Hybrid Working Policy

How and where we work
Agile, adaptable, accessible

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Introduction

1.1   The hybrid working policy introduces modern ways of working to Slough which incorporates both working remotely or working in an office environment. This will enhance the ways in which we serve the residents of Slough and gives individuals more choice over where they work to meet the service needs.

1.2   The aim of this policy is to set out the standards and expectations for all employees of Slough council in implementing the hybrid working principles and ways of working.

1.3   Slough Borough Council (SBC) aims to design and implement policy documents that meet the diverse needs of our services, residents, and workforce, ensuring that none are placed at a disadvantage over others. It considers current UK legislative requirements, including the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998, and promotes equal opportunities for all.

Scope

2.1   This policy applies to all employees of the council, except those employed in schools. This policy does not apply to interims, agency workers or contractors.

2.2   This policy does not deal with requests to permanently alter an individuals' working hours/pattern. In respect of a situation where an individual wishes to make a flexible working request, the council's flexible working policy encompasses the statutory right to flexible working and contains the statutory procedure for employees to make such requests.

2.3   This policy and procedure should be read and applied in conjunction with the manager and employee FAQ's, and the Council's other policies such as health and safety, IT policies/guidance documents, flexible working, employee code of conduct among others.

Hybrid Working Principles

3.1   Hybrid working is founded on five core and critical principles:

- Residents and Business- Our residents and businesses are at the heart of, and drive everything we do.
- Culture and People- Staff take responsibility and are accountable for their work and outputs.
- Team management and appraisal meetings are better done face to face, to aid collaboration, drive performance and build a positive working culture.
- Technology- Anywhere is your office and the technology infrastructure underpins this.
- Future Plans for "head office space"- A civic space at the heart of the community where staff can do their best work, and which optimises and benefits value for money.

3.2   These principles entail a cultural shift in mindset from all staff and leaders. Whilst we empower employees to take responsibility for their work, it is reliant on there being trust between managers and employees.

3.3   Trust is fundamental to the success of hybrid working. Any breach of trust will be treated very seriously and may be regarded as misconduct. Appropriate action may follow under the disciplinary procedure. If misconduct is found, the facility to work in a hybrid manner may be withdrawn.

3.4   Hybrid working is not an automatic right for all staff. There will be some circumstances where this is not a viable option, for example, front facing roles or roles that are required to carry out their work from a council premises. There will also be circumstances where operational needs necessitate a different approach.

3.5   All staff who can work in a hybrid manner will be able to work from home. They will however be required to attend their Slough place of work e.g., Observatory House, for a minimum of two, and preferably three days per week (pro-rated for part time workers), or more if required by the demands of the job. This will be reviewed after six months.

3.6   The needs of the service will be the key driver in implementing hybrid working and will take precedence. Line managers are responsible for managing their service areas, operational standards and expectations.

Performance

4.1   Hybrid working relies on goal setting, performance and outcome-based management. This means that staff are managed based upon their results. To achieve this, staff are expected to deliver outcomes within their contractual hours. The arrangements for how hours are worked will be agreed in advance with line managers.

4.2   This approach will require a strong commitment between the employee and the manager to plan and ensure that regular 1-2-1 meetings take place, and are recorded on cornerstone, our learning management system.

4.3   Hybrid working requires a different relationship between employees and their managers. As a result, there are different responsibilities for both staff and managers which are outlined in the hybrid working management guidance document.

Recruitment

5.1   Working in a hybrid environment requires particular skills. It is therefore important that these are considered and outlined when making new appointments.

5.2   The following criteria should be included in the employee specification for each post. These criteria should then be applied and assessed as part of the normal selection process.

5.3   **Managerial Posts**

Hybrid working requires that staff are managed both in person and remotely. Managers therefore must be able to:

- Tailor their management style as appropriate to the needs of dispersed teams/employees.
- Understand and apply different strategies for the effective management of performance by output.
- Set clear objectives/goals for staff.
- Address conflicting needs of staff in a fair and equitable manner that engenders confidence and trust.

5.4 **All Other Posts**

Staff who wish to work in a hybrid manner must:

- Be able to complete targets/objectives through independent working.
- Make effective use of time management and prioritising skills.

Attendance and Availability for Work

6.1 Employees should remember that the needs of the customer, members and the service will always take priority. This will mean that staff are expected to come into the office on a remote working day should a need arise that requires their attendance in the office. This may include situations such as training, team meetings, colleague collaboration, when they are unable to connect to the Slough IT systems, or if they are asked to do so by their manager, e.g., in the event of sickness of a colleague, inadequate cover or an emergency.

6.2 Ultimately, the manager will have the responsibility for ensuring that the service needs take priority; that staff are treated fairly and trusted to take responsibility for themselves and their work when working remotely. Managers will, in consultation with their staff, decide a rota pattern that best meets the needs of the service. These rotas will be subject to change, there is no entitlement to work remotely on specific days of the week, unless the service needs dictate different.

6.3 Staff must be available and able to work on their contracted days whether they are in the office or working remotely, unless absence is for an authorised form of leave or sickness. Any variation to this arrangement can only be made by prior agreement with the manager.

6.4 When staff are working from home or another location, they are expected to work in a similar way as they would in the office, for example, they should be available to answer the telephone, respond to emails, instant messaging etc during the hours that the service operates (usually between 9am-5pm), unless a change is agreed with their line manager. This includes taking appropriate breaks in line with health and safety.

6.5 Working from home is not a substitute for caring for dependants. Employees are expected to have made alternative arrangements for the care of their dependants during their working day.

Remote Working Exceptions

7.1 It is recognised that there are circumstances where it may not be possible for staff to work in a hybrid way.

7.2 The following are examples of where managers may consider making exceptions. This list is not exhaustive, and advice may need to be sought from HR depending on the circumstances:

Staff on probation, Apprentices and Trainees

7.3   Staff on probation should attend the office rather than working remotely during their first few weeks in post. This enables them to have a better understanding of the organisation, team and culture. This may mean reorganising working arrangements for other team members who may be needed to support the member of staff by coming into the office, and/or asking other members of the team to work remotely on particular days.

Staff who require specialist equipment

7.4   Some staff will have special requirements and specialist equipment where hot-desking is not appropriate. The council does not want to prevent these individuals from having the same opportunities as other staff to work remotely. In discussion with the individual, and seeking advice from the health and safety team, managers should take individual circumstances into account and ensure that staff are treated fairly and according to their particular needs.

Staff whose personal circumstances are not conducive to home working.

7.5   There could be a number of reasons where working at home is not possible for a member of staff, e.g., shared flats/houses, insufficient space, someone else caring for children/relatives at home which will not enable them to have a concentrated work environment. In such circumstances, managers need to explore other remote working options with their member of staff, e.g., a permanent desk in the office, library, or other council office.

7.6   In the short term, the individual may need to attend the office more frequently than other members of staff. Managers are expected to manage this in consultation with other team members.

Workstations

8.1   At the moment, staff have not been assigned a fixed desk and it is unlikely that this will be implemented, unless where required as part of a reasonable adjustment. Lockers are available in the office and can be obtained via facilities management. A clear desk policy applies to all workstations. Storage areas should also be kept tidy, and staff should refrain from storing personalised items or files in these.

8.2   As well as at Observatory House, there are limited hot desks available for staff to use in our community hubs such as Chalvey, Britwell and The Curve. These facilities are to support staff in working in a hybrid manner i.e., if visiting a client or between meetings in the area, staff can go to these sites if PC access is required to undertake work.

Sickness absence and other leave

9.1   The existing procedures for requesting and notifying absence such as annual leave or sickness absence continue to apply.

Working from home when sick

9.2   As a guide, hybrid working is not to be used as a substitute for a working in the office day when an employee feels unwell. It is however recognised that there may be specific circumstances where such requests may be agreed. In their discussion, the manager should consider the hours the employee expects to be able to work and their likely output before determining whether it is appropriate for the employee to work from home in this situation.

9.3   An employee who has reported in as sick is not expected to work either in the office or remotely. Managers should be mindful of this and not pressure them into working, simply because employees have the equipment to work from home.

Supply of equipment

10.1   All employees that are able to work in a hybrid manner will be issued with a laptop and mobile phone. The Council will not pay for additional equipment for remote working, other than that which is provided as standard issue, unless where reasonable adjustments are required to be made.

10.2   Employees must ensure all Council data and equipment is secured securely, and that it is not at risk of loss or theft. Hybrid workers must complete the mandatory training e-learning module on data security before commencing remote working.

10.3   Where an employee is working from home, they are responsible for ensuring they have the necessary furniture (such as a suitable table and chair) and broadband services to enable them to remotely access the council's IT networks.

10.4   The council will not reimburse employees for the costs of broadband or utility costs. We recognise that many employees will already have broadband services at home and employees who chose to work from home will also benefit from reduced travelling costs.

Employee Wellbeing

11.1   It is important that employees take regular breaks from work in accordance with the working time regulations and their contract of employment. Working hours and break periods are confirmed in the employee's terms and conditions of employment, but must include:
- A break of at least 20 minutes if working more than six hours a day
- A rest of at least 11 hours between working days
- An uninterrupted break of 24 hours each week

11.2   When working in front of a screen for long periods of time, employees must ensure they take regular breaks.

11.3   If you choose to work late during unsociable hours, providing you have agreement from your line manager, please be courteous and respectful to your colleagues.   Colleagues are not expected to respond to emails or other forms of communication during unsociable hours, unless in the case of an emergency.

11.4   Individuals who use a computer, laptop or tablet whilst working at home, in the office or at another remote location will be required to undertake a self-assessment to ensure that the work can be undertaken safely without endangering their health and wellbeing.

11.5   Employees are required to complete the 'Display Screen Equipment training and Self-assessment' module via the online learning portal. This course is mandatory for all visual display screen users and should be repeated if there is a change in circumstances i.e., location, health etc.

11.6   The employee is responsible for completing this training and self-assessment and highlighting any concerns to their line manager. They are also responsible for implementing any actions identified in order to reduce or mitigate the risks in your home and make your work environment safe. If an individual is unable to put suitable safeguards in place, they may not be able to work from that location and will need to work at council sites.

Change of circumstances

12.1 Hybrid working arrangements may be temporarily suspended or brought to an end at any time, subject to business and operational demands. No change to working practises will be made without consulting with the employee affected first.

12.2 There are circumstances where it may be necessary to review hybrid working arrangements such as:

- Staff wellbeing may require particular working practices which may require more time in the office or more time at home, these circumstances will be managed in line with our staff wellbeing policies.
- The employee moves to a new role, either permanently or on a secondment or acting up basis. The suitability of the new position for hybrid working would need to be assessed.
- Following a re-organisation of the work area, positions should be reassessed for hybrid working in light of any changes to service provision, job descriptions, person specification and interdependencies with other service providers.

12.3 Managers are responsible for reclaiming any allocated equipment when an employee leaves the council or moves to another directorate in order for it to be reallocated to the next post holder.

Policy schedule	Details
Policy owner and lead	HR BP Team
Consultation	Trade Unions Staff Network Groups 17th October Corporate / Senior Leadership Team 17th October
Equality Impact Assessment	30th October 2023
Approving body	Employment & Appeals Committee
Date of approval	DATE
Date of implementation	30th October 2023
This version number	V1 – 24th October 2023
Last version	v.? - DATE
Related documents	
Review interval	Three yearly minimum or as required

Policy Schedule

Version

Version	Author	Date	Changes
??		DATE	
		DATE	
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