

1. **Appointment of Recruitment Services** (Pages 2 – 10)

CABINET MEMBERS DELEGATED DECISION

Open		Operational			
Any especially affected Wards	n/a				
Lead Member: Cllr Simon Ring E-mail: cllr.simon.ring@west-norfolk.gov.uk		Other Cabinet Members consulted: All of Cabinet			
		Other Members consulted: n/a			
Lead Officer: Emma Hodds E-mail: emma.hodds@west-norfolk.gov.uk		Other Officers consulted: Executive Leadership Team and Corporate Leadership Team			
Financial Implications YES	Policy/Personnel Implications YES	Statutory Implications YES	Equality Impact Assessment: Pre-screening completed	Risk Management Implications YES	Environmental Considerations NO
Open					
Date of publication of report: 2nd October 2026			Date decision to be taken: 9th October 2026		
Deadline for Call-In: 16th October 2026					

TITLE: APPOINTMENT OF RECRUITMENT SERVICES

Summary

This decision confirmed appointment of Opus People Solutions as the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk's preferred recruitment partner and Managed Service Provider (MSP). The appointment would be made through an existing compliant ESPO framework and establish a single corporate approach to agency recruitment across the Council.

The proposed arrangement will provide greater control over agency staffing expenditure, improve compliance with employment and IR35 requirements, strengthen governance, and deliver enhanced management information on temporary workforce usage. It will also provide managers with access to a wider network of recruitment suppliers and candidates through a single managed service. The arrangement should also reduce costs due to the preferential rate that is provided through the framework.

Decision to be taken

1. Approve the appointment of Opus People Solutions as the Borough Council's preferred recruitment partner and Managed Service Provider (MSP) for the supply of recruitment services.
2. Authorise the award of a call-off contract through the appropriate ESPO framework arrangement.



Reason for Decision

The appointment will provide greater control of agency recruitment expenditure, improve compliance, strengthen workforce planning, standardise recruitment processes, and deliver a more efficient and transparent approach to the engagement of temporary workers across the Council.

1 Background

- 1.1 The Council currently engages temporary and agency workers through a variety of recruitment agencies and arrangements. While this approach provides flexibility, it does not provide a consistent corporate approach to workforce planning, agency spend management or supplier oversight.
- 1.2 In considering how best to strengthen the Council's approach to temporary recruitment, officers reflected on the current arrangements in place, which rely on multiple recruitment agencies operating through separate contractual arrangements. This highlights opportunities to improve governance, compliance assurance, financial control, supplier oversight and workforce planning through the adoption of a single Managed Service Provider (MSP) model.
- 1.3 The compliant public sector procurement frameworks were reviewed to determine providers capable of delivering a fully managed recruitment solution. The ESPO Managed Services for Temporary Agency Resources (MSTAR4) Framework was identified as the most appropriate route because it is a fully compliant public sector framework specifically established for managed workforce solutions. The framework enables the Council to make a direct award where the provider can demonstrate that it meets the Council's requirements.
- 1.4 Under this contract Opus would:
 - Act as the Council's single point of contact for agency recruitment requirements.
 - Source candidates directly or through its wider network of approved recruitment suppliers.
 - Undertake compliance checking and onboarding processes.
 - Manage timesheets, invoicing and supplier performance.
 - Provide management information and spend reporting.
 - Support workforce planning and recruitment activity across the organisation



1.5 The anticipated benefits include:

Improved Financial Control - The managed service model will provide consolidated reporting on agency spend and greater visibility of recruitment costs across the organisation. Monthly reporting will support stronger budget management and accountability.

Reduced costs to the Council – The average fee charged by agencies is 20%, Opus charge 10%. There is also no finder's fee, which is common practice with most agencies – for example they will charge anything between 20% and 30% of the annual salary if you convert a person to a permanent contract, this cost is NIL with Opus.

Enhanced Compliance - Opus will manage employment checks, IR35 compliance requirements and other statutory recruitment obligations, helping reduce organisational risk.

Workforce Planning - The arrangement will support a more strategic approach to workforce planning by providing market intelligence, recruitment expertise and access to wider candidate pools.

Reduced Recruitment Times - The proposed model gives access to an established supply chain of recruitment agencies and candidates, enabling vacancies to be filled more quickly when temporary resources are required.

Public Sector Values - Both the ESPO framework and Opus operate within a public-sector environment, ensuring that services are delivered with an understanding of local government requirements and public value principles.

2 Options Considered

- 2.1 Continue current arrangements – this would involve service areas using individual agencies for such staff and often paying a higher rate as economies of scale mean that beneficial rates are difficult to achieve. Continuing as we are would also mean that we carry the IR35 risk and need to internally undertake the appropriate checks before employment commences. This option would retain flexibility but would not address concerns regarding corporate oversight, spend control, consistency or workforce planning.
- 2.2 Undertake a full open procurement exercise - Whilst feasible, this would require additional time and resources and would duplicate work already undertaken through the ESPO framework route

3 Policy Implications

- 3.1 Not applicable to this report.

4 Financial Implications



- 4.1 The managed service model is expected to deliver improved visibility and control of agency staffing expenditure through standardised approval routes and reporting arrangements.
- 4.2 The contract will support more effective management of temporary staffing budgets and reduce the risk of uncontrolled agency expenditure. The final contract value will be determined by actual usage and demand across the organisation during the contract term, with the report being before Cabinet to ensure that there is correct approval in place should the spend exceed officer delegations.
- 4.3 Spend in relation to this arrangement will be from existing budgets within the council that relate to staffing. As outlined above there is expected to savings realised through this contract award.
- 4.4 Average agency spend (within budget) over a year is circa £709,000, 20% of this is paid to agencies to find and recruit the staff. With Opus the charge is 10% so on this average spend it is anticipated that a saving of £70,000 can be achieved. In addition, when / if staff are made permanent agencies tend to charge 20% to 30% of the annual salary as a finders fee, there is no such fee with this contract.

5 HR Implications

- 5.1 The proposal does not transfer any Council staff to Opus. The arrangement will support recruiting managers by providing a consistent corporate process for the engagement of temporary workers and improving access to qualified candidates when vacancies arise.

6 Environmental Implications

- 6.1 Not applicable to this report.

7 Statutory Considerations

- 7.1 The procurement of Opus will be through a compliant framework agreement. The proposed arrangement will assist the Council in managing employment-related risks by introducing a consistent process for recruitment, onboarding, right to work checks, references and other pre-employment compliance requirements. In addition, Opus undertakes supplier management and compliance monitoring across its recruitment supply chain, reducing the risk of the Council engaging workers through agencies that do not meet required employment, safeguarding or regulatory standards.
- 7.2 The proposed contract will strengthen the Council's management of IR35 and employment tax risks. Public authorities are responsible for ensuring appropriate employment status determinations are made where off-payroll working rules apply. A managed service arrangement provides a more controlled environment in which assignments can be assessed, monitored and administered consistently.



8 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 8.1 Pre-screening completed.

9 Risk Management Implications

- 9.1 Under the current arrangements, there is a risk that services may experience delays in securing suitably skilled temporary resources when vacancies arise. Through its established recruitment expertise and extensive supplier network, Opus will provide access to a wider pool of candidates and recruitment providers, reducing the risk of resource shortages and supporting service continuity.
- 9.2 There is also a risk that agency recruitment activity could be undertaken inconsistently across the organisation, resulting in differing recruitment practices, varied commercial arrangements and limited corporate oversight. The proposed managed service model will introduce a single, standardised process for agency recruitment, ensuring all temporary staffing requirements are managed through an approved corporate route and subject to consistent governance arrangements.
- 9.3 The Council must also ensure compliance with employment legislation, right-to-work requirements, vetting processes and IR35 obligations. The managed service arrangement will strengthen compliance controls by requiring these checks to be undertaken through a specialist provider with established processes and expertise, thereby reducing the risk of non-compliance and associated financial or reputational consequences.
- 9.4 Finally, the Council currently has limited corporate visibility of agency staffing expenditure across all services. The proposed arrangement will provide regular management information, supplier performance monitoring and consolidated spend reporting, enabling improved financial oversight and supporting more effective workforce planning and budget management.

10 Declarations of Interest / Dispensations Granted

- 10.1 Not applicable to this report.

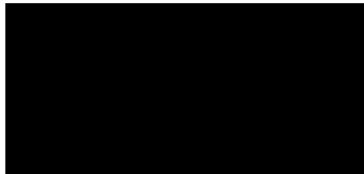
11 Background Papers



Authorisation from Executive Leadership Team

Post Held – Chief of Staff and Monitoring Officer

Signature

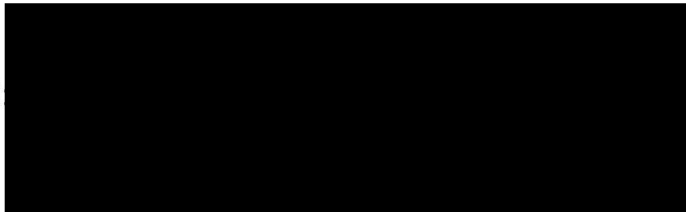


Date 30th September 2026

Cabinet Member for: *Business*

Date: *30/9/26*

Signed





PRE SCREENING EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT						
For equalities profile information please visit Norfolk Insight - Demographics and Statistics - Data Observatory						
Name of policy/service/function		Appointment of recruitment services				
Is this a new or existing policy/service/function? (tick as appropriate)		New	☒	Existing		
Brief summary/description of the main aims of the policy/service/function being screened. Please state if this policy/service is rigidly constrained by statutory obligations, and identify relevant legislation.		The letting of a contract for recruitment services for the council				
Who has been consulted as part of the development of the policy/service/function? – new only (identify stakeholders consulted with)		n/a				
Question		Answer				
1. Is there any reason to believe that the policy/service/function could have a specific impact on people from one or more of the following groups, for example, because they have particular needs, experiences, issues or priorities or in terms of ability to access the service? Please tick the relevant box for each group. NB. Equality neutral means no negative impact on any group. If potential adverse impacts are identified, then a full Equality Impact Assessment (Stage 2) will be required. <i>*For more information on health inequalities please visit The King's Fund</i>			Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unsure
					X	
Age					X	
Disability					X	
Sex					X	
Gender Re-assignment					X	
Marriage/civil partnership					X	
Pregnancy & maternity					X	
Race					X	
Religion or belief					X	
Sexual orientation					X	
Armed forces community					X	
Care leavers					X	
Health inequalities*					X	
Other (eg low income, caring responsibilities)					X	



Please provide a brief explanation of the answers above:				
The report covers entering into a contract to deliver a service, based on need and is not a policy.				
Question	Answer	Comments		
2. Is the proposed policy/service likely to affect relations between certain equality communities or to damage relations between the equality communities and the Council, for example because it is seen as favouring a particular community or denying opportunities to another?	No	The report covers the spend to enter into a contract and deliver improvements to the Council, it is proposed without prejudice.		
3. Could this policy/service be perceived as impacting on communities differently?	No	The report covers the spend to enter into a contract and deliver improvements to the Council, it is proposed without prejudice.		
If 'yes' to questions 2 - 3 a full impact assessment will be required unless comments are provided to explain why this is not felt necessary:				
Decision agreed by EWG member:				
4. Are any impacts identified above minor and if so, can these be eliminated or reduced by minor actions? If yes, please agree actions with a member of the Corporate Equalities Working Group and list agreed actions in the comments section	Yes / No	Actions:		
		Actions agreed by EWG member:		
5. Is the policy/service specifically designed to tackle evidence of disadvantage or potential discrimination?	Yes / No	Please provide brief summary:		
Assessment completed by:				
Name	Emma Hodds			
Job title	Chief of Staff and Monitoring Officer			
Date completed	18 September 2026			
Reviewed by EWG member		Date	21.09.2026	



	C Marriott		
✓ Please tick to confirm completed EIA Pre-screening Form has been shared with Corporate Policy (corporate.policy@west-norfolk.gov.uk)			
Revision 7			