service but also the level of strain it is under in order to provide the appropriate level of cover.
- 4.5 Any officer working over 37 hours is entitled to time and half as overtime.
- 4.6 The Visiting Officers are paid at Grade 5. The Control Room officers are paid at Grade 6. The Control Room staff are licensed to monitor CCTV – the Visiting Officers are not. The Visiting Officers are not trained as a matter of routine to cover the Borough Care monitoring system. Nonetheless some have been willing to assist and can use the system when cover has been difficult to source.

- 4.7 It is difficult to utilise agency staff to provide cover because of the level of training needed and licence requirement for CCTV.
- 4.8 Recently, in order to cover the work, the Community Support Manager and Supervisor have stepped in and done some shifts.
- 4.9 As stated above the hours which are achieved as part of the current staffing establishment allows for 39 shifts to cover sickness and training and team meetings. Unfortunately the levels of sickness in the Control Centre over the past few years have exceeded this allowance:
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| 2011 to 2012 | = 46 shifts |
| (This has been exacerbated by having two vacancies in the team.) | |
| 2010 to 2011 | = 70 shifts |
| 2009 to 2010 | = 23 shifts |
| 2008 to 2009 | = 75 shifts |
| 2007 to 2008 | = 48 shifts |
- 4.10 Sickness levels are being addressed in the Section. Members can see that there has been a reduction during this year and the Section acts to bring those who have been on long term sick leave back on a phased return as soon as is practical.
- 4.11 It should be noted that the additional shifts needed to cover for sickness is in addition to those needed for training (for example for first aid, manual handling and using defibrillators) and team meetings (which are particularly important given the shift patterns the section works) at which service issues and improvements are addressed.
- 4.12 There is an overtime budget for Community Support to ensure if staff are willing and available to do additional hours they can be paid to do so. The budget is £10,500. Some of this budget is designated for the overtime requirements for bank holidays. This amounts to a requirement of around £3,000.
- 4.13 At the end of 2010 the budget had to be supplemented and the actual spend was £13,600. In addition £4,300 was used from the sickness fund.

5 Options to Address the Shortfalls

- 5.1 The levels of sickness in the Community Support Team have caused increase pressure in the Council's 24/ 7 service. Officers have worked hard to accommodate the additional demand but it is now causing difficulties in the team. Options have been explored to address the issue:
- Use some of the overtime budget and employ an additional relief officer for 18 hours/ week
 - As part of Community Support review consider including in the Visiting Officer role cover for the Control Room.
 - Ask Visiting Officer staff whether they would be willing to provide casual cover on an ad hoc basis in extreme circumstances.
 - Consider practicalities of offering a stand by arrangement for relief staff to allow a little certainty over when they might be called on urgently.
 - Control Centre Supervisor provides cover during the day when shifts cannot be covered.

- 5.2 There are a number of options to explore. This will take time and needs to be part of broader considerations in the Community Support review. In the meantime it is clear that Relief Officers have been under pressure for some time to provide additional hours over the 24 that they are contracted for. (Most have opted for a job which requires only 24 hours commitment a week because they have circumstances which mean that 37 hours is not something they choose.) This means an interim solution is proposed:
- Appoint an additional Relief Officer at 18 hours/ week for 18 months
 - Control Centre Supervisor move into the Control Room and be able to provide day time support/ shift cover.
 - Asked Visiting Officer staff whether they would be willing to provide casual cover on an ad hoc basis in extreme circumstances.
 - Informal standby (essentially agreed list of who doesn't mind being contacted)
- 5.3 This proposal would require a large chunk of the overtime budget. Assuming the appointment is at the top of the Grade an additional £4,290 would be needed to cover the cost for 18 months.
- 5.4 An option of reducing the number of staff required to cover the service during the shifts has been considered and discounted at the current time. Changing shift cover will be considered as part of the review of the service. However if changes were to be made they will take time to implement and must be done with due care so that customer safety is not compromised. To act to reduce the level of staff cover at the present time would cause a risk to quality the service is predicated on.
- 5.5 The sickness fund has assisted Community Support in covering for absence however the need for a 24/7 service means hours have to be covered from day one and the sickness fund is retrospective after 6 weeks. When we have acted to bring staff back to work earlier than 6 weeks with a phased return there has been no recourse to the fund. If the additional cover is provided it is expected that there would be less need to access the sickness fund for long term sickness. Last year £4,300 was transferred from this fund to cover absences.
- 5.6 This proposal would be positive for officers who have worked hard to cover the shifts required but are now struggling to find the work/ life balance they expected when they opted to work 24 hours/ week. It will also assist the Community Support Manager to provide the cover he is obliged to and have a better balance with his time with regard to enabling them to attend team meetings and undertake training which is critical to them performing their duties well.

6 Report Implications

6.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications

- 6.1.1 If the proposal to appoint a temporary, part time Control Centre Officer is agreed, the cost at the top of the grade will be £14,790 over the 18 month contract. The majority of this cost can be covered by the existing overtime budget. There is an under spend on the current staffing budget as a result of vacancies, which can be used to cover the balance.

6.2 Human Resources Implications

- 6.2.1 These are two fold. There is the matter of appointing an additional member of staff and the difficulties caused to current staff of regularly being asked to cover more shifts than they are contracted for.
- 6.2.1 The additional member of staff will be appointed using the current job description for a Community Support (Control Room) Officer. The post will be for 18 months only and for 18 hours a week. It will be advertised internally initially and then externally if there are no suitable applicants.
- 6.2.2 The team have shown their commitment to the service by working to cover all of the shifts it requires. However they have now raised concerns with managers and the Union that a different solution needs to be found which relies less on staff having to commit to more and more hours.

Background Papers

Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D, as substituted by the Local Government Act, 2000 Section 97

Background Paper No	Author	Nature of Background Paper	Date

The Contact Officer for this report is Angela Coates (719369)