

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

PART I

7. TEMPORARY RESOURCE IN HUMAN RESOURCES: PROPOSAL FOR A 12 MONTHS CONTRACT (CHIEF EXECUTIVE – PAUL TURRELL)

Synopsis of report:

This report explains the need for more HR resource to assist with a range of initiatives including the Council's Voluntary Redundancy Strategy over the next 12 months.

Recommendation:

To approve a supplementary revenue estimate in the sum of £50,000 to fund a one-year temporary post in the Human Resources business unit.

1. Context of report

- 1.1 Members may recall that prior to the Covid pandemic, the Council's original budget for 2020/21 included a sum to strengthen the Human Resources (HR) capacity in the Council. This was for 1 professional HR post and one part-time HR Assistant role. The reasons for this proposal were the substantial additional work HR was undertaking in facilitating a range of organisational changes and the tripling of recruitment activity since 2017. This was also in the context that for the size of authority Runnymede's HR service has fewer HR staff to deal with the staffing issues in its workforce than both comparable and smaller authorities in Surrey. These proposals had to be shelved because of the financial impact of the pandemic on the Council's finances.
- 1.2 HR work within the Council has not diminished and in fact has grown over the past year. Partly, this has been in response to the Covid crisis but it is also a result of work which could not be stopped or rescheduled including the re-structuring of Commercial Services (shortly to be re-titled Assets and Regeneration Business Unit).
- 1.3 Capacity has also been affected by an unusually high level of sickness absence and the need for one member of the team to shield. HR is a small team and the need to strengthen the capacity of the Unit has been recognised and prioritised by the Chief Executive.

2. Report

- 2.1 As a service, HR is small compared to HR teams in neighbouring districts in terms of the ratio of HR staff to the number of staff in the workforce. RBC has a workforce of 420 rising to 460 as a consequence of the TUPE transfer of Community Services from Surrey Heath Borough Council on 1 April 2021. The ratios of HR staff to workforce serviced are set out on the next page.

Council	Ratio of HR staff to workforce
Runnymede	1: 84 (based on 420); 1: 92 (based on 460)
Spelthorne	1: 48
Mole Valley	1: 49
Reigate & Banstead	1: 41
Waverley	1: 65

- 2.2 In addition, HR at Runnymede provides a service to the Council owned companies.
- 2.3 HR plays a key role in facilitating organisational change and efficiency savings. At present HR is dealing with 3 TUPE transfers, is supporting the Corporate Head of Assets & Regeneration in consulting on and implementing the Commercial Services Review which involves the Commercial Services and Facilities Management teams and reviewing the structure of the RBCS company. Apart from dealing with all the HR aspects of the TUPE transfer of Community Services, HR is also facilitating the implementation of the revised structure.
- 2.4 In addition, HR is the client function implementing the Vendor Neutral Contract which will make an estimated £100k savings in its first year but involves HR providing a challenge process for the use of agency staff and overseeing the overall operation of the Vendor Neutral contract for the authority on an ongoing basis. HR has also been jointly leading the Agile Working project with Digital Services, has been doing work on the 'benefits offer' to make Runnymede Borough Council 'an employer of choice', and is due to re-model the lower end of the pay structure this year. This is in addition to a high volume of case work.
- 2.5 As well as the continuing high level of work in HR, the Council is embarking on a Voluntary Redundancy Strategy. This is necessary to meet financial targets and to make a major contribution to £2m of savings which must be achieved over the next two financial years.
- 2.6 The Voluntary Redundancy Strategy will also enable some re-investment within the Council in areas of priority to Members including:
- A Climate Change Officer.
 - A Bid Writer to access more resources for the Council in a range of different areas.
 - A Joint Enforcement Team (JET).
- 2.7 The aim is to bring all the opportunities to Members to achieve a balance in savings and re-investment in the Human Resources of the Council.
- 2.8 The Voluntary Redundancy Strategy involves significant work for HR which includes:
- Processing requests for financial information (pensions, redundancy entitlement) to individual employees.
 - After initial expressions of interest, processing applications.
 - Undertaking formal consultation with Business Unit managers and individuals and assessing whether individual employees can be released.
 - Supporting and facilitating further savings emanating from restructurings enabled by voluntary redundancy
- 2.9 This work is likely to involve the Head of HR on some of the more complex work and other members of the team on more routine operations. However, without an extra resource and preferably an experienced individual in industrial relations/transformation, it will not be possible to achieve the target date for completion of the Voluntary Redundancy Strategy which is March 2022.

3. **Policy framework implications**

- 3.1 It will be necessary to go through a formal process with each individual regarding their application for voluntary redundancy and with each individual service head. Adequate alternative arrangements will need to be in place.
- 3.2 There will also be a formal process established to consult Members on the terms of redundancy and on alternative structural arrangements should the redundancy be accepted.

4. **Resource implications**

- 4.1 Although this is a growth item, it is necessary to ensure that there is sufficient capacity in place to process applications and to meet legal responsibilities.
- 4.2 There is a continuing heavy workload in HR for a small team which also needs to continue if the Council is to meet its HR objectives.
- 4.3 The cost of a one-year post is £33-35,000 plus on costs and a one-off agency fee, bringing the total cost to £50,000. Before the end of the one-year period, there will be an evaluation of the ongoing needs of the HR division to ascertain whether some of the savings generated by the Voluntary Redundancy Strategy need to be re-invested.

5. **Legal implications**

- 5.1 None.

6. **Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications**

- 6.1 None

7. **Conclusion**

- 7.1 It is recommended that the Committee approves a supplementary revenue estimate in the sum of £50,000 to fund a one-year temporary post in the Human Resources Business Unit.

(To resolve)

Background Papers

None