

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE - 18th JUNE 2015

SMARTER WORKING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE RESOURCES

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to seek Employment Committee's approval for the introduction of the Smarter Working Policy and Guidance.

Background

2. In order to ensure the effective delivery of the County Hall Master Plan, the Council will need to implement new ways of working. There are also significant business benefits in further developing the Council's existing flexible working arrangements. These include; recruitment and retention of key skills, enhanced productivity and employee motivation. It is therefore proposed to broaden the scope of this policy to all County Council employees (excluding Schools and Colleges).
3. It is recognised that in order to embed new ways of working, it will be necessary to challenge and change the culture and behaviours which can prove to be a barrier. The tone and focus of the policy therefore reflects this change.
4. The increase in remote working will require managers to manage by performance and outcomes rather than by presenteeism. This will require a greater focus on trust and communication within the employment relationship, which again is highlighted in the policy.
5. Managers may have to at times make different decisions for different people to accommodate alternative ways of working. Whilst great emphasis is placed on the need for consistency to ensure fairness, embracing Smarter Working will mean managers having the confidence to consider individual personal circumstances and work styles, when making decisions. It is recognised that this is a cultural shift and some managers will require additional support in dealing with this change.
6. Remote and home working will be encouraged for a much broader range of employees and the emphasis will be on what tasks, rather than entire job roles could be performed away from the office. The policy incorporates relevant information which relates to this.
7. The policy demonstrates a positive commitment to Smarter Working, however, reinforces that any decisions in relation to 'where, when and how' employees work must be subject to service delivery needs.

8. The People Strategy Board recently approved a decision for the Council to work towards becoming an accredited Timewise Council. The Timewise Foundation champions flexible working and the accreditation programme is designed to help local authorities become more flexible. HR is therefore working with Timewise, in order to create an improvement plan which supports the County Hall Master Plan and the implementation of Smarter Working.

Key Points

9. In order to address the above issues, the following key principals have been incorporated into the policy:
10. The term 'Smarter Working' will replace reference to 'Flexible Working' in policies and communications. This change will demonstrate a fresh approach and indicates that the focus is not only on hours, but also where and how we work. The majority of requests for alternative ways of working will be dealt with in a more positive, informal manner (where appropriate) in line with the principles of Smarter Working.
11. This policy sets the scene in term of the reasons, benefits and the vision of Smarter Working but also provides guidance around the types of working arrangements (contractual and non- contractual) which may be considered/ adopted.
12. The aim of the policy is to provide managers with a framework for implementing new ways of smarter working. It provides advice on managing a remote workforce in the context of having reduced office accommodation.
13. Although the key policy will be the Smarter Working Policy and Guidance (replacing the former Flexible Working policy), the document will include sign posts to other relevant policies, e.g. Statutory Right to Request Flexible Working Guidance, Permanent Home Working Policy, Travel and Expenses Guide etc. All of these and a number of other policies have been reviewed or are in the process of being reviewed, in order to accommodate the changes in the new ways of working.

Implementation

14. The proposed policy, attached as Appendix A has been agreed by the Trade Unions and the People Strategy Board. In addition, comments have been received and incorporated from HR staff and a nominated group of Departmental Managers.
15. If endorsed by Employment Committee, the policy will become effective as soon as possible. A copy will be published on the Council's intranet for managers and employees to view; specifically located on the designated Smarter Working pages, which will be available on CIS.
16. To promote the introduction of the policy, an article will be published in Managers' Digest and a news item posted on the front page of the Council's intranet. It will also be referred to within forthcoming Management Training and various forms of communications, as part of the County Hall Master Plan.

17. The policy's application will be monitored through ongoing discussions with Trade Unions, HR staff and managers. A formal review of the policy, with the Trade Unions will take place after one year.

Recommendations

18. Employment Committee is requested to approve the introduction of the Smarter Working Policy and Guidance.

Equalities and Human Rights Implications

19. An Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment has been undertaken in relation to this policy, and has not identified any adverse impact on equality and human rights.

Officer to Contact

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List of Appendices

Appendix A – Smarter Working Policy and Guidance