



EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE: 10 SEPTEMBER 2026

WORKING ARRANGEMENTS POLICY – IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE RESOURCES

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to update the Employment Committee on the implementation of the Council's Working Arrangements Policy, following the Committee's previous consideration of the policy in September 2025, December 2025 and February 2026.
2. The report provides assurance on the implementation approach, progress made across the organisation, the support provided to managers and staff, the management of individual circumstances, and the arrangements for ongoing monitoring and review.

Background

3. The Council's previous Smarter Working Policy was introduced in 2015 and provided the framework for flexible, productive and inclusive working arrangements across the organisation. Following the significant changes to working practices since the Covid-19 pandemic, and the completion of the Council's Ways of Working office refit programme, the policy was reviewed during 2025 to ensure that the Council's approach remained aligned with organisational, service and workforce requirements.
4. In September 2025, the Employment Committee approved consultation on a proposed new Working Arrangements Policy and Guidance. The proposed policy was intended to provide greater clarity and consistency on where, when and how employees are expected to work, while continuing to recognise the Council's legal obligations, the importance of staff wellbeing, and the need to maintain effective service delivery.
5. Consultation took place with the recognised trade unions, staff and staff network groups. Feedback highlighted a range of concerns about increased onsite attendance on wellbeing, productivity, inclusion, caring responsibilities, reasonable adjustments, recruitment and retention, office space and parking.

The committee considered the feedback at its December 2025 and February 2026 meetings.

6. Following the committee meeting in February 2026, further discussion took place with the recognised trade unions and a final version of the Working Arrangements Policy was agreed with them. The agreed policy was published in March 2026, alongside supporting guidance and communications for managers and staff. The policy was implemented across teams and service areas by 31 May 2026.

Overview of the Agreed Policy

7. The agreed Working Arrangements Policy replaces the former Smarter Working Policy. Its purpose is to ensure that working arrangements support the delivery of high-quality services to the people of Leicestershire, enable employees to maximise performance and productivity, maintain appropriate visibility and accessibility as a public service provider, and retain flexibility where this supports service and individual needs.
8. The Policy makes clear that working arrangements should be determined by service requirements, organisational need and individual circumstances. It expects managers to determine the working arrangements that best support delivery of their services, while applying the policy fairly and consistently.
9. The policy confirms that the Council expects work to be carried out primarily at Council workplaces where this is required by the role, service need or contractual workplace location. Working from home remains subject to the needs of the service and discussion with, and permission from, the employee's manager.
10. The policy provides for different working arrangements, including fixed, field-based, hybrid working where appropriate. It recognises that the Council has a diverse range of roles and services and that one approach will not be suitable for all employees or teams.
11. The policy does not replace employees' statutory right to request flexible working. It also maintains the Council's duty to consider reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010 and provides for temporary adjustments through an Inclusion Commitment process where appropriate.
12. The policy also sets out expectations for professional conduct and collaboration, including standards relating to working locations, availability, rest breaks, shared workspaces, use of Council premises, online meetings, professional presentation, calendar sharing, communication, new starters and recruitment.

Implementation Approach and Progress

13. Implementation began in March 2026 following publication of the agreed policy, supporting guidance, briefing sessions, frequently asked questions and a manager toolkit. The implementation period gave managers time to consider service requirements, engage with teams and hold individual discussions with staff before arrangements were confirmed.
14. Managers were asked to review existing working arrangements and confirm whether they continued to support service delivery, performance, collaboration, staff development, customer responsiveness and effective use of Council workplaces.
15. The implementation approach was based on the following principles:
 - working arrangements should be driven by service need, not presenteeism or personal preference;
 - managers should apply the policy consistently, while taking account of individual circumstances;
 - staff should have the opportunity to discuss their working arrangements with their manager;
 - temporary adjustments should be documented and reviewed appropriately;
 - longer-term changes should be considered through the appropriate policy route, including statutory flexible working requests where required;
 - the Council should continue to support reasonable adjustments for disabled employees;
 - decisions should be capable of being explained and justified by reference to service requirements, organisational need and individual circumstances.
16. Corporate communications and manager support were provided throughout implementation. Staff were informed that the revised policy had been agreed with the recognised trade unions and that managers would discuss arrangements with them individually and as teams.
17. Departmental Management Teams were responsible for ensuring that implementation took place within their services and that the policy was applied in a way that was locally appropriate but consistent with the corporate framework. Departments have reported that most implementation discussions have been managed locally and constructively. In many teams, the policy has formalised or clarified arrangements that were already operating in practice. In other areas, managers have used the policy as an opportunity to increase on-site or team-based working where this supports service delivery, learning, collaboration, supervision or customer responsiveness.
18. The Corporate Management Team has received updates on implementation and has considered the operational impacts arising from the policy, including

service delivery, management consistency, workplace capacity and staff support. This provides assurance that implementation is being overseen corporately, that any emerging issues are being considered at an appropriate senior level, and that arrangements are in place to manage operational impacts through normal departmental, People Services and property management processes.

19. The policy has now been implemented across the organisation. The implementation process has reinforced the importance of management accountability. Managers are expected to keep working arrangements under review and ensure that they remain appropriate as service needs change.

Trade Union Engagement

20. The recognised trade unions agreed the revised policy before implementation commenced. This provided a more stable basis for implementation and reduced the risk of industrial relations escalation.
21. Engagement with trade unions has continued through the Council's established consultation and negotiation arrangements. Any themes arising from implementation can be raised through these mechanisms and considered as part of ongoing review.

Equalities and Inclusion

22. Equalities considerations have remained central to implementation. Feedback received during the consultation process highlighted the potential impact of changes to working arrangements on disabled staff, staff with long-term health conditions, staff with caring responsibilities and staff who rely on flexibility to manage personal circumstances.
23. The agreed policy seeks to mitigate these risks by requiring managers to consider service need and individual circumstances on a case-by-case basis.
24. The Policy explicitly preserves the statutory right to request flexible working and the requirement to consider reasonable adjustments. The Inclusion Commitment process provides a practical mechanism for documenting and reviewing temporary adjustments where appropriate.
25. During implementation, managers have been reminded that decisions must be fair, evidence-based and capable of being justified. Particular care is required where changes to working arrangements may affect disabled employees, employees with caring responsibilities or those with other circumstances that may require adjustment or flexibility.
26. Departments will continue to monitor themes arising from implementation, including whether any groups of staff appear to be disproportionately affected

by changes to working arrangements. Any emerging concerns will be considered through departmental management arrangements and, where appropriate, through People Services and trade union engagement.

Resource and Property Implications

27. The implementation of the policy has implications for the use of Council workplaces, including office occupancy, desk availability, meeting space, parking, equipment, ICT and facilities management.
28. Departments continue to consider how office space is used most effectively, including how teams can work together when on site, how shared workspaces are managed, and how arrangements support collaboration, supervision and service delivery.
29. The Policy also supports the Council's wider estate objectives by enabling a more evidence-based understanding of how office space is used and what is required to support effective service delivery.
30. There may be ongoing premises and facilities implications associated with increased use of Council workplaces in some service areas, including utilities, cleaning, consumables, security and car parking management. These will continue to be monitored through normal departmental and corporate property arrangements.

Monitoring and Review

31. Working arrangements will continue to be reviewed through normal management practice, with departments monitoring any recurring themes or issues that may require further guidance or corporate consideration.
32. People Services will continue to provide advice and monitor themes arising from queries, flexible working requests, Inclusion Commitments, reasonable adjustment discussions and trade union feedback, including whether further manager guidance, communications or policy clarification is required.
33. It is proposed that future updates to Employment Committee are provided by exception, where implementation identifies a material employment risk, a compliance issue, a significant employee relations matter, or a proposed change to the policy requiring Committee consideration.

Equalities Implications

34. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for the Working Arrangements Policy. The assessment identified that the policy may have a greater impact on some groups, particularly disabled employees, employees

with caring responsibilities, and those who are pregnant or returning from maternity leave, due to the expectation that attendance at Council workplaces remains the default working arrangement. However, the policy includes a range of mitigating measures, including statutory flexible working arrangements, Inclusion Commitments, reasonable adjustments, and a requirement for managers to consider individual circumstances when agreeing working arrangements. The assessment concluded that the Policy is proportionate to its aims of supporting effective service delivery, collaboration and organisational performance, and that appropriate safeguards are in place to minimise any adverse impacts.

Human Rights Implications

35. There are no human rights implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

Recommendations

36. The Employment Committee is asked to:
- a) note that the revised policy was agreed with the recognised trade unions before implementation commenced;
 - b) note the support provided to managers and staff during implementation, including guidance, communications and People Services advice;
 - c) note the ongoing arrangements for monitoring the application of the policy, including consideration of equality, legal, employment relations, property and service delivery implications; and
 - d) agree that future updates be brought to the Committee by exception, e.g., proposed policy change requiring Committee consideration.

Background Papers

Working Arrangements Policy and Guidance, Employment Committee, 18 September 2025:

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=212&MId=7898&Ver=4>

Working Arrangements Policy – Consultation Feedback and Implementation, Employment Committee, 4 December 2025:

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=212&MId=7899&Ver=4>

Working Arrangements Policy, Employment Committee, 5 February 2026:

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=212&MId=8436&Ver=4>

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

37. None.

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