



Personnel Sub-Committee

Date: 11 October 2021

Title: Flexible Working

Purpose of the Report: To ask for committee consideration of a draft Flexible Working Policy.

Contact Officer: Mark Saccoccio, Town Clerk
Sarah Sandiford, Deputy Town Clerk

Corporate Objective/s	LLTC Five Year Plan – Aim 1 (to consolidate processes and procedures, ensuring operational efficiency and a structure which will underpin future service delivery by the Town Council).	
Implications:		
Financial	No	
Human Resources	No	
Operational/Service delivery	Yes	Requests will need to ensure no detrimental impact on service delivery/operations
Risk/Health and Safety	Yes	Display screen/workspace assessments needed
Legal	Yes	The Flexible Working Regulations 2014
Environmental	Yes	Potential to reduce journeys to work

1. RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 To recommend to Policy and Finance Committee approval of a draft Flexible Working Policy (attached).

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Employees have a legal right to request flexible working in accordance with The Flexible Working Regulations 2014. Employers have a legal obligation to consider any requests for flexible working formally.

2.2 Types of flexible working could include job sharing, less than full time hours, compressed hours, annualised hours, staggered hours, flexi working, working from home or phased retirement.

2.3 The Town Council Employee Handbook references this at 4.4:

You are entitled to request flexible working conditions in respect of the current statutory provisions.

You should initially approach your Manager with your written request. If management are able to agree your request you will receive a Change of Particulars to your employment contract.

There is no automatic entitlement for your request to be approved and we retain the right to deny an application based upon the operational needs of the business. Any agreed change will be a permanent change.

2.4 The Town Council already operates a flexi time system which applies to many roles and for which a Flexi Time Procedure exists (last reviewed and approved in January 2017).

2.5 A Home Working Protocol was introduced in October 2017 to cover ad-hoc requests for home working.

2.6 A Flexible Retirement Policy was endorsed by Council in 2021.

2.7 Ad hoc requests for compressed hours or reduced hours have been assessed as they occur on a case-by-case basis.

3. UPDATE

3.1 Prior to March 2020, it was the expectation that all employees would work from Town Council premises.

3.2 Since March 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic has necessitated home working for over half of Town Council employees (the remainder being unable to undertake their core work from home, e.g. Parks and Cemeteries team members).

3.3 The abrupt move to home working caused significant operational and technological difficulties initially, but these were gradually addressed. Whilst some technological issues were resolved by way of a temporary “sticking plaster”, ultimately solutions were found to enable employees to maintain Town Council operations over the subsequent 18-month period.

3.4 With all Covid-19 restrictions having been lifted in summer 2021, the Town Council has seen a gradual return to the workplace for all employees.

3.5 The return to office working has facilitated team working and communications, with staff more quickly and easily able to interact and take actions. Whilst the

impact of the pandemic will take some time to recover from, we are seeing a gradual return to normality (for example, once sufficient numbers of staff had returned to the office, it was possible to re-open office doors to the public).

- 3.6 As a public body funded by local residents, the Town Council prides itself on being accessible to the public and as such, it is felt that maintaining a town centre visible and accessible presence is key. Residents wishing to communicate with us about our services should be able to reach the relevant officer easily.
- 3.7 However, the last 18 months have clearly demonstrated the possibilities of more flexible working arrangements and it is felt that now is the time to adopt a clear Flexible Working Policy to underpin the existing procedures and provide clarity to both employees and managers alike.
- 3.8 The attached draft policy is based on that adopted by Luton Borough Council, the Town Council's Human Resources support provider. The document clearly sets out the expectations for all parties in respect of requests for flexible working.
- 3.9 It is recognised that requests for flexible working should not result in additional and unbudgeted costs for the Council. With desktop computers having been purchased in 2019 and with three years' warranty left, there is no intention to replace these in the short term. Home working would be dependent on availability of the appropriate technology to enable the specific role to be undertaken.
- 3.10 Consideration of any flexible working requests will take into account not only the specific tasks attributable to the role in question but also any wider implications in terms of service area or whole team operations and communications.
- 3.11 In the medium term, it is likely that as computers need replacing, they will be replaced with laptops to help facilitate more flexible working arrangements.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 Like all employers, the Town Council has a legal obligation to consider flexible working requests. Establishing a clear policy will provide a framework for both employees and managers in considering flexible working requests.
- 4.2 Existing policies and procedures (Flexi time, Home Working Protocol) will continue to apply until and after any Flexible Working Policy is approved by Council.

End.