

Item 9 - Question Time

To the Chair of the Corporate Resources Committee/Budget Leader

“In answer to my question to you at the last full Council highlighting the £115,000 fees paid to a Consultant over a 6 month period engaged at Highland Council in ICT in the position of Head of Digital Transformation, you said that you would get back to me and the Council with an explanation. I am still waiting so I would like to ask you for that report please?”

Response to Ms M Smith

The post of Head of Digital Transformation became vacant at the end of November 2016 and it was agreed not to recruit due to the pending review of the senior management structure and the need to hold vacant posts for potential redeployment opportunities. Members were consulted at the ICT Executive Board in November on the intention to appoint an interim manager with specific expertise, to provide senior leadership and expertise for the delivery of a number of critical ICT programmes including the transition to the new ICT contract with Wipro.

The Council was able to recruit a highly experienced Interim Manager who has provided excellent leadership for the transition to the new contract, which was delivered on time; the establishment of an ICT Network Refresh Programme, to support the roll-out of Chromebooks in schools; and management of the commercial issues that have arisen, including those associated with the delays in the [separate] transition to the Scottish Wide Area Network (SWAN). Their responsibilities have also included the leadership of customer and digital services and the development of a Digital Ambition for the Council.

Most importantly the Council has, as a result of securing the services of this Interim Manager, successfully managed a number of strategic risks which would have resulted in both reputational damage and significant unbudgeted costs to the Council, these costs could have risen to as much as £900k.

In this context the investment in this post has been justified and the budget of £100k for the post of Head of Digital Transformation has been used to meet costs, along with some additional investment from the service budget. The Council will consider proposals for the Senior Management Structure of the Council later on this agenda and, subject to that decision, permanent arrangements can then be made for the future leadership of Digital Transformation.