# Newport City Council's reliance on agency staff exposes risks to long-term public service stability



Newport City Council's irresponsible reliance on agency staff is yet another glaring example of its failure to prioritize the long-term stability of public services. With nearly £19 million splurged on temporary workers last year—£10.3 million in schools alone—the council seems content with short-term fixes rather than investing in permanent, skilled personnel. This approach is akin to management refusing to develop its own talent, opting instead to sign players on loan, thereby undermining the consistency and quality of education and other vital services.

The opposition leader rightly criticizes the council’s focus on quick fixes, urging a shift towards filling vacancies with permanent employees. Permanent staff bring stability, experience, and a genuine commitment that fleeting agency workers simply cannot provide—yet Newport’s leadership continues to pour millions into short-term solutions. The danger is clear: reliance on temporary staffing erodes organisational continuity, leaving schools and services vulnerable to instability and inconsistent standards, just as Estyn has previously warned about the impacts of recruitment failures.

In justifying these costly practices, a council spokesperson claims that agency staff are necessary to “plug essential gaps,” but this reveals a failure of strategic planning. The ongoing expenditure, especially in schools, appears to be more about firefighting staffing shortages than about building a sustainable workforce. This temporary workaround comes at the expense of investment in dedicated, permanent personnel who could better serve the community in the long run.

Even as Newport’s leadership promotes a facade of efficiency, deeper scrutiny exposes their prioritization of budget management over genuine service quality. The recent decision to defer the creation of crucial senior roles—like a deputy police chief and deputy director of public services—mirrors a broader failure to allocate resources effectively. Instead, funds are diverted to cover staffing shortfalls, undermining the council’s ability to deliver stable and high-quality public services.

This short-sighted approach is further highlighted by the council’s ambitious infrastructure plans, which include over £128 million for upgrades—yet they continue to neglect the foundational need to develop a dependable, permanent workforce. Meanwhile, job vacancies in policing, water management, and technical fields remain unfilled, waiting for qualified candidates willing to commit long-term.

The overarching message is painfully clear: Newport City Council’s misguided focus on temporary staffing and budget juggling compromises the very fabric of public service. As residents face rising costs and diminished stability, the council’s leadership remains complicit in a system that prioritizes quick fixes over sustainable growth—another failure in governance that undermines community trust and jeopardizes the future of local services.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/25453525.opposition-leader-criticises-19m-newport-agency-spend/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.newportthisweek.com/articles/city-defers-new-positions-to-bolster-school-budget/> - In May 2024, Newport City Council deferred the creation of two new positions—a deputy police chief and a deputy director of public services—to allocate additional funds to Newport Public Schools. Facing a $2 million shortfall, the school district requested a 4% increase in funding. The council approved a 3.3% increase, amounting to approximately $932,000, and considered further layoffs to address the remaining gap. The decision underscores the council's prioritisation of educational funding amidst budget constraints.
3. <https://www.newportthisweek.com/articles/budget> - Newport City Council approved a $110 million budget for the fiscal year 2024, marking a 5% increase from the previous year. The budget addresses projected increases in employee salaries, benefits, and other expenses. It also includes a 3.23% increase in the residential property tax rate, with owner-occupied homes seeing an overall decrease due to exemptions. The budget reflects the city's efforts to balance fiscal responsibility with the need for enhanced public services.
4. <https://www.newportthisweek.com/articles/breaking-down-the-citys-128m-capital-improvement-plan/> - Newport's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for fiscal years 2023-2027 outlines $128.3 million in spending for infrastructure, parks, and facilities projects. Key initiatives include $12 million for upgrades to Long Wharf Pump Station, $40 million for relocating the city yard, and $10 million in bonds for reconstructing or removing Van Zandt Bridge. The CIP serves as a roadmap for the city's long-term infrastructure and maintenance needs, with funding sourced from bonds, user fees, and state loans.
5. <https://www.cityofnewport.com/en-us/city-hall/departments/human-resources/city-employment-application/employment-opportunities> - The City of Newport's Human Resources Department lists current employment opportunities, including positions such as Deputy City Manager, Water Plant Operator, and Engineering Technician. The department provides detailed application procedures, including the requirement for a completed application form, which can be submitted via email or in person at City Hall. This resource is essential for individuals seeking employment with the city, offering a transparent and accessible application process.
6. <https://www.cityofnewport.com/en-us/news/archives/city-manager-selection-process-moves-forward> - In February 2024, Newport initiated the next phase of its City Manager recruitment process, reviewing applications from over two dozen candidates nationwide. A three-member screening committee was formed to assess candidates based on management credentials and experience. The process includes public surveys to gather community input on priorities for the next manager, reflecting the city's commitment to a thorough and community-involved selection process.
7. <https://www.cityofnewport.com/city-hall/departments/police/recruitment-become-an-officer> - The City of Newport Police Department is actively recruiting new officers, with open application processes for both entry-level and certified officers. Applicants must complete written and physical agility tests administered by Fit2ServeRI.com. The department offers a structured training program, leading to appointment as a Probationary Police Officer, with a salary range of $58,683 to $83,331. This initiative aims to strengthen the police force by attracting qualified individuals committed to community service.