

# Human Resources Committee

14 March 2008



## Recruitment Protocol – Interim Appointment Arrangements

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### Report of Kim Jobson, Head of Strategic Human Resources

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#### Purpose

1. To provide the HR Committee with an update on the immediate implications in respect of the introduction of a recruitment protocol within the 8 councils of County Durham in light of Local Government Review (LGR). This recruitment protocol will be applied to all 8 affected Councils leading up to vesting day.

#### Background

2. On 22 January 2008 a decision was made by the Senior Officer Group (SOG) on a recruitment protocol to assist with the process for which vacancies are managed by all 8 councils. This referred to three levels of risk – High, Medium and Low which were to be identified through application of a jointly agreed matrix.
3. The reason for this jointly agreed recruitment protocol was to:
  - Protect existing permanent employees by “future proofing” all new appointments.
  - Retain existing and essential skills and capacity for the new authority.
  - Ensure that all Councils continue to deliver quality local services.
  - Ensure that interim appointment arrangements are practical and non-bureaucratic (and are therefore not bypassed).
  - Facilitate inter-authority working and cooperation in the lead up to vesting day.
  - Support all Councils in fulfilling their statutory duty to cooperate in the reorganisation via the release of employee resources.
4. However due to the complexity and number of roles with Durham County Council, a recommendation was made for all 8 Councils to consider advertising all posts internally to all 8 affected Councils (excluding specialist posts). This was considered a reasonable and pragmatic approach given the number of vacancies within the County Council.

#### Current Position

5. Whilst the majority of Councils have agreed to the recommendation referred to in 4, a small proportion of the Districts have opted to restrict advertising vacancies internally only to their own organisation in the first instance.

6. Durham County Council's (DCC) viewpoint remains unchanged, i.e. for DCC to adopt the principles outlined above. This approach has been made in consultation with our two larger service areas of A&CS and C&YPS who have both indicated that this is an acceptable approach given the circumstances. Therefore it has been agreed to advertise all posts internally to all 8 Councils in the first instance (with the exception of specialist posts – defined as no comparable post within the Districts, e.g. Social Worker, Home Care Worker).
7. Externally recruited permanent appointments should be kept to an absolute minimum in order to achieve the stated objectives and the proposals have been developed on the principle of a “family group” of County Durham Councils.
8. School based vacancies will remain unaffected by this proposal.

### **Implications/Timescales**

9. It is proposed that the new arrangements will apply with effect from Monday 3 March 2008 and all posts will be screened by the Employee Relations Team through the normal permission to fill system that is already in place. This will ensure that only posts identified as ‘specialist’ will be released to external advert. There will be close links with the Services to ensure this is undertaken reasonably and consistently to avoid any unnecessary blockages to the recruitment process.
10. In addition all vacancies advertised internally only to the 8 Councils would be restricted to temporary employees with more than 12 months service (at the closing date) and all permanent staff. This has been agreed with the Trade Unions and supports Durham County Council's criteria for alternative employment.
11. It is hoped that this process will not incur unnecessary delays in the recruitment process. Durham County Council closing dates for internal adverts for the 8 Councils will be reduced from the usual two weeks to 10 calendar days.
12. An LGR County Durham Update, Issue 2, has been circulated to all staff explaining the new arrangements in more detail.

### **Recommendations**

13. The HR Committee are asked to note the above report for information purposes.

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Local Government Reorganisation**

Yes, subject to transfer of HR policies and procedures.

### **Finance**

None directly.

### **Staffing**

This would create wider options to retain employees within the 8 councils of County Durham.

### **Equality and Diversity**

A objective justification has been made in relation to temporary employees of all 8 councils of County Durham with less than 12 months service.

### **Accommodation**

None directly.

### **Crime and Disorder**

None directly.

### **Sustainability**

None directly.

### **Human Rights**

None directly.

### **Localities & Rurality**

None directly.

### **Young people**

None directly.

### **Consultation**

The Trade Unions are in agreement with this protocol.

### **Health**

These measures are encouraged in order to minimise the impact of change and potential job insecurity.