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|  | **Highland Council**  **Employee Early Release Scheme**  **5th January 2017 to 20th January 2017** |
| **1.** | **Introduction** |
| 1.1 | The Highland Council is looking at ways to minimise the number of compulsory redundancies across the organisation. In response to this the Council has decided to ask for volunteers to apply for an Employee Early Release Scheme. This scheme enables individuals to consider if the time is right for them to move on and explore new opportunities, if doing so meets their personal circumstances and the ongoing needs of the Council. The scheme offers employees to resign by mutual consent and the employee will receive the associated benefits of the scheme, outlined below. |
| **2.** | **Criteria for eligibility** |
| 2.1 | The scheme is voluntary and is open to all employees with more than one year’s continuous service (as at the 5th January 2017), with the exception of Teachers and employees delivering NHS commissioned services under our integration scheme. |
| **3.** | **Benefits associated with the scheme** |
| 3.1 | There will be two options available under the Employee Early Release Scheme:   * Receive 26 weeks basic pay as a compensation payment and access to actuarially reduced pension entitlement , if applicable   **OR**   * Access to unreduced pension, if applicable and no additional compensation payment   Compensation payments up to £30,000 are not subject to deductions for tax. |
| 3.2 | An online estimate is available for eligible employees that will calculate pension options. |
| 3.3 | Compensation benefits will be based on the employee’s basic pay and guidance with a link to the employee’s electronic payslip will be provided. |
| 3.4 | Pension estimates will be based on an employee’s length of membership and pensionable pay up to the proposed future employment end date. |
| **4.** | **Procedure** |
| 4.1 | The Council recognise that making this decision will be difficult for employees. Full information and guidance is available on the Highland Council Employee Early Release scheme web pages. Employees who have specific concerns or require assistance with the procedure can speak to an adviser who can assist them by calling the Helpline on (01349) 886669. |
| 4.2 | Applying for Employee Early Release means that an employee’s application will be considered by the Service. |
| 4.3 | Employees who wish to consider this early release should view the online pension estimate and guidance reference compensation benefit. |
| 4.4 | Once the estimate figures have been obtained and the employee wishes to progress their application, the employee will apply for Employee Early Release through the Workforce Change web pages. |
| 4.5 | Where an employee making an application is employed in more than one post they will be required to leave all their posts to take advantage of the scheme. |
| 4.6 | Once the period of this scheme is closed, Service Senior Management Teams, advised by their Finance Manager and HR Business Partner, will consider the applications. |
| 4.7 | Applications will be considered based on savings and the impact on service provision, including the ability to reorganise services within budget, and the impact on other posts. |
| 4.8 | Directors will collate details of applications, business cases and proposals in a standard report and submit these to the Director of Finance for consideration before full scrutiny by the Executive Leadership Team. These reports should include:   * Details of applications and proposals * Details of business cases * Details of financial savings * Impact on Service delivery * Details on any equality impact assessment |
| 4.9 | If the employee’s application is accepted for the Employee Early Release scheme then the employee will resign and sign settlement agreements. The employee will be required to work their full contractual notice to receive the benefits, as outlined above. |
| 4.10 | Approved applicants who wish to withdraw their application from the scheme must do so before they sign a settlement agreement. |
| **5.** | **Period of the Scheme** |
| 5.1 | This Employee Early Release Scheme will be open to applications from eligible employees for the period from 5th January 2017 to 20th January 2017. |
| **6.** | **Further information** |
| 6.1 | Full information and guidance are available on the Highland Council Workforce Change web pages. Employees who have specific concerns or require assistance should speak to an adviser who can assist them by calling the Workforce Change Helpline on (01349) 886669. |