

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE Finance and Resources
DATE: 12 November 2009
REPORT BY: Director of Corporate Governance & City Chamberlain
TITLE OF REPORT: Additional Support
REPORT NUMBER: CG/09/138

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek committee approval for the use of additional financial resources on a temporary and fixed term basis to support and progress work with services.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee

- (a) consider and approve the request as detailed in this report for additional support;
- (b) agree to the procurement of this support through appropriate agencies in consultation with the Procurement team; and
- (c) agree to the application of Standing Order 69(3)(ii) in relation to (b) above; and
- (d) agree to the advertisement and recruitment of the current vacancy of 1 FTE Accountant, on a permanent basis within the corporate accountancy team.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The related costs will be met from uncommitted budget remaining from the Corporate Investment Fund and underspends arising from across the Corporate Governance service.

4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 4.1 The use of this supplementary resource will be undertaken in conjunction with services. It will also support services and the finance accounting teams.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None.

6. REPORT

Background

6.1 The context of this report and the request for additional support on a fixed term and project specific basis arises from the outcomes of:-

- an assessment by the Corporate Director and the City Chamberlain of the current structure, areas of risk and priority;
- recent internal audit reviews;
- feedback by the Council's external auditor; and
- feedback reflected in the "Audit of Best Value and Community Planning – Progress Report".

Proposal

6.2 There are broadly three specific areas in which it is proposed to utilise additional support on a fixed term and temporary basis to address the current capacity, skills and workload of the present accountancy staffing.

6.3 The areas are

- 1) Social Care and Wellbeing;
- 2) Education, Culture and Sport; and
- 3) Service liaison

6.4 The additional support will, in the current period of change, provide assistance to and complement the current limited resources. It will

- Provide support to services in respect of planning and management reporting functions.
- Provide professional judgement and input on financial matters to planning, cost control, and management reporting
- Provide advice to services on ways of improving business performance, helping services make informed business decisions and to routinely report on progress
- Assist in monitoring spending and effectiveness of financial control
- Evaluate existing financial information systems and implement suggested and agreed improvements
- Provide professional judgement and input to improve the systems surrounding all aspects of budgets, forecasts and business planning
- Work with Finance and Services to ensure timely and reliable management information reports on a weekly, monthly and quarterly basis are available
- Assist in the development and operation of budgetary controls to ensure that principles of good practice are applied

- 6.5 A key aspect of focus within Social Care and Wellbeing will be in relation to the spend on adults and childrens services and related commitment monitoring which accounts for significant spend within this service. For Education, Culture and Sports services a key element of the work will be in relation to reviewing education establishment financial controls.
- 6.6 It is not proposed that additional staffing be employed by the Council but that the specialist support be sourced through various agencies and bodies e.g. CIPFA placements and others that can offer suitably skilled resources for project specific work on a fixed term basis.
- 6.7 The proposal is for the following specific support in the three areas outlined at paragraph 6.3 above
- 1) Social Care and Wellbeing – a small external team to provide financial support;
 - 2) Education, Culture and Sport – 1 FTE on an interim basis to support the management of the team
 - 3) Service liaison – 1 FTE fixed term to manage a restructure of accounting services
- 6.8 This work would be undertaken in conjunction with services and in support of the current finance accounting teams.
- 6.9 In addition the Committee’s approval is sought to advertise and recruit on a permanent basis the budgeted accountancy support to the Corporate Accountant of 1 FTE Accountant. This established post is currently vacant with support presently provided through an agency.
- 6.10 The proposals outlined require to be actioned quickly and are key and important to the delivery of the current demands and assessments, both internally and externally, in financial management and accounting requirements. Upon this basis the Committee are requested to agree to the application of Standing Order 69(3)(ii).

7. **REPORT AUTHOR**

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8. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None