



## Policy and Resources Committee Meeting – 15 December 2020

### Use of Specialist Contractors

#### Introduction

Since my arrival I have seen that specialist contractors have been appointed to cover certain pieces of work. Two obvious examples are Peter Malley at DM Payroll Services, for GDPR, and In Touch, for the appraisal of the compliance of our website for access purposes.

There are two further areas where I would recommend that specialist advisors be appointed - Human Resources and Health and Safety.

In general terms, I would not suggest the outsourcing of multiple functions of the Council to outside bodies. However, I think that the careful appointing of outside advisors and contractors can offer a higher level of assurance to the Council that key operations are being carried out correctly. This seems particularly important with regards to certain statutory/legal responsibilities. In working with external specialist organisations, it can also help insure the Council against risk, as that risk is passed onto the contractor, if the basis of the contract between the two parties is framed correctly.

#### Human Resources

In the recent past, the Council has employed Telford and Wrekin HR to provide support and advice. This has been delivered on an “as required” basis, currently costing £75.00 per hour. A knock-on benefit of this work has been the establishment of a known contact/relationship at Telford and Wrekin HR, which could be exploited into the future. I believe that it would be beneficial for the contract documents for the Council’s staff to have a one-off review. This will be discussed in more details in a separate paper. I also feel that the Council should keep an HR advisor on a retainer to provide the following:-

- ongoing support (as required);
- an annual health-check of our policies, contracts and job descriptions/person specifications;
- updates on changes to the law that might affect the Council's operation.

#### Health and Safety

As a newcomer to the Council, I am already impressed with the feel I get regarding Health and Safety. It is obvious that The Sambrook Centre is being managed well in this regard, while I am pleased that RoSPA checks, for example, are being undertaken on our play equipment/areas. This is all good to see.

That said, I feel that it is always good to have an outside audit of one’s operation. There is a possible impact of such an audit, however. Should there be any issues to be addressed, then it is incumbent on the Council to put matters right, in line with any recommendations. This might involve expense. Nevertheless, should the Council not be running its operation with due reference to Health and Safety, the costs of things going wrong (both in financial and reputational terms) will usually outweigh the costs of having things right in the first place.

Aside of contractor fees, going down this route should not involve significant one-off costs. If a “traffic light” approach is adopted, it is usual to rectify issues on a prioritised basis, over an extended timescale. This will allow budgets to be shaped to accommodate any expenses accordingly.

#### Costs

I have had indicative quotes from three providers (all figures are per annum, except where stated):

<b>Human Resources</b>			
	<b>Quote No.1</b>	<b>Quote No.2</b>	<b>Quote No.3</b>
An initial review of our contracts as a stand-alone, one-off exercise;	£350.00	??	£4400.00  (this company covers HR and H&S and has quoted)
An annual health-check of our HR contracts, procedures and job descriptions/person specifications, with a view to reviewing them in terms of any changes to HR/employment law. and best practice;	£500.00	£680.00	
A named, retained contact that we can approach should any HR issues come to light at any given time;	£1500.00	£680.00	
HR Consultancy (per hour)	£40.00	£75.00	

Quotes Nos 1 and 2 are from local authorities. Quote No.3 is from an independent company that is used extensively by local councils. In addition to the services that I have referred to, they have a sizeable library of Risk Assessments etc that can be drawn upon. Among other reasons, I suspect that this is why their quote (which is their “worst-case scenario” figure) is much higher.

<b>Health and Safety</b>			
	<b>Quote No.1</b>	<b>Quote No.2</b>	
An annual H&S health-check	£350.00	£180.00	one figure for everything)
A named, retained contact that we can approach should any HR issues come to light at any given time;			

Quote No.2 is for the provision of a purely phone-based service.

### **Conclusion**

Seeking quotes for services from organisations, so that one can undertake a like-with-like comparison, is notoriously difficult. However, based on the information provided, I would like to table the following:-

### **Resolutions**

- 1) For Human Resources, the Clerk ask the providers of Quote No.1 and Quote No.2 (assuming that their quote is less than £500.00) to undertake an initial review of our contracts and make recommendations for change. (This will give us an idea of the quality of the service and enable us to consider which provider to go with, if we wish to widen the use of their services);**
- 2) For Health and Safety, to use the providers of Quote No.2 (who are happy to provide their services on a monthly basis) to test the suitability of their services up to a value of £90.00.**

**Michael Turner**

**Parish Clerk**

3 December 2020