

AUDIT STANDARDS & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

11th MAY 2016

VALEUR CONSULTING

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr. Geoff Denaro
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Deb Poole – Head of Transformation
Wards Affected	All Wards
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

To present the Committee with an update of the work and associated costs in relation to Valeur consulting.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to NOTE the update and recommend any actions necessary.

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 The costs associated with the work undertaken by Valeur Consulting since 2014 has been £139k across Bromsgrove and Redditch Councils. The allocated cost purely for the Bromsgrove related cost is £44k over the two years. There was a charge of £28k in 2014/15 and £16k for 2015/16.

The contract with Valeur Consulting is with Bromsgrove District Council and is supported by a waiver which was agreed in 2014 at an estimated £100k. Two vacant posts in the transformation team have been used to fund the costs over the last two years. The vacant posts are Project Support Officers on a salary of £30k. It was decided to keep these posts vacant in order to fund the specialist systems thinking support needed for the transformation of the organisation. Recruitment of an experienced systems thinker into a post on the establishment would be extremely difficult as these skills are in high demand and consequently command high salaries.

Legal Implications

- 3.2 In accordance with the Bromsgrove District Council Contracts Procedure Rules (Revised March 2008) tendering/quotation procedures may be waived when the work/services is of an urgent nature or other special circumstances as described below and may only be actioned on the written authority of the appropriate Head of

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Service for Contracts valued up to £49,999 or a Corporate Director for Contracts valued over £50,000. The waiver for Valeur was justified due to the work that had already commenced by the Public Services Academy in developing a systems thinking approach to service delivery. It was important to maintain the continuity of the experience in supporting this methodology of working.

- 3.3 There are a number of reasons that a tender procedure is not completed and are included within the Contract Rules. These include:
- where the supply is proposed under special arrangements negotiated by the Office Government Commerce in which event the said special arrangements must be complied with;
 - the timescale genuinely precludes competitive tendering. Failure to plan the work properly is not a justification for a single tender;
 - specialist expertise is required and is available from only one source;
 - the task is essential to complete a project, and arises as a consequence of a recently completed assignment and engaging different consultants for the new task would be inappropriate;
 - there is clear benefit to be gained from maintaining continuity with an earlier project. However, in such cases the benefits of such continuity must outweigh any potential financial advantage to be gained by competitive tendering;

- 3.4 In relation to Valeur Consulting there was benefit in maintaining the continuity with the existing work. The wider transformation programme was continuing in line with the systems thinking method to ensure complete alignment of the locality work to the existing organisational transformation. It is for this reason that Valeur Consulting was being used to support the delivery of the existing transformational work and would need to continue to do so in the locality for continuity and completeness. In addition the work was part of completing a project and engaging different consultants would be inappropriate.

Service/Operational Implications

- 3.5 In 2012 Bromsgrove joined the Reshaping Public Services Academy (along with a number of other public sector bodies – and hosted by Stoke Council) which provided resource to support the ongoing programs of transformation at the Councils. A number of specialist

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officers were part of the team that we drew on to support this work – this included Valeur Consulting. It was anticipated that the Academy would continue to grow and attract more partners to create a pool of system thinking practitioners that could be called on to offer support and guidance. Unfortunately the Academy was not as successful as expected and to enable the transformation work to continue at Bromsgrove. Valeur Consulting was retained to support the Council with a formal waiver approved to an estimated value of £100k. Using the specialist support officer ensured that the wider transformation program continued in line with systems thinking methods.

Over the two years Valeur Consulting has worked across the organisation in developing service redesign in Environmental Services (place teams), Customer Services and Financial Support and enabling services. Significant savings have been realised for the Council in the support of budget pressures whilst enhancing service delivery to our communities.

3.6 Intervention Work

Valeur Consulting has worked closely with the Management Team and 4th tier managers over the last two years to support the transformational changes to the way we deliver our services and to realise significant savings to support the financial pressures whilst enhancing service delivery to our community. The key areas supported have been;

- Place Teams within Environmental and Community Services;
- Financial Support with the Revenues and Benefits team;
- Providing guidance in working in the localities with BDHT and the Sunrise project.
- Working with the Planning team to ensure applications are dealt with by one officer; and
- Providing support to enabling services in mapping out the service delivery to make them more effective.

3.7 Management Team

Valeur Consulting has provided strategic support and guidance to the Management Team in our development towards being a systems thinking organisation including the creation of opportunities for wider public sector agency work to enhance services to our communities. Other work has included facilitating sessions for Managers and the leadership team in development areas we have identified. Support for the development of the Corporate Plan has been undertaken including a session on key priorities with the Cabinet.

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3.8 Connecting Families

Valeur Consulting involvement in 'Connecting Families' has been seen as the contribution to the project by Redditch Borough Council and has been charged on this basis. They have provided the lead on the scoping & check stage and has continued to support the team throughout the intervention as they move towards the redesign of their services. This cost has been met in full by Redditch Borough Council.

During 'scoping and check' stage, Valeur:

- Helped the team to understand the method for change;
- Helped the team to 'map the flow' process;
- Explained and supported the mapping of cases,
- Explained why learning and questioning is important;
- Helped them to establish some 'measures'
- Helped them to develop principles,
- Supported the proposed redesign, and
- Supported the development of a different culture and approach,
- Assisted in the identification of 'system conditions' and
- Challenged senior leaders to adopt the different approach and to change how they work.

3.9 'Connecting Families' is a cross agency initiative involving: Health Visitors, Your Ideas, Early Help Parenting, Police, school nurses, DWP, CAMHS, Housing locality, post 16 support, Early Help Transition, Social Workers, Mental Health, Early Help, Early Start, Housing Benefits, Home Start, Stronger Families to support families across the Borough (and ultimately across Worcestershire) in solving issues in a cross organisational way to provide a better service to residents and to save the public purse in the future.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

3.10 There are no implications arising out of this report.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

Effective budget and internal control is part of the finance risk register and financial costs are monitored on a monthly basis to ensure overspends to budget are mitigated.

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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