

Report to:	TOURISM, ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Steve Thompson, Director of Resources
Date of Meeting	13 December 2017

REPORTING THE USE OF EXTERNAL CONSULTANTS 2016/2017

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To consider the annual report detailing consultancy spend across all Council services during the 2016/2017 financial year.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

- 2.1 To note the annual spend paid to external consultants during 2016/2017.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

- 3.1 To provide a level of understanding of third-party spend paid to external consultants during 2016/2017.

- 3.2a Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

- 3.2b Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

- 3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

The report is for information only.

4.0 Council Priority:

- 4.1 The relevant Council Priority is organisational resilience.

5.0 Background Information

- 5.1 At its meeting on 15 December 2016, the Tourism, Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee confirmed its approval to a revised approach for the reporting of consultancy spending. This annual report sets out details of payments made to external consultants across the whole Council in 2016/2017 relating to both business and technical services.
- 5.2 The report indicates that a total of £2.3m was spent across the whole Council on external consultants during 2016/2017. A detailed analysis is provided at Appendix 7(a).

Does the information submitted include any exempt information?

No

List of Appendices:

Appendix 7(a) – External Consultants Spend Analysis 2016/2017

6.0 Legal considerations:

- 6.1 All Council expenditure over £250 is already published as part of Transparency Code requirements and therefore the provision of the data in this format should not breach any data protection requirements.

7.0 Human Resources considerations:

- 7.1 None

8.0 Equalities considerations:

- 8.1 None

9.0 Financial considerations:

- 9.1 The consultancy spend was contained within the 2016/2017 approved budget and in some cases subject to external grant funding.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

- 10.1 Due to limited resources and capacity the Council would be unable to fulfil all of its statutory requirements and deliver its capital programme without the advice and support from external consultants.

10.2 The use of consultants is critical to some projects in a number of ways; taking the Museum and the Tramway Extension as examples. In both cases the funding we have received from external funding agencies requires us to appoint certain experts to ensure the security of the funding, experts that we do not have on the staff of the Council nor would it be sensible for to retain. These may be specialists that are recommended by the funders or have very specific skills such as a Heritage Architect or Heritage Structural Engineer. If these experts were employed by the Council on the payroll we would make little use of them for the majority of time they were employed and their relative cost would be very high due to their “downtime”. Due to the size of these projects these costs can be relatively large but on the whole they are funded through the resources we have won through external funding grants to help us to build these great developments for the town.

11.0 Ethical considerations:

11.1 None

12.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

12.1 This report has been produced jointly by Internal Audit and the Corporate Procurement and Projects Team.

13.0 Background papers:

13.1 None.