



**TITLE OF CONSULTATION:** **ADDITIONAL CAPACITY IN CUSTOMER SERVICES**

**OFFICER REQUESTING:** **LOUISE WOOD, COVID PEOPLE WORKSTREAM LEAD**

## **PURPOSE**

1.1 To appoint x6 Customer Services Assistants (front-line customer contact centre operatives) on six month fixed-term contracts in order to respond to an increase in citizen calls for service during the COVID public health emergency.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)**

2.1 It is recommended that:

- (i) Six additional Customer Services Assistants be appointed on a six-month fixed term contract
- (ii) These are Grade 4 roles, with a salary of between £20,751-£22,911. Assuming appointments are made at the top of the grade, and assuming 25% on-costs, the maximum financial liability is: £85,914. This is requested from the £250,000 emergency fund agreed by P&R in March 2020. Although this is a maximum cost, it is anticipated that the actual cost may be slightly lower as not all appointments will be made at the top of the grade.

## **3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 3.1 RDC has seen an uplift in calls from citizens due to COVID-19. We predict we will continue to receive calls at a high level throughout the public health emergency – especially as the government instruction to stay home means that customers are more likely to call than visit the offices in person. To answer and direct citizen calls, it is vital that RDC retains numbers in its frontline customer contact centre – which is staffed by Customer Services Assistants.
- 3.2 At the same time as seeing an increase in demand, RDC is facing a reduction in capacity in the Customer Services Team. This is due to members of the team having to be redeployed into grant-making and benefits functions in order to support the Council's priorities during COVID. These posts need to be back-filled, and additional capacity is also needed in order to cope with the continued extra demand.
- 3.3 RDC officers deem it prudent to recruit numbers beyond the immediate gaps, in order to plan for potential staff absence of up to 30% due to sickness. This will protect the frontline service, and enable citizen calls to continue to be answered and directed to the correct place within the Council.

#### **4.0 SIGNIFICANT RISKS**

- 4.1 The customer service assistant role has been identified as a key worker under the government definition. It requires some time spent at Ryedale House fulfilling rotas as well as some home-working. We will mitigate health and safety risk by advertising that candidates should be fit and well, and not in any of the most “at risk” categories for COVID-19.

#### **5.0 IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The following implications have been identified:

- a) Financial  
Maximum £85,914. This is requested from the £250,000 emergency fund agreed by P&R in March 2020.
- b) Legal  
None anticipated. Recruitment of these posts would be on fixed-term contract and subject to HR law around such contracts. Notice period for termination of contract would be one week.
- c) Other (Equalities, Staffing, Planning, Health & Safety, Environmental and Climate Change, Crime & Disorder)  
None.

## 6.0 MONITORING OFFICER ADVICE

Consultation is required with the Leader as this would normally have been a member decision owing to the costs involved.
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## 7.0 CONSULTATION RECORD

According to the Constitution, under urgency powers, decisions usually taken by the Council and its committees are taken by the CEO following consultation with the appropriate elected members.

The appropriate elected members are:

- The Leader of the Council
- The Chair of the appropriate committee, for matters relating to that specific committee<sup>1</sup>
- Relevant Ward member(s), if any, for matters of particular relevance to that ward<sup>2</sup>

Name of consultee	Cllr Duncan - Leader
This is urgently required to deal with increased customer demand and capacity constraints at this critical time. I have been able to discuss this with Steve Arnold (Deputy Leader of Council; Ryedale First Independent group leader) and Di Keal (Liberal Democrat group leader) who agreed with this approach. I feel that additional capacity as required should also be drawn from volunteers, including elected members and furloughed employees of other public authorities.	
Date consultation completed	31-03-20

## 8.0 DECISION

Decision of the CEO based on consultation	The recommendations are approved.
Date	31-03-20

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<sup>1</sup> "Chairman of the appropriate Committee" refers to committee specific matters and does not mean that all Committee Chairs will be consulted on everything

<sup>2</sup> "Relevant Ward Member(s), if any" refers to ward specific matters and does not mean that all Members will be consulted on everything