

Purpose

1. This report provides the Overview Committee with an outline of the preliminary work that has been undertaken with staff at Sherwood Industries to identify and assess the support needs of those staff members that have expressed interest in retaining employment should the decision to close Sherwood Industries be taken by Full Council in February 2012.

Background

2. As reported at the Overview Committee in November, the Council has undertaken to support all staff at Sherwood Industries to find alternative suitable employment where this is their preferred option.
3. The activities undertaken to date have been limited to enable the public consultation to be completed and to ensure and demonstrate that the decision to be taken by Members at Full Council in February has not been pre-empted.
4. A number of initiatives will be undertaken simultaneously in order to ensure that all the disabled employees who wish to remain in work are supported to find suitable alternative employment, including:
 - identifying opportunities within the other Supported Businesses
 - working with the Shaw Trust to identify external employment opportunities
 - protecting the employment status of existing employees where other initiatives are unable to identify suitable alternative employment
5. In 2011, some analysis was undertaken to map the skills profile and support needs of the disabled employees working in Sherwood Industries at that time. A summary of this analysis is shown in Appendix 1.
6. Since this time, and running concurrently with the consultation process, one to one meetings have been facilitated between staff at Sherwood Industries and a human resources officer on the 13th and 19th December. Attendance was purely voluntary as the one to one meetings were offered over and above any employer-led meetings that the County Council would be required to undertake following any decision to close the factory. The purpose of the meetings was to give staff an opportunity to ask any questions they have as well as to enable the Council to identify support levels that may be required.

7. An officer from the Shaw Trust was also available at Sherwood Industries on 13th & 19th December for staff to talk to. Nine disabled workers took the opportunity to meet with the Shaw Trust officer.
8. All staff, with the exception of one member of staff who was absent through ill health, took the opportunity to attend a meeting. Many of the conversations were quite detailed in nature but, in summary, of the 42 staff who attended a one to one meeting:
 - 38 expressed an interest in redeployment although 8 of these staff also asked for a voluntary redundancy estimate
 - 9 expressed an interest in voluntary redundancy (1 of which firmly wished for this option)
 - 1 expressed an interest in compulsory redundancy due to a concern about the impact on future benefits
 - 2 did not wish to express a preference at this stage
9. An estimate of benefits has been requested for all those staff (10) who expressed interest in redundancy.
10. In addition to the above, The Shaw Trust has offered to run a range of workshops at Sherwood Industries for Work Choice participants. Sessions, which will be facilitated from January 2012 and include:
 - Confidence Building
 - Transferable Skills
 - CV Session
 - Application Forms
 - Preparing for Interviews
11. All staff at the County Council's other supported businesses (County Enterprise Foods, County Horticulture & Work Training and Solutions4Data) are due to receive a letter shortly to advise them of the opportunity to express an interest in voluntary redundancy. The outcome of this will enable officers to estimate how many opportunities could become available through this route within these other supported businesses.
12. With the support of the Service Director, HR, discussions are currently planned with Corporate Directors and Service Directors across the Council to consider all potential redeployment opportunities for the Sherwood Industries staff

Recommendation:

Members are requested to consider and comment on the information provided.

Caroline Baria

Service Director, Joint Commissioning, Quality and Business Change