

# CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

## Cabinet

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	20 <sup>th</sup> August 2012
<b>Report of:</b>	Head of HR and OD
<b>Subject/Title:</b>	Notice of Motion: The Use and Approval of Outside Consultants
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Cllr Barry Moran

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### 1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 This report invites the Cabinet to consider the following Motion, proposed by Councillor Brickhill which has been referred by Council to the Cabinet for consideration. The Motion stated that “No outside consultants (other than clerical staff) shall be employed by the Council without their specific instruction.”

### 2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 That Cabinet consider that the Council already has sufficiently rigorous arrangements in place for the engagement of consultants and will therefore take no further action in response to the notice of motion.

### 3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 To enable Council to consider the Cabinets views on the matter.

### 4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 None

### 5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 None identified.

### 6.0 Policy Implications

- 6.1 Any decisions to change/alter the approval process may have implications for the recruitment processes in place for consultants.

### 7.0 Financial Implications (Authorised by the Director of Finance and Business Services)

- 7.1 None identified specifically however, any recommendations that may have an impact on the use and volume of consultants could seek to reduce spend in this area.

7.2 In addition, ensuring that all services comply with the corporate frameworks / contracts will undoubtedly result in savings by opening up opportunities to competition and driving down costs.

## **8.0 Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)**

8.1 None identified.

## **9.0 Risk Management**

9.1 There is a risk that additional levels of approval, particularly up to Council level, would have an impact on services where there is an urgent or business critical need to engage the services of a consultant in a timely way.

## **10.0 Background and Options**

10.1 On 19<sup>th</sup> July 2012 Council considered a Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Brickhill on a policy of not employing outside consultants (other than clerical staff) without their (Council) specific instruction.

10.2 During the Council meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup> July 2012 Cllr Brickhill confirmed that in raising this motion, it did not relate to agency staff.

10.3 Currently, all requests for consultants must be approved by the Leader, the Portfolio holder for Resources, the Head of HR and OD and the relevant CMT member making the request at the weekly Recruitment Watch meeting. As with all vacancies and opportunities, approval to proceed will only be given where a clear and compelling business case is put forward to the panel.

10.4 The Council currently has two corporate contracts / framework agreements in place for the procurement of consultants. These are:

**Asset Management Framework** – which covers a range of construction related professional consultancy services e.g. Architects, Quantity Surveyors and Structural Engineers.

**Matrix Framework** – This is for all other types of consultants.

10.5 Both frameworks ensure that potential consultants compete on a value for money basis for any assignments and the price they submit is their final position i.e. they do not get the opportunity to revise/amend prices which helps to avoid unnecessary pushing up of prices.

10.6 Following approval from the Recruitment Watch panel, the subsequent stages of the process for engaging a consultant under the Council's procedures are set out below:

1. A detailed business case (including why the services can't be delivered in house) is developed and loaded onto the online request form (on either the Asset management framework or the Matrix framework) seeking (further) management approval prior to releasing the opportunity to the market.
  2. Once loaded on the framework as an opportunity, it is released to all those suppliers registered. There is a strong mix of suppliers signed up to the frameworks, ranging from one individual offering their services to larger companies specialising in supplying consultants. This seeks to ensure that the process is open, fair and transparent whilst delivering the very best value for money and quality of consultant for the Council.
  3. Following a request being sent to the suppliers, a number of 'bids' come in from consultants and suppliers. These will be ranked according to price and quality for the manager to select the best supplier.
- 10.7 The framework agreements were put in place last year and seek to ensure that consultants are procured in a consistent and coherent way across all services for the first time. The Procurement team have been working with managers to ensure that all new requirements are sourced in this way and that any off contract spend is managed out.
- 10.8 The approval process for consultants is therefore already very rigorous. The addition of the recruitment watch approval process has undoubtedly provided an extra level of scrutiny and brings it in line with the approval process for all other vacancies and opportunities. Further approval and decision making at full Council, which could take up to three months for the next available meeting, will undoubtedly delay critical project work and in some instances put services at risk by preventing them from being able to carry out urgent and necessary tasks e.g. asbestos surveys.
- 10.9 It is therefore recommended that Cabinet take no further action in response to the notice of motion.

## **11.0 Access to Information**

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer. There are no specific background documents.

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