

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Human Resources Committee** held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Friday 6 February 2015 at 10.00 am**

Present:

Councillor M Williams (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors J Armstrong, J Blakey, J Brown, J Clark, O Gunn, J Hillary, I Jewell, S Morrison, J Shuttleworth and J Turnbull

Also Present:

J Kemp – HR Support and Advice Manager
N Orton – HR Team Leader Operations and data/Pensions
L Mason – HR Business Lead, Neighbourhoods
J Walt – HR Business Lead, Children and Adults Services

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Iveson, R Bell, J Buckham, K Dearden, D Hicks, B Moir and R Ormerod.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor J Turnbull substituted for Councillor B Moir.

3 Declarations of Interest

Councillor J Clark declared an interest in item numbered 8 on the Agenda regarding an application for the early release of pension benefits on compassionate grounds from a former employee of Children and Adults Services. The Member left the meeting when the application was considered.

4 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2015 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

5 Exclusion of the Public

Resolved:

That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

6 Applications for Early Retirement and/or Voluntary Redundancy for Council Employees

Consideration was given to the joint report of the Corporate Directors, Regeneration and Economic Development, and the Head of Human Resources (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:

That the cases of Early Retirement and Voluntary Redundancy be noted and agreed with effect from the date specified in the report.

At this point Councillor J Clark left the meeting.

7 Application for Early Release of Pension Benefits on Compassionate Grounds from a former Employee of Children and Adults Services

Consideration was given to the joint report of the Corporate Directors, Children and Adults Services and Resources, and the Head of Human Resources (for copy see file of Minutes).

This application had been deferred at the last meeting of the Committee in order to seek clarification of information provided by the applicant.

Resolved:

That as there was no cost to the Council the application for the early release of pension benefits on compassionate grounds be granted with reductions (option 6(b) in the report).

8 Application for Early Release of Pension Benefits on Compassionate Grounds from a former Employee of Children and Adults Services

Consideration was given to the joint report of the Corporate Directors, Children and Adults Services and Resources, and the Head of Human Resources (for copy see file of Minutes).

In discussing the application some Members felt that in view of the applicant's circumstances the request for the early release of pension benefits should be granted without reductions. However other Members considered that the application should be granted with reductions at no capital cost to the Council.

Resolved:

That the application for the early release of pension benefits be granted on compassionate grounds with no reductions (option 6(c) in the report).

9 Workforce Reorganisation and Redundancy - Update on Activity

For information Members were provided with a report which gave an update on activity with regard to workforce reorganisation and redundancy from 2 December 2014 to 12 January 2015 (for copy see file of Minutes).

In considering the information provided Members discussed the use of Agency Workers across Service Groupings.

In response to questions Members were advised that Agency Workers were recruited for specific projects and short-term assignments. Options for reducing the number were being explored, including the use of fixed term contracts. Members expressed an interest in receiving an update on progress with reducing the number across the Authority and also savings associated with the employment of Agency Workers.

Councillor Shuttleworth referred to Services currently undergoing a restructure and asked for information regarding structures for Neighbourhood Services and Regeneration and Economic Development.

Councillor Hillary noted that for applications for ER/VR a Business Case was provided to demonstrate that there would be no detriment to service delivery, yet he noted an increase in overtime. The Member was advised that overtime costs related to essential functions over and above routine service delivery such as gritting.

The Member also asked for current total employment figures compared to year 2010/2011.

Councillor Gunn expressed an interest in apprenticeships and asked if the Committee could be provided with the total number of apprentices across the Authority and in which Services they were employed.

Resolved:

That the report be noted and Members be provided with the information requested.