

Action No. 7 – Updated Annual Report on use of consultants 2024/25:

- b) Members have requested a briefing note explaining the Council's highest interim spend on the Neighbourhoods directorate.

The council's Neighbourhoods Division (Neighbourhood Services, Waste Service and Market Operations), comprises of approximately 170 operational staff whose work consists of waste collection, market operations, street cleansing, removal of fly-tips and dead animals, cleansing of foreshores and beaches, and coastal event support, plus the grounds maintenance of our parks, public owned spaces, and assets - throughout 700 square miles of East Lindsey's district. To provide statutory services efficiently it is necessary that these services operate with a full establishment of staff.

The Waste Service cannot logistically and safely crew the HGV vehicles for the daily collection of household waste, recycling, and garden waste, with reduced staffing numbers.

In the Neighbourhoods Service agency workers are essential to cover a temporary shortfall in staff due to vacancy management and long-term sickness to support service provision during the busy tourist season on the coast.

Agency staff are also sourced to support additional requirements in the event of an emergency incident – an example most recently was in response to the north-sea ship collision, which resulted plastic 'nurdles' washed up ELDC's beaches, which required manual removal.

The cost of agency is offset by a reduction in staff costs when there are vacancies. In 2024/25 the variance between salary costs and agency costs in Neighbourhoods was -£37,000, and in waste was £43,600. So, while there is a considerable agency spend across the Division, the actual cost of using agency support in 2024/25 to the whole Neighbourhoods Division was £6,600.

Notwithstanding that, there are other measures we use to reduce the need for agency staff. Staff sickness absence is diligently managed in partnership with PSPS HR services to ensure employees are supported through any ill health and are able to return to work as soon as possible. Vacancies are also turned around as quickly as possible.

Additionally, a cross council (SELCP) procurement exercise for agency supply has recently been concluded, which will ensure best value rates for agency staff moving forward.