



**Corporate Policy &
Resources Committee**

Thursday, 13 February 2025

Subject: Recruitment Controls Discussion Paper

PRESENTED TO SAVINGS BOARD ON 9 JAN 2025.

Report by:

Director of Corporate Services and S151 Officer

Contact Officer:

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Purpose / Summary:

To document and present existing recruitment controls in place at West Lindsey District Council as set out in HR policy, Financial Regulations and Constitutional Scheme of Delegation.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

This report was prepared for Savings Board on 9 January 2025.

The recommendation is that the Committee reviews and notes the information within the report.

IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

The paper describes the procedures in place for recruitment at the Council.

Financial:

The paper describes the procedures in place for recruitment at the Council.

Staffing:

The paper describes the procedures in place for recruitment at the Council.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights:

The paper describes the procedures in place for recruitment at the Council.

Data Protection Implications:

The paper describes the procedures in place for recruitment at the Council.

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:

The paper describes the procedures in place for recruitment at the Council.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:

The paper describes the procedures in place for recruitment at the Council.

Health Implications:

The paper describes the procedures in place for recruitment at the Council.

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

Risk Assessment:

Contained within the report.

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

No

X

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

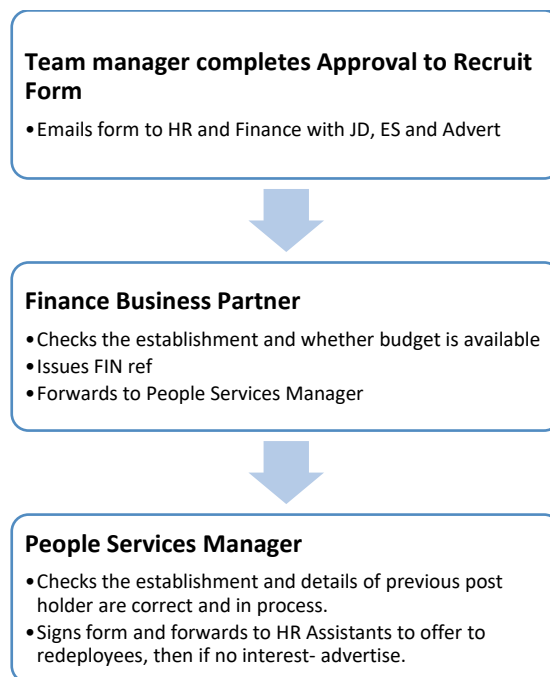
Yes

No

X

1 Background

- 1.1 In the context of future funding challenges and the estimated level of future savings required within the Medium-Term Financial Plan it was requested by the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee in September 2024, that an options paper regarding recruitment be brought to the Committee. Following agreement with the Chairman, the following report was presented to the Savings Board at their meeting on 9 January 2025.
- 1.2 Under the Local Government Act, West Lindsey District Council is required to deliver the services and posts detailed within the legal implications of this report. This legislation applies regardless of financial position with Local Authorities under Section 114 still required to ensure that all statutory services are delivered. Any extension to recruitment controls or implementation of a recruitment freeze would still need to ensure that statutory services can be delivered effectively to comply with legislation.
- 1.3 The constitution sets out the delegations to officers in the Scheme of Management. These delegations set out that responsibilities for recruitment to existing vacancies are delegated to Team Managers. Extension of fixed term posts and new positions are required to be authorised by Directors or Assistant Directors. This delegation assumes that any new posts or extensions to fixed term posts are within existing budgets. There are no restrictions on headcount providing existing budgets are not exceeded.
- 1.4 The recruitment process for vacant existing posts is shown below:



- 1.5 Where new posts or extensions to fixed term posts require additional budget approval by the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee is required if the decision is in-year. If the decision is for future years approval is provided as part of the Annual Budget approval at Full

Council. This approval is explicit within the budget paper. Examples of where such decisions have been recently taken are:

- Recruitment of additional Sports Development Officer and Cultural Development Officer – March 2024 – Full Council

- 1.6 Detailed salary expenditure monitoring takes place on a monthly basis as part of the budget monitoring process and is reported to all managers and budget holders. Monthly review of all additional and changes to salary payments is reviewed before salaries are paid to ensure that no changes have been made that have not been authorised.
- 1.7 As detailed in the financial implications the salary budget for 2024-25 is £12,861,900 and we are forecasting a full year outturn on salaries of £12,422,041.
- 1.8 The Council's budgetary position is one of relative certainty for 2024-25 with the full year forecast outturn on all services being £160K underspend based at Q2. This is an outturn of 0.87% under budget.
- 1.9 Officers predict that whilst funding 2025-26 will be more challenging than 2024-25 a fully funded zero based salary budget has been included within the MTFP based on the current permanent establishment at the 27 September 2024. The Budget gap for 2026-27 is currently estimated at £2,193K.

2. Recruitment Freezes

- 2.1 A recruitment freeze is when an organisation stops hiring new employees to vacant posts. It is usually a temporary measure which is used to reduce in year budget expenditure on posts which caused will not impact essential or statutory service delivery.
- 2.2 The below table shows the number of leavers in 2023-24 to provide the Board with some context of recent churn at the organisation.

| | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| Number of Leavers | 32 |
| Leavers by Service | |
| Customer Services | 3 |
| Data Protection | 1 |
| Democratic Services & Elections | 3 |
| Trinity Arts Centre | 1 |
| Wellbeing Lincs | 2 |
| Waste | 5 |
| Revenues and Benefits | 2 |
| Finance | 3 |
| Planning | 1 |
| Regeneration | 4 |
| Property & Assets | 1 |
| Homelessness | 1 |
| Systems Development | 1 |

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Executive PA | 1 |
| Regulatory | 2 |
| Change Management | 1 |

2.3 Of the 32 leavers, 15 of these members of staff deliver direct or indirect statutory functions with a further two members of staff delivering contractual obligations. Further to these eight members of staff provide back-office services that are essential to deliver statutory functions. Four members of staff provided essential work to the delivery of the LUF, and regeneration schemes were grant funding would be lost if the schemes weren't delivered within timescales.

2.4 When a member of staff resigns, we expect the line manger to fully consider all options before recruiting again and asking themselves whether the post needs to be recruited to on a like for like basis. This means in some cases posts are held vacant whilst an assessment is made as to whether the post is needed on a permanent basis. We have posts held in both Benefits and the Crematorium currently. It is much harder to hold posts where the requirement to deliver statutory services is attached to a role.

3 Summary

3.1 The Council already has internal recruitment controls in place to ensure that all salary expenditure remains within budget. Whilst Team Managers can approve recruitment to vacancies in their areas this must be within the salary budget set.

3.2 Any changes to the existing establishment are approved by the Director if within budget and if outside budget must comply with approvals stated in the Financial Regulations.

3.3 Recruitment freezes can be effective in a scenario where significant salary overspends are forecast in-year. The Council starts each year with a fully budgeted establishment.

3.4 Any additional recruitment controls or recruitment freeze must ensure that statutory services are still provided.

3.5 Any change to the constitution would require a recommendation to Full Council.

3.6 The current salary forecast for 2024-25 is an underspend of £160K (Q2). It is recommended that a watching brief is maintained on salary expenditure with any material in-year overspend reported to this Committee where a later decision on recruitment controls can be taken if required.

