

FLEXIBLE WORKING POLICY

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Council believes that its employees are its most valuable assets and is committed to attracting and retaining the very best talent. It also appreciates that the UK workforce is becoming increasingly diverse and includes a high percentage of parents and individuals with caring responsibilities, as well as those whose interests and aspirations impact on their time.

1.2 The Council recognises the importance of helping its employees balance their work and home lives. It is understood that a degree of flexibility in working arrangements can also be crucial in helping employees respond to personal issues, such as caring commitments and recovering from personal situations. In addition, the Council recognises that staffing levels must remain in line with the demands of the services it provides for the community and to meet its statutory obligations.

1.3 This policy aims to set out the ways in which flexible working can increase staff motivation, build better relationships between the Council and its employees, increase the rate of retention of staff, reduce absence, attract new talent, promote work-life balance and reduce employee stress. In doing so, it is hoped this will improve the Council's efficiency.

1.4 Any application for flexible working is likely to require an employee providing data about themselves. Any data collected will be used solely for the purpose of reaching a decision on the application. All data will be managed and stored in line with the Council's Data Protection Policy.

2.0 Scope

2.1 Employees must have 26 weeks' continuous service to make a statutory request for flexible working. Employees must not have made a request for flexible working within 12 months before the date of their request.

3.0 Applying for flexible working

3.1 The application must be made to the Clerk. It must:

- be in writing and stating that it is an application for flexible working under the statutory right to make a request
- state whether a previous application for flexible working has been made under this procedure and, if so, when
- specify the change applied for and the proposed date for the change to become effective
- explain the effect the employee thinks the change will have on the Council and their colleagues and explain how any effect should be handled
- be signed and dated.

3.2 The application must also state whether the variation requested is made in pursuance of a reasonable adjustment under the disability discrimination provisions of the Equality Act 2010. Normally an employee can only make one statutory request in a 12-month period. If an application is made arising from a disability, length of service and the limit of one application per year would not apply.

3.0 Responding to a request

3.1 Once the Council receives a written request, it will arrange a discussion with the employee as soon as possible. It may be that further details will be asked for and if there is likely to be a delay in discussing your request, the employee will be informed. If the employee wishes to be

accompanied to any meeting with the Council, they be accompanied by a work colleague, trade union representative or official, or family member or friend.

3.2 Having the right to request a change to your arrangements does not necessarily mean that the request will be agreed to. The request will be fully discussed at a meeting with the employee and all aspects will be fully considered, including any adverse impact on the Council.

3.3 The Council will then write to the employee with its decision, which will be:

- to accept the request and establish a start date, with or without a trial period and review date. Where the request is granted, the Council will set out what changes will be made to the employee's terms and conditions of employment, or,
- to propose an alternative, which may require further discussion, or,
- to confirm a compromise agreed at the discussion, or,
- to reject the request, setting out the reasons, how these apply to the application and the appeal process.

3.4 Requests to work flexibly will be considered objectively, however we may not always be able to grant a request to work flexibly if it cannot be accommodated. If we turn down your request, it will be because of one, or a combination of the following reasons, and we will explain why:

- the cost of the proposed arrangement
- the effect of the proposed arrangement on other staff
- the level of supervision that the post-holder requires
- the structure of the department and staff resources
- other issues specific to the individual's department
- an analysis of the tasks specific to the role, including their frequency and duration
- an analysis of the workload of the role.

3.5 If an employee requests an informal change for a short period to working hours or conditions, for instance to pursue a short course of study, the Council may be able to agree to this.

3.6 The Council will make every effort to resolve the application within 28 days.

4.0 Procedure for handling an appeal

4.1 An employee may appeal against the decision to refuse the application. The notice of appeal must be in writing, setting out the grounds for appeal and sent to the Clerk.

4.2 An appeal panel comprised of no less than three councillors, not involved in the original decision, will consider the appeal. The panel will meet within 28 days of the appeal being lodged in writing. The employee will be invited to a meeting with the panel to make their case. The employee may be accompanied by a work colleague, trade union representative or official, or family member or friend.

4.3 As soon as possible after the date of the appeal discussion, the panel will give the employee written notice of the appeal decision.

4.4 Where the decision is to dismiss the appeal, the notice will state the grounds for the decision and contain an explanation as to why those grounds apply. The notice will also state that there is no further right of appeal.

5.0 Withdrawal of application by employee

5.1 An employee can withdraw their application at any stage before agreement is reached. The employee should write to their line manager stating they wish to withdraw their application.

5.2 Where the employee fails to attend a meeting or appeal meeting on more than one occasion, or they refuse to provide reasonable information to allow their application to progress, without reasonable excuse, the Council will treat the application as withdrawn.

5.3 The Council will confirm the withdrawal of the application to the employee in writing.

6.0 Non-statutory requests for flexible working

6.1 Ineligible employees may make an informal request for flexible working. This should be made, in writing, to their line manager with information of their proposed pattern of working, the date they propose this to take effect, whether this variation is temporary or permanent, and how any negative effects of the proposed working pattern can be managed.

6.2 This request will be considered in line with the Council's operational and staffing needs. Consideration will always be given, however, to the personal circumstances of staff and added flexibility could assist them in managing both professional and personal commitments.

7.0 Effect on contract of employment

7.1 Any change made to an employee's terms and conditions will, normally, be a permanent change to their terms and conditions of employment. Any such changes will be explained in the letter the employee will receive from the Council.