

## WORKSTYLES POLICY

Policy Date	April 2022
Review Date <i>when under review, this policy should continue to be used</i>	April 2025
This policy is non-contractual	
Version <i>This policy may be amended prior to the review date to comply with any new, relevant legislation or organisational change that affects how this policy is used</i>	1
Related Policies	Flexible Working Policy Equalities and Diversity Policy Capability Policy Disciplinary Policy H&S Policy 5C ICT Security Policy Suite Managing Change Policy Carer Policy

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## 1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework of understanding with regards to how the Council determines staff workstyles. It also sets out the parameters that are in place to ensure the workstyles approach for each member of staff takes account of the needs of the service and identifies the most efficient ways of working for the organisation and the individual.
- 1.2. The future working trial has illustrated the benefits of a hybrid approach to working for the organisation and the individual. The policy which follows encourages:
  1.
    - greater flexibility for staff with consideration for work/life balance
    - greater productivity
    - reduction in the carbon footprint which supports the green agenda
    - redesign and review of office space
    - greater diversity in the workforce profile
  - 2.
- 1.3. Havant Borough Council (HBC) are committed to providing a safe working environment ensuring the health, safety and welfare of all employees. This includes promoting good health and wellbeing for all employees.
  - 3.
- 1.4. HBC will continue to review advice by professional bodies to act on best advice e.g. NHS, Government guidance, HSE. The guidance from professional bodies may alter the guidance set out in this policy and staff will be notified of any changes which need to be made and the policy updated where appropriate.

## 2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy applies to all employees of the council who fulfil the eligibility criteria set out in section 4, regardless of gender, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, disability, sexual orientation, age, trade union membership or public interest disclosure status. It also applies to part time and fixed term employees.

## 3. Principles

- 3.1 The following principles apply in utilising this policy:
  - The default position for the council will be a hybrid style working model. This means that there will be:
    - a) Employees who are classed as office workers whose role or circumstances mean that they need to be present in the office every day to perform their duties.

And,

- b) Employees whose working style range from those that work at home for most of the time but come in for face-to-face meetings when required to employees that work most of the time in the office and everything in between.

- The exact mix between locations should allow the individual to meet business needs in the most efficient way and allow them flexibility to have the best work life balance.
  - The decision on the degree of homeworking in relation to any given role rests at a corporate level. Decisions made on the degree of homeworking that can be accommodated in an existing or new role will be made at Director level and will follow the approach detailed at section four.
  - Individual workstyles should be reviewed on an annual basis, or when a significant change in the way the role is delivered makes a review sensible.
  - The successful application of hybrid working arrangements relies on mutual trust between the member of staff and their manager. Employees must take responsibility for managing their work and their time during work hours. Breaches of trust will be treated very seriously and may be regarded as misconduct. Employees may also be subject to formal action in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy.
  - There will be some circumstances where working in a hybrid way is not a viable option or where the operational needs necessitate a different approach. Such circumstances are expected to be the exception not the norm and will be determined by management and communicated to relevant teams or individuals where necessary.
  - The number of days per week each employee spends attending the office compared with working remotely will vary, depending on:
    - The business needs and requirement to attend the office. This will include key points of a business cycle, to deputise for absent colleagues or the space we have available at our work locations.
    - The requirement for collaboration to ensure service delivery e.g. team meetings, 1-1's, training etc.
    - individual circumstances.
    - the nature of their role; and
    - what is happening within their role and team at any particular time.
  - Departments and teams with minimal office presence will be required to attend the office on an occasional basis. This will be a requirement for team meetings and 1-1's. It is expected that staff will have at least a 1-1 and team meeting every quarter which is in person. This will ensure that employees feel part of the organisation and can collaborate with colleagues on a regular basis.
  - Some meetings will continue to work better face to face, some examples of this are induction of new staff, project kick off meetings, meetings or 1-1's that may be contentious.
- 5.
- Teams should schedule regular check ins, these are to be agreed at a local team level.

- The working style for staff will be discussed and considered with their line manager (once a corporate decision has been made as to what is appropriate) and agreement reached as to the way this will work on a day-to-day basis which will ensure the optimum level of service delivery.
- Where a request solely for homeworking is submitted, this constitutes a statutory flexible working request, and the staff member must make this request using the council's **Flexible Working Policy**.
- Any permanent changes to hours or days of work must be agreed with their line manager or through a formal change under the **Flexible Working Policy**. Agreement to a change in hours and patterns of work will depend upon the circumstances of the request and its impact on the team and service delivery.
- Working from home is not a substitute for caring for dependants. Employees are expected to make alternative arrangements for the care of their dependants during their working day. See Carer's policy on Skoop+.

#### 4. **Determination of the appropriate workstyle**

- 4.1 Determination of the appropriate workstyle will be agreed at corporate level. Heads of Service will review the job roles within their service area and put forward a recommendation on the appropriate workstyle for each for Director sign off. This includes part time and fixed term contracts.
- 4.2 Consideration will be given to business and customer need, location of work, location of team member, team collaboration and communication styles, and considerations for access to technical support and equipment.
- 4.3 Where there is an element of homeworking required in a role, an assessment of the working environment must be undertaken by the member of staff using the DSE assessment process. This is a legal requirement, must be adhered to and reviewed annually. Please refer to Skoop+ for details on DSE.

#### 5. **Homeworking and Office working**

- 5.1 For the purposes of this policy, a workstyle which incorporates an element of homeworking means that a member of staff is working from their home, or another suitable location agreed with their line manager. Whether based in the office or at home, all policies and procedures still apply, including the requirement to safeguard confidential information.
- 5.2 If a member of staff wishes to temporarily work from a location outside the UK, they must obtain prior approval in writing from the Council before doing so, via their line manager. The procedure for considering such requests will be explained to the member of staff when the request is made. Please note that a member of staff must not travel to

work abroad without the prior approval of their line manager.

- 5.3 Attendance in the office will be based on business need and mental health considerations. Attendance in the office will remain an important element of working at the Council, supporting collaboration, and helping to maintain relationships with colleagues.
- 5.4 Hybrid workstyle employees will be required to book a desk on their office working days. Further information can be found on Skoop+.
- 5.5 Homeworking provisions will be reviewed regularly to ensure that they are legally compliant and reflect best practice. There is a requirement to complete a DSE assessment annually.
- 5.6 Employees must confirm that their home environment is suitable and safe to undertake their role, meeting H&S guidelines and regulations, e.g. DSE Assessment, and having access to a reliable internet connection and phone signal. If employees are unable to do so they will be expected to undertake their work from a designated council office. As part of the annual DSE review staff should send evidence of home broadband speed to their manager. This can be checked by a staff member by undertaking a speed test through google.
- 5.7 Homeworking relies on outcome-based performance management. This means that employee performance will be assessed based upon delivery of individual objectives and employees are expected to deliver outcomes within their contractual hours.

To effectively manage objectives and performance, managers and employees must:

- o Be clear on expectations, with robust communication arrangements.
- o Plan and ensure that regular check in meetings take place and relevant measures are used to evaluate the outcomes required.
- o Create and record objectives, actions and check in meetings, with clear review dates.
- o Communicate clearly with colleagues (in advance where appropriate) of any times employees are not available

## **6. Attendance and Availability for work**

- 6.1 Given the degree of flexibility that the workstyle arrangements provide to employees, we expect employees to be flexible in return when required to attend the office.
- 6.2 Employees are expected to be available to come into the office should a need arise and may be required to attend work on particular days at the request of their line manager, for example, for in-person training and for meetings that the line manager has determined are best conducted in person.
- 6.3 There may be circumstances in which we ask hybrid workstyle employees to work remotely, for instance; for operational needs, if we have too many employees attending the office on specific days; or government guidance.

- 6.4 Managers will act reasonably and will endeavour to provide employees with as much notice as possible. However, for some frontline services this may, occasionally, be at short notice and employees are expected to be available to work.
- 6.5 The council also offers flexibility in the way employees fulfil their contracted hours, so for example an employee may wish to take an earlier or later lunch break. This level of flexibility in diary management must not be at the expense of the needs of the business, customers or function that the employee works in.
- 6.6 The council recognises that when working remotely it is easy to always be online and accessible. Therefore, employees should be mindful of the hours they work and ensure that they are not working excessive hours when working remotely. It is also important to have a routine, set boundaries and be clear when your working day starts and ends.
- 6.7 To help maintain wellbeing, employees should also make sure that they take adequate rest breaks including taking a lunch break, throughout the working day in line with working time directive regulations.
- 6.8 Employees must be available and able to work on their contracted days whether they are in the office or working from home unless absence is related to sickness or approved leave. If an employee is unable to work on their contracted days this must be reported through the relevant policy and processes.
- 6.9 Employees should log onto the IT systems and networks to clearly indicate their availability status throughout their working day. Ensuring that their outlook calendars are kept up to date and non-working days and holidays are blocked out.
- 6.10 Employees should be contactable during normal office hours, by telephone and Microsoft Teams. This is especially important if their role comprises an element of customer contact. Missed calls and messages should be returned at the earliest opportunity.
- 6.11 In the case of a systems failure/broadband issue, the employee must contact their line manager, who will need to establish the extent of the system failure, the impact on the service and decide on the appropriate course of action. This may include an employee being required to work from the office for a period until the IT issue is resolved.

## **7. Health and Safety Requirements**

- 7.1 As part of the evaluation process, the council is committed to providing a safe working environment ensuring the health, safety, and welfare of all employees. This includes promoting good health and wellbeing for all our employees.
- 7.2 Managers and employees will continue to monitor and review office and homeworking stations to ensure they follow the Health and Safety policies and requirements.
- 7.3 DSE assessments must be completed for all working environments and reviewed annually. Failure to complete a DSE assessment within a reasonable timeframe as stipulated by the council may lead to disciplinary action being taken. Any changes to circumstances must be communicated to the line manager and H&S team as soon as possible.

- 7.4 Lone working will be assessed as part of the evaluation process and lone working processes will be followed if a role is identified as such.
- 7.5 Managers must continue with welfare and wellbeing checks with employees. Employees are encouraged to speak with their manager or appropriate appointed persons (Mental Health First Aider, EAP etc.) if they are struggling with their current working style. Information and resources on wellbeing can be found on the HR Skoop + pages and within the Practical Support section of this policy.

## 8. Confidentiality

- 8.1 It is the responsibility of the employee and manager to ensure the confidentiality of all the Council information whilst the employee is working from home. Consideration should be given to the availability of lockable storage cabinets, or other suitable equipment due to the risk of other members of the household/visitors gaining unauthorised access to confidential information. Reference should be made to the ICT Security Policy Suite and Remote Working Policy in particular and the Data Protection Policy
- 8.2 In order to maintain confidentiality and data security, Council documents and equipment (laptops etc) must be stored securely at home and not be left in employees' vehicles when unattended.
- 8.2 All staff need to be mindful of what they are doing, how they are doing it and who is around when working from home, reference should be made to the IG Handbook and the IG Policy, Strategy and Framework.  
Further information can be found on Skoop+

## 9. IT

- 9.1 All hybrid workers will have a Laptop, Bag, Headset and mouse as standard. They will be expected to bring the equipment with them from home to work and back again each day to sit at laptop-enabled desks. Additional offsite IT kit is identified via the DSE process. The council's aim is not to duplicate kit at home and on site but have one portable IT provision per user. Where this cannot be accomplished, it should be reflected in the working style, or with exceptions.
- 9.2 Mobile phones will be provided on a business needs basis

**NOTE: 9.1/9.2 are assumptions pending an agreed policy and budget**

## 10. Travel and Expenses

- 10.1. In most cases, the costs of working from home will be offset by the savings in the cost and time of commuting to work in a council office, and the benefits of an improved work/life balance. Therefore, any costs incurred by working at home such as heating, lighting, broadband will **not** be met by the council. If for example, an employee lives locally to the office and walks to work then a workstyle which includes an element of home working may not be offset in the usual way. Employees who are in this position should discuss this with their line manager who may

determine that a full return to office working may be in the employee's best interest.

- 10.2. Employees may be able to claim tax relief for additional household costs incurred by home working by completing a form on the [HMRC](#) microsite or through self-assessment.
- 10.3. All council property provided to enable an employee to work from home will be covered under the council's insurance policy.
- 10.4. Any employee provided with council property must take care to look after it. Inappropriate use of equipment may not be covered under the council's insurance policy. If any of your equipment is damaged, please talk to your line manager straight
- 10.5. Employees who hold a household/home insurance policy should notify their insurer of their homeworking arrangements and are responsible for ensuring that those arrangements do not breach any policy condition, restrictive covenant affecting their home address, local authority planning restriction or mortgage condition.
- 10.6. Employees should ensure that all council property is used appropriately and responsibly and that all reasonable precautions are taken to prevent damage and theft. Any damage or theft of council property must be reported to the line manager and the IT Service desk immediately. A crime number should be requested when reporting any theft to the police.
- 10.7. Travel expenses for journeys to an employee's designated council office base will not be reimbursed.

## 11. Home Office Equipment

- 10.1 During the pandemic some furniture from the offices was installed in employees' homes to enable hybrid working. Assuming these employees remain working in a hybrid way this furniture should continue to be used at home.
- 10.2 Requests for supply of new/replacement furniture should be directed to the Health and Safety teams, who can recommend suitable equipment.
- 10.3 Any change of office set up at home will require a new DSE check and declaration to be completed.
- 10.4 Specialist DSE equipment will be supplied if required following the completing of a DSE assessment and sign off by line management

## Appendix A

### Practical Support

To support employees whose workstyle includes an element of working from home, the following information includes practical hints and tips to make working from home successful including what an employee can do to maintain their own wellbeing while working from home.

- Ensure you and your line manager maintain regular contact and communication with your colleagues through phone calls or virtual meetings
- Adhere to the virtual etiquette which can be found on skoop+
- 6. • Discuss your caring or childcare responsibilities and look at the practicalities of working at home and how to accommodate the right balance that works for you and the council
- Establish a routine, including a start and end time to your work, as agreed with your manager
- Discuss home working arrangements with family or the other people you live with and try to establish boundaries so you can work uninterrupted
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle, good nutrition and plenty of sleep, remember staff can claim 30 minutes time back for exercise per week between the hours of 7am-7pm.
- Take a lunch break during each day, and take regular breaks throughout the day to get away from your screen/desk
- Stay connected with other colleagues
- Stay active, either by taking a walk or doing simple stretches and exercise at home.

There is also useful and helpful information that you can access from:

#### Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

This free and fully confidential service is available for any member of staff.

Free 24-hour confidential helpline: 0800 030 5182

Website: <https://healthassuredeap.co.uk/>

**Mental Health First Aiders** – See Skoop+

**DSE** – Link to desk setup video - See Skoop+

**MIND:** <https://www.mind.org.uk/>