

South Ayrshire Council

**Joint Report by Head of Finance, ICT and Procurement
and Head of Legal and Regulatory Services
to Cabinet
of 29 August 2023**

Subject: Corporate Support Services Capacity Issues - Update

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on progress and outcomes so far achieved through the addition of temporary resources.

2. Recommendation

2.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1.1 considers the progress and outcomes achieved through the addition of temporary resources;**
- 2.1.2 note the challenges being encountered in terms of recruiting staff to these temporary posts;**
- 2.1.3 agrees to convert seven temporary posts to permanent posts (per 4.5) immediately and fund from the available reserves until the balance has been expended, and thereafter include the posts in future annual staff budgets; and**
- 2.1.4 requests officers to undertake a review of Communications support to be presented to Cabinet in October 2023.**

3. Background

- 3.1 At its meeting on 26 October 2021, the Leadership Panel considered several factors contributing to an identified resourcing and skills gap within the corporate support teams, not only to continue to support current day to day operational activity, but to also provide the capacity to support all the additional demands being placed on the teams. After considering the issues highlighted, the Leadership Panel:

- 3.1.1 approved the creation of 11 temporary posts within the Corporate Support teams, at a cost of £0.842m, funded from uncommitted reserves;
- 3.1.2 requested that a report would be brought before the Service and Performance Panel in December 2022 to consider the progress and outcomes achieved through the addition of these temporary resources; and

3.1.3 noted that towards the end of this temporary period a review would be undertaken to confirm the resourcing requirements at that juncture, to determine whether a more permanent solution is required with the posts being embedded within the core staffing complement.

3.2 At its meeting on 22 November 2022, the Service and Performance Panel considered a progress report that highlighted the action taken and spend to date at that time. The panel also noted the challenges being encountered in recruiting staff.

4. Proposals

4.1 One of the most significant challenges encountered in utilising the approved resource was the ability to recruit staff. Despite approval being given in October 2021, it took between six and nine months to recruit staff to the various posts via several rounds of advertisement. In one case the post remains vacant despite several attempts to recruit. Unfortunately, this appears to be indicative of the overall market conditions in terms of public sector job recruitment at present. This may be exacerbated to a certain degree by the posts being temporary in nature which may be a less attractive option in the job market.

4.2 Members are asked to consider the progress and outcomes achieved so far through the addition of the temporary resources, as detailed in [Appendix 1](#), where the following information is provided:

- (1) Post details;
- (2) November 2022 update information provided to SPP;
- (3) June 2023 update; and
- (4) Review of whether to retain post on a permanent basis.

4.3 As noted in 3.1.3 above a review of the resourcing requirements has been undertaken to determine whether a more permanent solution is required with the posts being embedded within core staffing complements and structures. Detailed information on the reasons for converting the posts from temporary to permanent are provided in [Appendix 1](#).

4.4 Table 1 below summarises the outcome of this review.

Table 1

Service/Posts	Retain post on a permanent basis	FTE
Communications - L7 Comms Officers (2fte)	Undertake review	-
Employee Services – L5 Employee Services Administrators (3fte)	Yes	3
Corporate Finance – L12 Senior Accountant (1fte)	Yes	1*
ICT Operations – L4 Asset Compliance Officers (2fte)	No	-
ICT Operations – L10 DevOps Engineer (1fte)	Yes	1
Legal Services – L11 Solicitors (2fte)	Yes	2
Total FTE retained		7

* HSCP have agreed to provide permanent funding for the L12 Senior Accountant once the reserve funding has been expended.

- 4.5 It is requested that Cabinet agrees to the conversion of 7 of the 11 temporary posts to permanent posts with immediate effect with the costs being met from the remaining balance of reserve funding for each individual post. Once the funding has been fully expended the costs will be included in future staffing budgets. This will likely impact over several financial years as the reserves balance for each post is reduced to zero.
- 4.6 Covid funding and a vacant post within OD have been used to temporarily augment the Communications team, it is proposed that there is a review of Communication support requirements to be presented to Cabinet in October prior to making any decision on whether to retain these two posts permanently.

5. Legal and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.
- 5.2 There are no procurement implications arising from this report.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 Of the funds provided, £0.335m has been spent up to the end of 2022/23, of this £0.036m was spent in the 2021/22 financial year and £0.299m spent in 2022/23, as outlined in table 2 below.

Table 2

Service/Posts	21/22 £m	22/23 £m	Remaining balance in reserve £m
Communications - L7 Comms Officers (2fte)	-	0.070	0.070
Employee Services – L5 Employee Services Administrators (3fte)	0.022	0.091	0.053
Corporate Finance – L12 Senior Accountant (1fte)	-	-	0.118
ICT Operations – L4 Asset Compliance Officers (2fte)	0.004	0.034	0.061
ICT Operations – L10 DevOps Engineer (1fte)	0.010	0.053	0.037
Legal Services – L11 Solicitors (2fte)	-	0.051	0.168
Total	0.036	0.299	0.507

- 6.2 Of the original £0.842m funds set aside, £0.507m remained in reserves at the end of 2022/23.
- 6.3 Following the reserve funds being fully expended, the annual cost of retaining any posts on a permanent basis will require to be included in future staffing budgets within the annual budget setting process.

7. Human Resources Implications

- 7.1 Members of staff employed in these temporary positions will not have accrued 4 years' continuous service to be directly matched to the permanent roles. The positions will require to be advertised because the change to permanent may attract more applications than when they were advertised temporary.

8. Risk

8.1 *Risk Implications of Adopting the Recommendations*

8.1.1 There are no risks associated with adopting the recommendations.

8.2 *Risk Implications of Rejecting the Recommendations*

8.2.1 There is a risk that Central Support Service functions will be unable to maintain an adequate service provision if the recommendations are rejected.

9. Equalities

9.1 The proposals in this report have been assessed through the Equality Impact Assessment Scoping process. There are no significant potential positive or negative equality impacts of agreeing the recommendations and therefore an Equalities Impact Assessment is not required. A copy of the Equalities Scoping Assessment is attached as [Appendix 2](#).

10. Sustainable Development Implications

10.1 ***Considering Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)*** - This report does not propose or seek approval for a plan, policy, programme or strategy or document otherwise described which could be considered to constitute a plan, programme, policy or strategy.

11. Options Appraisal

11.1 An options appraisal has not been carried out in relation to the subject matter of this report.

12. Link to Council Plan

12.1 The matters referred to in this report contribute to Priority 4 of the Council Plan: Efficient and effective enabling services.

13. Results of Consultation

13.1 There has been no public consultation on the contents of this report.

13.2 Consultation has taken place with Councillor Ian Davis, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Human Resources and ICT, and the contents of this report reflect any feedback provided.

14. Next Steps for Decision Tracking Purposes

14.1 If the recommendations above are approved by Members, the Head of Finance, ICT and Procurement will ensure that all necessary steps are taken to ensure full implementation of the decision within the following timescales, with the completion status reported to the Cabinet in the 'Council and Cabinet Decision Log' at each of its meetings until such time as the decision is fully implemented:

Implementation	Due date	Managed by
Notify Human Resources that 7 of the 11 temporary posts be converted to permanent posts with appropriate staffing structures being updated	30 September 2023	Head of Finance, ICT and Procurement
Review of Communication support to be undertaken and presented to Cabinet	31 October 2023	Director of Strategic Change and Communities

Background Papers **Report to Leadership Panel of 26 October 2021 - [Corporate Support Services Capacity Issues](#)**

Report to Service and Performance Panel of 22 November 2022 - [Corporate Support Services Capacity Issues](#)

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Date: 18 August 2023

Corporate Support Services Capacity Issues – Update

Post details	November 2022 update	June 2023 update	Retain position on a permanent basis
Service: Communications Post: Comms Officer No. of Posts: 2 Grade: Level 7	<p>Social Media - The trend during Covid for people to use social media for council news has continued to grow. Social media followers have increased significantly since March 2022, (from 34, 593 to 53, 247 followers across 6 channels). The 2 Assistant posts play a key role in managing the high volume of interactions, comments and questions on these channels as well as creating engaging and high-quality content. The team would not be able to manage this volume without the additional resource.</p> <p>Design – The Communications Assistants play a key role in supporting the in-house design service, providing an average of 15 hours of design work per week, including the production of South Ayrshire Council magazine. To outsource this work services would pay approx. £35 per hour, resulting in a saving of £15,750 to date. The demand for in-house design continues to grow and this in house provision represents better value than outsourcing design work.</p> <p>Communications Campaigns – Demand on the service continues to grow. Assistants have played a key role in the design and delivery of 50 communications campaigns and activity since 1 April 2022. Assistants play a key role in evaluating the effectiveness of campaigns, including carrying out social media analytics.</p>	<p>Assistant roles have been essential to manage the increase in demand and output for the service including managing the significant increase in social media followers which now sits at 56,752; creation of content; social media monitoring; social media analytics and evaluation. Assistants have supported the in-house production of approximately £100k of design work, including branding and design of documents, signage, in house magazine etc. Assistants support the creation of video content which has grown in line with growth of social media audience. Assistants provide out of hours and weekend coverage of events including Holy Fair; TamFest; the Ayr Show; Lowland Gathering; Tattie Fest. These events could not have been covered without assistant roles in place. Assistants manage day to day content on public facing TVs, coordinate advertising with all services and Adworks and support speechwriting as appropriate. They have also been key in growing Yammer as an employee communications channel. Furthermore, they have made a significant contribution to the on average 40 ongoing communications campaigns. This includes creating copy, social media content, design, magazine articles, adverts and contributing significantly to the evaluation of every campaign.</p>	<p>Undertake Review - There have been recent adjustments to the staffing structure within the Communications team therefore the impact of the previous changes will be reviewed prior to making any decision on whether to retain these two posts on a permanent basis.</p> <p>There has been significant growth in demand for the service and in output, related to the following:</p> <p>Social media - our social media audience has grown from 21,106 followers in March 2020 to 56,752. We have also increased the number of social media channels we use, and now use 6 social media platforms. Social media is 2-way engagement and it is essential that corporate channels are continuously monitored, as increasingly the public are using social media to contact the council or request information or a service. The 2 Assistant posts play a key role in managing the high volume of interactions, comments and questions on these channels, as well as creating engaging and high-quality content that helps to sustain public engagement and sustain and continue to grow our audience. Key to ensuring the effectiveness of social media is consistent analysis and reporting on social media trends/ analytics as part of the communications evaluation process. The substantive team cannot manage this volume of social media content creation, followers and channels and without the assistant posts. A significant reduction in output and in channels used would be required.</p> <p>Design – the volume of design work has continued to increase with approximately £100,000 of design work provided in-house in 22/23. Design work has expanded to support a wide range of council activities and events such as the air show, design of</p>

Post details	November 2022 update	June 2023 update	Retain position on a permanent basis
	<p>Employee Comms – Assistants played a key role in the development and delivery of employee comms enabling the launch and ongoing development of the employee corporate Yammer channel.</p> <p>Additionally, the roles provide significant support for press releases, speechwriting, media liaison, arranging photo calls and advertising.</p>		<p>new school uniforms, vinyl artwork for display on buildings, signage and events. The increasing volume means that the substantive design officer cannot undertake all the design work required and the 2 x assistant posts play a key role in supporting this area of work.</p> <p>Digital Communications/ Video – There is increasing demand corporately and from services for animated video content and editing of filmed video. Increasingly video is being used to engage the public and promote the council. This includes video creation for external media e.g., targeted adverts on Sky/ Virgin and YouTube adverts. Animated video creation, scriptwriting, voiceover and editing requires significant resource. This cannot be managed within the substantive team.</p> <p>Public Facing TVs – assistant posts are required to support the creation of content and to manage continuous updates of information in line with agreed communications plans.</p> <p>Promotion and attendance at a range of council sponsored events – increasingly the communications team is having to cover out of hours and weekend activities, including council sponsored events e.g., the air show. The substantive team of 2 officers and 1 coordinator does not have the capacity to cover the volume of output required.</p> <p>Employee Communications. The team creates and manages a range of employee communications. Yammer is increasingly being used as a crucial employee communications tool and requires engaging content creation, monitoring and responding to employee queries.</p> <p>Campaigns – the volume of communications campaigns and content associated with these continues to grow, with the team currently managing 40 ongoing campaigns. Assistants are</p>

Post details	November 2022 update	June 2023 update	Retain position on a permanent basis
			<p>required to support the delivery and evaluation of this volume of campaigns.</p> <p>Advertising – assistants play a key role in liaising with services and Adworks to source and book advertising on behalf of all services.</p> <p>Additionally, the roles provide significant support for press releases, speechwriting, media liaison, arranging photo calls and advertising.</p>
<p>Service: Employee Services</p> <p>Post: Employee Service Administrator</p> <p>No. of Posts: 3</p> <p>Grade: Level 5</p>	<p>Difficulty filling and required to re-advertise. One person was already in a temporary contract covering maternity leave and we then extended the contract when the maternity leave ended. One of the temp employees stayed in position for 8 months and then we readvertised and managed to fill it from another internal temp quite quickly.</p> <p>The temporary employees are carrying out the agreed duties. The additional positions have helped the workload pressures, but it is anticipated that the teams are still 4 FTE below what is required for the current workload.</p>	<p>The temporary employees are now an integral part of the team and continue to support the high volumes of work. As an example, there are currently 350+ recruitment checks and the current waiting time for the team to start these checks is 4 weeks. This is having a negative impact on our ability to recruit in that we have lost candidates due to these timescales thereby impacting frontline services who have had to readvertise their positions.</p> <p>It should be noted that this workload impacts across the recruitment and contracts team and the members of staff are presenting symptoms of work-related stress with one member of staff being absent for 3.5 months due to this reason, another member of staff seeking advice from their GP to prevent them from going off sick and others being upset at work due to workload pressures. The team are taking it upon themselves to work additional unpaid hours to ensure the work is being progressed. This is not sustainable.</p>	<p>YES - Volumes of workload within these teams have remained consistent since 2021 when the temporary funding was approved, and it is not anticipated that the workload will decrease. In addition to the existing workload pressures, with the implementation of Oracle Fusion, the team are required to perform new tasks which were not required in Oracle EBS thus further increasing the workload. It should also be noted that each year between April and October the workload increases exponentially due to the Education staffing exercise. The most recent resource analysis continues to evidence that based on current volumes the team are 4FTE short. Therefore, to ensure continuity of service delivery and staff well-being, it is paramount that the temporary resources are made permanent.</p>

Post details	November 2022 update	June 2023 update	Retain position on a permanent basis
Service: Corporate & Service Finance Post: Senior Accountant No. of Posts: 1 Grade: Level 12	Unable to appoint despite two separate attempts to fill the posts, in December 2021 and March 2022. The post remains unfilled at present with the workload being absorbed within the current compliment of staff. This is impacting on the incumbent staff who are working beyond capacity at times which is unsustainable in the long term. The result of this affects the output of the HSCP finance team in supporting the partnership. A further 3 rd round of recruitment for the position is currently being considered.	This post remains unfilled due to the inability to recruit appropriately qualified staff. Discussions have taken place with HSCP to identify that the likely reason is due to the temporary nature of the post. HSCP have agreed that post should be advertised as a permanent position and once the reserves funding is exhausted the partnership will provide appropriate permanent funding to allow the post to remain in place. Recruitment for this permanent position post has recommenced.	YES - Reporting requirements are increasing from HSCP, and the current team complement cannot provide all information requested. Information provided to be more in depth and analysis based due to more sources of funding from SG that must be tracked and measured; controls around commitments require to be improved and monitored more closely with service directly; short notice demands for budget information and projections to allow the service respond to the crisis in care & vacancies mean workload is ever increasing and requires a senior position to develop and review. HSCP have agreed to provide permanent funding once the temporary funding is expended.
Service: ICT Operations Post: Asset & Compliance Officer No. of Posts: 2 Grade: Level 4	There were no difficulties in filling the roles, beyond a low volume of candidates. the successful applicants have proved to be valuable assets working on Improvements in asset & compliance distribution.	It should be noted that one of the posts has been vacant for some time but both posts are currently occupied. These posts have facilitated the creation of robust processes and procedures will streamline asset & compliance activities.	No - Alternative arrangements for this team, were put in place during the budget setting process for Financial Year 23/24. There is no requirement for these posts to be made permanent.
Service: ICT Operations Post: Dev Ops Engineer No. of Posts: 1 Grade: Level 10	Regulatory and legislative compliance including but not limited to security patching and development of automated services. I would note that the removal of the post will generate service delivery challenges moving forward.	The DevOps post was vacated in January 2023 when the staff member returned to their substantive post. The post was readvertised and the successful candidate took up their post at the end of February 2023. The funding for this post is due to expire in late February 2024. The activity supported by this post continues to revolve around regulatory and legislative compliance an dis essential in ensuring business as usual and development work continues.	YES - With the removal of the temporary post there will be a significant degradation in service provision within the team. This will include negative impacts on existing commitment to enterprise projects, including Legislative and Regulatory compliance activity and Data Centre migrations. Additionally, Business as Usual support activity will be adversely impacted by a reduction in staff numbers. Failure to augment core existing resources will result in increased call response and fix times for Infrastructure related activities and more importantly a longer period to apply security updates. Which will increase the risk of South Ayrshire Council's digital estate being compromised.
Service: Legal Services	The two posts were advertised (internally and externally) and we were hopeful that although	The additional resource of one temporary solicitor from May 2022 allowed the team	YES -In March 2023, a solicitor in the Property & Contracts team gained a promoted post. Following a recruitment process

Post details	November 2022 update	June 2023 update	Retain position on a permanent basis
Post: Solicitor	<p>temporary, the 2-year contract and flexibility for home working would attract several candidates. However, we only received a small number of applications and were only successful in recruiting one solicitor, despite readvertising.</p> <p>The additional resource of the temp solicitor in the Property & Contracts team has allowed for capacity to be improved within the team to provide legal advice in areas such as Ayrshire Growth Deal, community empowerment, property projects and contract disputes, as well as generally in more “business as usual” work such as sales/purchase/leasing and advice to Panels. In addition, the new solicitor has provided significant legal advice across the summer to the Housing team in connection with the implementation of the Short Term Let legislation.</p> <p>However, the team continues to be under pressure from competing demands and requirements of service departments, in particular in relation to Common Good title checks and investigation work, and a request to try a 3rd round of recruitment for the 2nd position is being reviewed by the Head of Service.</p>	<p>to have some improvement in capacity. The focus of the postholder's work has been contracts and governance. This has been a valuable additional resource to support both "business as usual" type work as well as a range of more specialist areas such as contract advice relating to the Scottish Airshow, policy advice on the introduction of new legislation, social work contracts and SRC disaggregation arrangements, some of which were unanticipated at the point of approval for the temporary posts in 2021 and could not have been resourced from within the permanent team. This freed up other team members to an extent, to deal with other advice areas. However, we were not able to fill the second temporary post, and as a result, the anticipated assistance for other areas of work, particularly for Common Good and Transforming the Estate, has not been obtained.</p>	<p>(internal and external), the temporary solicitor was appointed to that vacant permanent post. As a result, the team is now reduced to its previous complement. The team continues to sustain an increasing workload, and are aware that there will be further pressures coming, particularly work related to both the project work within the transforming work required by Best Value and the Transforming the Estate agenda involving increased commercialisation of the estate with complex sales of Council properties, and sharing of premises with other parties, leading to more new leases, licences and SLAs; high volume of work from the Assets/Estates service who will be progressing outstanding rent reviews and leases; and significant ongoing work relating to common good title checks and investigation work, and community empowerment. It is requested that the 2 temporary posts are both made permanent in the team, to provide the capacity internally to meet these significant demands.</p>
No. of Posts: 2			
Grade: Level 11			

**South Ayrshire Council
Equality Impact Assessment
Scoping Template**

Equality Impact Assessment is a legal requirement under the Public Sector Duty to promote equality of the Equality Act 2010. Separate guidance has been developed on Equality Impact Assessment's which will guide you through the process and is available to view here: <https://www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/equalities/impact-assessment.aspx>

Further guidance is available here: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/assessing-impact-and-public-sector-equality-duty-guide-public-authorities/>

The Fairer Scotland Duty ('the Duty'), Part 1 of the Equality Act 2010, came into force in Scotland from 1 April 2018. It places a legal responsibility on Councils to actively consider ('pay due regard to') how we can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage, when making strategic decisions. [FSD Guidance for Public Bodies](#) in respect of the Duty, was published by the Scottish Government in March 2018 and revised in October 2021. See information here: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/fairer-scotland-duty-guidance-public-bodies/>

1. Policy details

Policy Title	Corporate Support Services Capacity Issues
Lead Officer (Name/Position/Email)	Tim Baulk, Head of Finance, ICT and Procurement – tim.baulk@south-ayrshire.gov.uk

2. Which communities, groups of people, employees or thematic groups do you think will be, or potentially could be, impacted upon by the implementation of this policy? Please indicate whether these would be positive or negative impacts

Community or Groups of People	Negative Impacts	Positive impacts
Age – men and women, girls & boys	-	-
Disability	-	-
Gender Reassignment (Trans/Transgender Identity)	-	-
Marriage or Civil Partnership	-	-
Pregnancy and Maternity	-	-
Race – people from different racial groups, (BME) ethnic minorities and Gypsy/Travellers	-	-
Religion or Belief (including lack of belief)	-	-
Sex – (issues specific to women & men or girls & boys)	-	-

Community or Groups of People	Negative Impacts	Positive impacts
Sexual Orientation – person’s sexual orientation i.e. LGBT+, lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, heterosexual/straight	-	-
Thematic Groups: Health, Human Rights & Children’s Rights	-	-

3. What likely impact will this policy have on people experiencing different kinds of social disadvantage i.e. The Fairer Scotland Duty (This section to be completed for any Strategic Decisions). Consideration must be given particularly to children and families.

Socio-Economic Disadvantage	Negative Impacts	Positive impacts
Low Income/Income Poverty – cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food, clothing	-	-
Low and/or no wealth – enough money to meet Basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provision for the future	-	-
Material Deprivation – being unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, leisure/hobbies	-	-
Area Deprivation – where you live (rural areas), where you work (accessibility of transport)	-	-
Socio-economic Background – social class i.e. parent’s education, employment and income	-	-

4. Do you have evidence or reason to believe that the policy will support the Council to:

General Duty and other Equality Themes Consider the ‘Three Key Needs’ of the Equality Duty	Level of Negative and/or Positive Impact (High, Medium or Low)
Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation	Low
Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not	Low
Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. (Does it tackle prejudice and promote a better understanding of equality issues?)	Low
Increase participation of particular communities or groups in public life	Low
Improve the health and wellbeing of particular communities or groups	Low
Promote the human rights of particular communities or groups	Low
Tackle deprivation faced by particular communities or groups	Low

5. Summary Assessment

Is a full Equality Impact Assessment required? (A full Equality Impact Assessment must be carried out if impacts identified as Medium and/or High)	YES NO
Rationale for decision: This report provides an update on progress and outcomes achieved through the addition of temporary resources. Members' decision on this has no specific equality implications	
Signed : Tim Baulk	Head of Service
Date: 25 July 2023	