

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Subject Matter:	Use of Consultants, Hired Staff and Temporary Staff
Meeting:	Employment Committee 23 July 2025
Executive Portfolio:	Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources - Cllr B Mickelburgh
Report by:	Corporate Director of Finance and Resources
Ward(s) affected:	All

Executive Summary:

Members requested this annual report in order to monitor the Council's use of interim staff (consultants and temporary staff).

Capital

During 2024/25, consultants have continued to be employed to provide technical and professional advice in respect of the Commercial Investment Strategy, Local Plans, future high street funding and development of market town prospectus for growth. There were also costs for temporary staff which have been employed on capital projects in the year.

Revenue

Overall, there was a net increase of £630k in the cost of interim staff in 2024/25 when compared to 2023/24. There is a continued use of interim staff to cover staff vacancies across the Council where recruitment has proved difficult, and to provide expert advice and interim capacity whilst the Council follows the current transformation programme, development of the Local Plans and other business efficiency improvements.

All costs relating to interim staff have been met from within current resources (central government grants, existing budgets or use of earmarked reserves) and the use of such staff has given the Council the flexibility and short-term capacity to undertake its transformation programme.

Recommendation:

Members are asked to comment on the report and note its contents.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To advise of the use of consultants and temporary staff during the 2024/25 financial year.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In July 2014 the Employment Panel approved guidance notes for managers regarding the use of consultants and temporary staff.
- 2.2 The use of interim staff is an essential requirement in the day-to-day management of the Council's business. However, their use is limited to a range of specific purposes i.e., to meet a specialist skills gap where a full-time resource would not afford the Council value for money, to cover for unplanned gaps in staffing or to meet short-term peaks in workload.
- 2.3 Increasingly, the Council is benefitting from successful bids which attract external funding to deliver projects that meet our corporate objectives. Use of interim staff to deliver these projects is therefore fully funded and does not represent an additional burden on the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 2.4 The Council's accepted definitions for consultants and temporary staff is shown below:

Consultants

Individuals are contracted to the Council as a sole trader or employees of a contractor to provide specialist and/or professional skills and knowledge the Council lacks. This is often to deliver a specific task or project where it would be non-economic for the Council to retain these skills on a full-time basis. The contract terminates after a defined period of event (e.g., delivery of a report of advice).

Temporary Staff

Individuals contracted to the Council as employees of an agency or contractor to provide additional capacity. They may be providing short term cover for staff absences (e.g., refuse operatives) or medium-term cover (e.g., cover for vacant posts while permanent recruitment completes).

3. EXPENDITURE ANALYSIS

3.1 The analysis shown below is split between capital and revenue. The reason for this distinction is that interim staff employed for capital development projects are incidental to the project and can be financed from capital resources i.e., the sale of assets.

3.2 Capital

During 2024/25, there was an overall increase of £106k in the cost of interim staff compared to 2023/24, a summary is shown below, and the detailed analysis is shown in **Appendix 1**.

Capital Comparison of consultants and temporary staff 2024/25 and 2023/24			
	Consultants	Temporary	TOTAL
	£000	£000	£000
2024/25	763	192	955
2023/24	742	107	849
Increase	21	85	106

This increase relates mainly to the use of consultants for the increased reliance on consultants for the Old Falcon and the Market Town/Future High Street programmes and consultancy relating to solar PV canopies, offset by reduced spend on the Transport Project.

3.3 Revenue

During 2024/25, there was an overall increase of £630k in the cost of interim staff compared to 2023/24, a summary is shown below, and the detailed analysis is shown in **Appendix 2**.

Revenue Comparison of consultants and temporary staff 2023/24 and 2022/23			
	Consultants	Temporary	TOTAL
	£000	£000	£000
2024/25	1,424	1,734	3,158
2023/24	1,168	1,360	2,528
Increase	256	374	630

4. KEY IMPACTS

- 4.1** The use of interim staff assists the Council in meeting services needs and objectives. If such resources are not used from time-to-time, then it is very likely that service delivery and priorities would be impacted, and the process of transformation would take considerably longer.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** New regulations came into force on 6 April 2017 changing the responsibility for assessing the tax status of consultants, interims, and temporary staff. If directly engaged (not through an agency), the Council must determine whether the individual is acting as if a member of staff and if appropriate, collect national insurance (NI) contributions and tax. The determination, based on HMRC guidance, considers a number of factors including duration, if a post holder, ability to substitute, etc. Failure to collect the correct tax and NI risks incurring fines, interest charges and back tax. The Management Team have been briefed and provided with links to the HMRC guidance and the HMRC online assessment tool. The Heads of Service have been tasked with identifying any consultants, interims and temporary staff that fall within the scope of the regulations and carrying out the appropriate assessment.

7. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

- Appendix 1 - consultants and temporary staff – capital expenditure
- Appendix 2 - consultants and temporary staff – revenue expenditure

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

CONTACT OFFICER

Suzanne Jones
Corporate Director of Finance and Resources

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

Comments on expenditure in excess of £10,000 are provided.

CONSULTANTS CAPITAL EXPENDITURE			
Head of Service	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	
Corporate Resources	23	14	Fees relating to work on Investment Property in Hampshire
Housing Strategy	586	424 117 5	Fees relating to Market towns & future high streets* Old Falcon Transport project*
ICT Shared Services	36	85	Fees relating to Hardware replacement
Leisure & Health		80	Solar canopy & panels
Strategic Insight & Delivery	97	38	Fees relating to Hinchingsbrooke Country Park
TOTAL	742	763	

TEMPORARY STAFF CAPITAL EXPENDITURE			
Head of Service	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	
Economic Development		10	Administrative support relating to UK Shared Prosperity Fund
Housing Strategy	107	157 25	Fees relating to: Old Falcon* Market towns & future high streets*
TOTAL	107	192	

* externally funded

Appendix 2

REVENUE EXPENDITURE

Comments on expenditure in excess of £10,000 are provided.

CONSULTANTS REVENUE EXPENDITURE				
Head of Service	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	Expenditure for 2024/25 includes	Justification for Spend
Chief Operating Officer	50	33	Support for Licensing	Specialist advice not available within establishment
Chief Planning Officer	187	175 103 25 9	Support for: Planning applications** Local plan** Community Infrastructure Levy Other**	Specialist advice not available within establishment
Corporate Leadership	28	20 16	Support for: Leadership team Strategic communications Place Strategy**	Specialist advice not available within establishment
Corporate Resources	514	87 60 48 41 37 31 5 8	Support for: Risk management & internal audit Financial management system Commercial Estates** Treasury, valuations and pension fund administration** HR initiatives** Commercial investment strategy VAT reclaims** Other areas	Specialist knowledge not available within the Council and/or that is required for financial stewardship and audit

Economic Development		43 43	Support for Hunts travel feasibility UK Shared Prosperity Funding	Specialist knowledge not available within the establishment
ICT Shared Services	114	74	Support for ICT applications**	Specialist knowledge not available within the establishment
Leisure & Health	38	57 20 6 18	Support for Feasibility studies Latent demand surveys Mystery shoppers Other areas	Specialist knowledge not available within the establishment
Operations	47	55 30 12	Support for Garden waste project** Materials recycling contract** Other areas	Specialist knowledge not available within the establishment
Strategic Insight & Delivery	190	221 53 45 37 12	Support for: Biodiversity initiatives* Climate change strategy** Civil parking enforcement implementation project* Parks, open Spaces & countryside management** Other areas	Specialist advice not within establishment.
TOTAL	1,168	1,424		

* externally funded or funded from earmarked reserves/increased income

** budgeted in MTFS

TEMPORARY STAFF REVENUE EXPENDITURE				
Head of Service	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	Expenditure for 2024/25 includes	Justification for Spend
Chief Operating Officer	102	98 60	Agency staff for: Commercial team Benefits Administration*	A combination of cover to maintain service delivery and to cover additional workload re grant payments
Chief Planning Officer	70	132	Agency staff for: Development Management*	Cover to maintain service delivery
Corporate Resources	32	60 37 10 3	Agency staff for: Procurement Human resources Maternity cover* Other	A combination of cover to maintain service delivery and to support the income generating portfolio of property
Corporate Leadership	12	25	Agency staff for: MD team & Communications	
ICT Shared Services		228	Agency staff for: 3CICT service	Cover to maintain service delivery
Leisure & Health		4		
Operations	1,105	954 98 19 6	Agency staff for: Waste Management* Street Cleansing* Grounds maintenance Vehicle maintenance* Other services	Requirement to back fill vacancies, sickness and holidays with agency staff to maintain service delivery
Strategic Insight & Delivery	39			
TOTAL	1,360	1,734		

* externally funded or funded from earmarked reserves/increased income/staff savings

** budgeted in MTFS