

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Subject: WORKFORCE FLEXIBILITY
Meeting: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Date: 21 OCTOBER 2014
Author: DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Members will recall the actions outlined in the Revenue Budget 2014/15 report which was considered by Council on 12 February 2014, aimed at bringing added flexibility into the workforce to assist the Council in achieving sustainable savings through methods which avoid compulsory redundancies where possible.
- 1.2 This report provides an update on the steps which have been taken to date.

2. ACTIONS TAKEN

- 2.1 There were a number of actions highlighted to Members in February 2014, as possible methods which could be used to help bring added flexibility to the workforce to achieve sustainable savings. The following provides an update on each.

Voluntary Severance

- 2.2 A number of steps were to be taken with regards to Voluntary Severance, including seeking applications, making offers wherever possible and reviewing those applications which were previously rejected. All of these steps have been taken and in the current financial year, there have been 13 applications approved, giving a total net saving over 5 years of c£602,250. There have also been 3 applications approved for teaching staff, giving a total net saving over 5 years of c£47,500. For comparative purposes, during 2013/14, there were 7 applications with net savings over 5 years of c£435k, excluding teacher severances approved by Committee on a spend to save basis.
- 2.3 In addition, Council agreed that work should be undertaken to review the cost of the severance package. As Committee will be aware, this work has been completed with the revised Policy having been approved by Committee on 30 September 2014.

Vacancy Management

- 2.4 A range of steps have been taken by all Services to assist in achieving savings through vacancy management. Initially a 'clearing house' was established which included officers from all Services who reviewed all vacancies prior to advert. As a result of this work, protocols have been put in place to enable this group to be disbanded. Service Directors now manage vacancies and workloads in line with the following protocols:
- With the exception of exempt posts (see below), posts will be held vacant for a period of 3 months prior to advert, unless there is a financial detriment or service risk in doing so;
 - Lists of exempt posts for the purposes of vacancy management have been agreed, which essentially cover core services for which there would be service risks if posts were left vacant. For example, teaching posts, a range of social care posts, and other such posts which would impact on service delivery if not filled;

- Post hours will be reduced wherever possible to minimise spend but to ensure service delivery is maintained at appropriate standards;
- Temporary posts will be used wherever possible and appropriate, to provide added future flexibility;
- Casual posts will be used rather than overtime to ensure minimum spend on overtime and other such allowances wherever possible.

2.5 With regards to the use of casual posts, it is worth highlighting that the Council does not make use of zero hours contracts, but instead employs casual workers in line with the Casual Employment Policy which was previously agreed by Members. For Members' information, casual workers are employed to cover absences or specific peaks in workload demand. The Council is under no obligation to offer employment to individuals on the casual list, and equally, there is no obligation on such individuals to accept any offer of employment from the Council or to remain on standby for offers of employment. As Members may be aware, this differs from zero hours contracts where individuals may be required to be available on a standby arrangement and in some cases, employers may also limit the opportunity for individuals to take up work elsewhere. There are absolutely no such requirements for those who work on a casual basis with the Council. Equally, such arrangements provide added flexibility for both the Council and individuals, some of whom prefer such flexible work arrangements.

Redeployment

2.6 The option of redeployment for employees who wish to volunteer for a change in job has also been promoted. To date however, only one employee has volunteered for this. Discussions with Trade Unions are continuing to assess how the uptake of this option can be better promoted.

Contractual Matters

2.7 Work continues to be undertaken with Trade Unions to review terms and conditions and other contractual matters which may be of assistance in achieving longer term savings. For example, one such area of work includes a review of working patterns in different areas of the Council to help achieve longer term savings.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 Section 2 of the report provides Members with a summary of the actions being taken to assist the Council in achieving workforce flexibility, aimed at realising sustainable savings through methods which avoid compulsory redundancies. Work will continue on all of these options which will be developed in consultation with Trade Unions, to assist with the Council's budget strategy.

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 It is recommended that the Executive Committee note the content of the report.

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DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

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Ref: AAP211014KA-Workforce Flexibility
Contact Name: Karen Algie, Extn 6223

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.