

Totton & Eling Town Council
Home Working Policy
June 2023

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 The Council recognises that its employees are its most important asset and is committed to improving the working lives of all employees.
- 1.2 As far as possible, the Council operates flexible working arrangements. The home working policy is one of the flexible working options which can be requested by employees; it has been introduced with the aim of providing a better work life balance for all employees.
- 1.3 The Council realises that there are situations where conflict between work and home life creates difficulties and where temporary or permanent changes to working arrangements can enable employees to re-establish a balance. The options available in this policy can help employees to accommodate the needs of both their home and professional lives.
- 1.4 This policy does not form part of the employment contract and the Council may update it at any time.
- 1.5 The policy fits with the Council's vision of providing the highest standards of service and achieving greater efficiency by providing a better working environment.

2. Policy Aims & Benefits

- 2.1 This Home Working Policy aims to:
 - 2.1.1 increase the options for flexible working arrangements;
 - 2.1.2 reduce costs;
 - 2.1.3 increase efficiency;
 - 2.1.4 improve recruitment; and
 - 2.1.5 improve employee retention rates.
- 2.2 The benefits of the policy for both the Council and its employees include:
 - 2.2.1 Retention of trained employees who might otherwise have to leave for domestic reasons, resulting in savings on the recruitment and training of new staff;
 - 2.2.2 Reduction in office accommodation space;
 - 2.2.3 Greater job satisfaction and personal responsibility;
 - 2.2.4 Enhanced quality of life;
 - 2.2.5 Greater flexibility for combining work and domestic commitments; and
 - 2.2.6 Furtherance of the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy, for example home working can help employees with disabilities.

3. **Home Working Definition**

- 3.1 Home working is where employees perform some or all of their duties at home.
- 3.2 When home working, employees' contractual obligations, including core working hours, continue to apply.
- 3.3 Home working can be divided into two categories:
 - 3.3.1 **Regular home working:** full-time or part-time employees with a formalised agreement to work from home on a regular basis for the whole or a significant percentage of their working week.
 - 3.3.2 **Occasional or ad hoc home working:** employees who work at home on an ad hoc basis, without a formalised agreement, to carry out a specific task. The office base for these employees will remain the Council's office.

4. **General Principles**

- 4.1 This policy applies to all employees of the Council. All employees can request formal home working arrangements, however the Council will determine which posts are suitable for home working.
- 4.2 The Council encourages and supports home working where it meets business needs. The Line Manager will consider the appropriateness of home working and will implement it where there are demonstrable benefits to both the Council and its employees.
- 4.3 The Line Manager will regularly monitor and review home working arrangements in order to ensure their continued effectiveness. To this end, regular contact must be maintained between the home working employees and the Line Manager.
- 4.4 The Council will treat all employees equitably, whether they are home or office based.
- 4.5 Employees who work from home must ensure that they have a suitable environment in which they can work. Employees must ensure that they can work free from disruption, e.g. by having adequate care arrangements in place for dependants who may be at home during working hours.
- 4.6 It is the responsibility of the home working employees to inform their Line Manager if their home working base changes.
- 4.7 Employees are entitled to apply for combinations of flexible working options.
- 4.8 All employees, whether working at home or at their office base, are required to comply with the policies and procedures of the Council.
- 4.9 Occasional/ad hoc homeworking usually needs to be arranged at short notice. For formalised, regular homeworking, see section 5 below. Reasons for occasional homeworking may include the illness of a child or adverse weather conditions. In these situations, employees should contact their Line Manager as soon as they think they will need to work from home. The Line Manager will decide whether or not to authorise homeworking on that occasion.

5. **Applying for Formalised Home Working**

- 5.1 In line with the flexible working rules introduced by the Employment Act 2002, employees can request a variation to their terms and conditions of employment in respect of working from home. However, employees do not have an automatic right to work from home.
- 5.2 To work effectively, home working has to primarily meet the business needs of the Council. Whilst not all jobs are suitable for home working, any request will be considered on its merits.
- 5.3 Employees who wish to apply for home working must do so in writing to their Line Manager. The written application should set out:
 - 5.3.1 the nature of the employee's request and the reason for it;
 - 5.3.2 the proposed start date for the new arrangement;
 - 5.3.3 an explanation of how the employee thinks it will affect the Council and its business; and
 - 5.3.4 how such effects can be dealt with.
- 5.4 Where a request is made to work from home under an employee's statutory right to request flexible working arrangements, the requirements of the Council's Flexible Working Policy must also be fulfilled.
- 5.5 The Council will consider a request for home working and will hold a meeting with the employee as soon as possible and within 28 days of receipt of the request. The Council will notify the employee of its decision in writing within 14 days of the meeting.
- 5.6 Applications for home working will be approved at the Town Clerk's or Deputy Town Clerk's discretion, taking into account the individual's circumstances and the needs of the Council. When a request for home working has been refused the Council will provide the reasons for the refusal in writing.
- 5.7 If employees feel that an application for home working has been unreasonably refused, they may appeal against the decision in line with the Appeals procedure contained in the Council's Flexible Working Policy.
- 5.8 Employees working from home will be required to sign a Home Working Agreement before being allowed to work from home.
- 5.9 Approved home working arrangements will be subject to a trial evaluation period before being confirmed.
- 5.10 The Council reserves the right to review and vary existing home working arrangements.
- 5.11 If the employee moves house, the home working arrangement will be reassessed.
- 5.12 The Council reserves the right to end an existing home working arrangement if it is proving unsatisfactory in the opinion of the Council.
- 5.13 Home working may be withdrawn from employees who abuse the system. Such employees may also face disciplinary action under the Council's disciplinary policy.

6. **Selection Criteria**

- 6.1 In determining whether to grant a request for home working the following

criteria will be taken into account:

- 6.1.1 The suitability of the job and whether the work is capable of being undertaken at home;
- 6.1.2 The impact on the level of service, efficiency and effectiveness;
- 6.1.3 Whether costs incurred are reasonable;
- 6.1.4 The needs of the employee for more flexible working arrangements;
- 6.1.5 The suitability of the home environment;
- 6.1.6 The suitability of the employee;
- 6.1.7 The ability of the employee to cope with reduced social contact; and
- 6.1.8 Whether arrangements can be put in place for effective communication between the home working employee and the Council.

7. Equipment and Connectivity

- 7.1 The Council will provide the necessary equipment to enable employees to work effectively from home. This could include:
 - 7.1.1 The supply of a telephone and/or broadband line, for the exclusive purpose of business use;
 - 7.1.2 Relevant IT equipment including PC, laptops, printer, fax;
 - 7.1.3 Furniture including desk, chair, lockable drawers etc;
 - 7.1.4 Mobile phone where appropriate; and
 - 7.1.5 Consumables, such as printer paper and ink, and stationary.
- 7.2 The Council will bear the cost of installing, maintaining, repairing or replacing the equipment.
- 7.3 The Council reserves the right to enter the employee's home for the purposes of maintaining and servicing the equipment.
- 7.4 Equipment supplied by the Council is not for personal use. The equipment should be used exclusively for Council business and it must not be used by anyone other than the employee.
- 7.5 The equipment provided will remain the property of the Council. Employees are required to return any equipment supplied by the Council should the home working arrangement end.
- 7.6 Use of personal equipment for work purposes is permissible provided that it satisfies the necessary Health and Safety, security and technical requirements.
- 7.7 The Council will not be responsible for maintaining employees' own computers and equipment.

8. Health and Safety

- 8.1 The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 applies to home working employees as well as office based employees. Under the Act, the Council is responsible for the health, safety and welfare of its employees, wherever they work. At the same time employees have an obligation to ensure that they take reasonable care not to expose themselves and others to risks to health and safety.

- 8.2 Prior to any employee starting home working, the Council will undertake a risk assessment at the employee's proposed place of work in order to ensure that it is suitable for its purpose and that the work can be carried out safely. This may be carried out by the employee themselves. Should any remedial work or measures be required, they must be completed prior to the employee starting to work from home.
- 8.3 The risk assessment will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it remains appropriate.
- 8.4 Home working employees are responsible for day-to-day health and safety issues and for reporting any concerns to the manager. Employees must take reasonable care to ensure that they work in a safe working environment.
- 8.5 Failure to comply with the health and safety provisions may result in the withdrawal of the home working arrangement and disciplinary action.

9. Insurance and Other Financial Concerns

- 9.1 Equipment supplied to home working employees is covered by the Council's insurance policy. Employees must take reasonable care to ensure that all equipment owned by the Council is kept secure.
- 9.2 Employees will be held responsible for the loss or damage to any supplied equipment when caused by failure to take adequate precautions to ensure its safety.
- 9.3 Employees working from home are covered by the Council's Employer's Liability policy in respect of injury arising out of and in the course of employment at home.
- 9.4 It is the responsibility of the home working employee to provide adequate home buildings and contents insurance. The Council will not accept liability for damage caused to the home or its contents.
- 9.5 Home working arrangements may affect the home and contents insurance policies of the householder. Before commencing home working employees are required to contact their own insurance Council to advise that they will be working at home on a regular basis.
- 9.6 Some mortgage and rental agreements do not allow for the home premises to be used for work purposes. It is the responsibility of the employees to inform their landlord or mortgage provider and to obtain permission where necessary.
- 9.7 Employees should check with their local council as to whether business rates are payable in respect of any part of their home used for business purposes.
- 9.8 The Council will not accept any responsibility for an employee who suffers any detriment, loss or legal action as a result of not obtaining the necessary permissions from their insurer, mortgage lender, landlord etc.

10. Confidentiality, Security and Data Protection

- 10.1 All employees, whether working at home or at their office base, are required to comply with the Council's Data Protection Policy.
- 10.2 Employees are responsible for ensuring the security of the Council property and all Council information, files, documents etc. within their possession.

- 10.3 It is the responsibility of the Line Manager to determine whether the home working employee is able to retain the security and confidentiality of information within the home. The Line Manager must be satisfied that all reasonable precautions are taken to maintain confidentiality of material in accordance with the requirements of the Council.
- 10.4 Data security is a particular concern for home working employees. The Council may want to carry out a data protection risk assessment before deciding whether or not to agree to a homeworking request. Employees must ensure that all information stored and accessed, including written information and that held on a computer, is secure and cannot be accessed by other parties. Employees must take no action which might prejudice the security of such information.
- 10.5 Employees must report any actual or potential breach of security, confidentiality or data protection to their Line Manager immediately.
- 10.6 Failure to keep information secure is a serious matter and will be dealt with under the Council's disciplinary procedure.

11. Hours of work

- 11.1 Employees working from home and their line manager are required to agree an appropriate working pattern in the Home Working Agreement. Home working employees must ensure that appropriate breaks are taken.
- 11.2 Requests from home working employees to change their hours of work will be treated in the same way as requests from office based employees and must be agreed by their line manager.

12. Annual and Sick leave

- 12.1 Requests for annual leave must be sent to and agreed by the Line Manager following the normal procedure.
- 12.2 Employees working from home will be subject to the normal sickness absence procedures.

13. Expenses

- 13.1 Expenses paid for by the Council will be agreed at the outset of the Home Working Agreement.
- 13.2 Further reasonable expenses incurred by the employee may be reimbursed at the Council's discretion, to be decided on a case-by-case basis.

This policy has been approved & authorised by:

NAME:	SUSAN CUTLER
POSITION:	TOWN CLERK & CHIEF EXECUTIVE
DATE:	21 ST JUNE 2023
SIGNATURE:	