

FORM S & PP 3

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|  Walsall Council | REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE | DATE: 12 July 2023 REF.NO: |
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TITLE OF THE MATTER CALLED-IN: Temporary Workers (Agency) Provision

DATE CONSIDERED BY CABINET: 21 June 2023

CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDER: Councillor K. Ferguson

DATE OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MEETING: 12 July 2023

Grounds under which the matter was called in for scrutiny:

1. How was the decision arrived at?
2. The consultation that took place before the decision was made.
3. The level of social engagement the new contractor will be putting into Walsall.
4. The basis of why a company carrying out work for Walsall Council for 20+ years needed to be changed?
5. Was there a fair and transparent tendering process?
6. Is this the best decision for Walsall?

Record here the Overview and Scrutiny Committee conclusions and proposals:

Following the presentation of the reasons for call-in, the Committee received presentations from two temporary worker providers, Members posed questions and were provided with points of clarification to enable them to gain an insight into the challenges and opportunities within the sector.

The Portfolio Holder (Internal Services) responded to the call-in outlining that recruitment and retention of staff was a critical issue for local government in general and this had also affected Walsall Council. He explained that it was vital that the Council had access to good quality and cost-effective agency staff in all areas and at all levels of the Council. He noted that the agreed contract would provide this access with an offer that included specialist agencies and executive recruitment. Assurance was provided that the report presented to Cabinet detailed the rigorous process that officers had undertaken to arrive at the options considered by Cabinet, and these were described to the Committee. Assurance was provided to the Committee in relation to the procurement process.

The Committee questioned the Cabinet and Officers in relation to the following:

- The assurances sought by Cabinet in relation to the impact on each service.
- How Cabinet had arrived at their decision.
- For further detail on consultation and the opportunities provided to providers to engage with tender processes.
- Whether there had been a fair and transparent process in selecting a provider for the contract of temporary workers.
- How quickly a response could be provided (to supply temporary workers) in the event of a crisis.
- The social impact that the contract would have and how much Walsall Council influence Walsall Council would have in.
- How Council contracts were managed.
- Level of confidence on the projected figures.

Committee Members debated the information provided and concluded that it was satisfied with the responses given and the subsequent decision made by Cabinet. Further to this the Committee considered it to be of importance that Walsall residents were given every opportunity to access employment, upskilling and access training. Members also wished to ensure that there was a robust process (within the Council) for managing current and future contracts to ensure they were providing value for money and having a beneficial social impact in Walsall.

Record here the specific recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

The Scrutiny Overview Committee was satisfied with the decision, and the process used to arrive at it, made by Cabinet.

However, the Committee recommend that Cabinet considers the following recommendations:

That:

- a) The provider of the temporary (agency) worker contract should be set a target in their agreement with the Council regarding the use of employees from the Walsall borough.
- b) Upskilling of workers for employment in Walsall is a priority - the provider of the temporary (agency) worker contract should work with the council to support residents into employment (with the possibility of this taking place in local community hubs).

c) All Council contracts should be reviewed in a timely manner to ensure value for money and a benefit to the community in the Walsall Borough.

Explain here how the proposals/recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee differ from those of Cabinet:

Not applicable.

This form provides an accurate record of the meeting of the above named Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Chair of Scrutiny Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Signature: *Councillor John Murray*

Date: 17th July 2023