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HOME WORKING POLICY

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Author: Town Clerk

Responsibility: Human Resources Committee

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Table of Contents

1. Outline.....	2
2. Purpose.....	2
3. Review.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4. Equality.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5. Governance	Error! Bookmark not defined.
6. Responsibilities	Error! Bookmark not defined.
7. Definition of Risk	Error! Bookmark not defined.
8. Definition of Risk Management.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
9. Types of Risk.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
10. Monitoring.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.

1. OUTLINE

- 1.1 Shepton Mallet Town Council (“the Council”) understands that there may be instances when an employee needs to work from home. Depending on the nature of that employee’s role the Council may consider flexible home working appropriate.
- 1.2 The Home working Policy enables home working to support the Town Councils business and employee needs and demands. It remains flexible whilst identifying the responsibilities, measures, and the risk-based approach to be carried out within the home environment to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our staff.
- 1.3 While homeworking is categorised as a type of flexible working, employees should not assume that other aspects of flexible working (such as amended hours) are automatically part of a homeworking arrangement.

2. DEFINITION

- 2.1 Flexible homeworking is defined as time split between home and the office when an employee undertakes some of their duties from home on an agreed basis. This is usually planned in advance and may be for complete or part days. Examples of the type of work considered suitable for home working include report writing, preparations for meetings, project work etc. The holding of physical meetings at home is not permitted due to public liability insurance.
- 2.2 There may be times when homeworking is required by the Council to meet business need during times of emergencies or as required by law. This is not defined as “flexible” homeworking.
- 2.3 Working from home enables work to be carried out more efficiently in a quiet location and without disruption. It may also prove a more efficient use of time if employees who have been away from their work base for part of day and are closer to their home on their return journey, complete the working day at home rather than at their normal place of work.
- 2.4 In cases where office facilities are shared, or the employee risks continual interruption, the Town clerk/ Deputy Town Clerk may agree that an employee can work from home. This may include agreeing to home working on a regular basis or for a fixed period e.g. two weeks as well as shorter ad hoc periods. Managers and employees should be aware of the potential impact home working could have on teams e.g. isolation from the team, and/or Council activities, a reduction in effective managerial support or supervision.
- 2.5 In cases where the Town Clerk requests a period of home working the Chair of the Human Resources Committee will consider the request.
- 2.6 Due to the nature of individual tasks some roles within the Council are not deemed suitable for home working.

3. CONDITIONS

- 3.1 Home working arrangements should work for both the Council and the employee.
- 3.2 Wherever possible requests for home working should be made at least one month before the employee wishes to start the arrangement.

- 3.3 In general the Council will be supportive of employees working up to 2 days per week from home as long as core business needs are met, and that the employee can meet all the requirements of their role from home.
- 3.4 The working environment should be distraction free with work time for working.
- 3.5 Risk assessments of the home working environment, in line with legal requirements, must be undertaken. An application and self-assessment form (Appendix 1) must be completed by the employee and agreed by the Town Clerk/Deputy Town Clerk before home working can commence.
- 3.6 Requests should be considered on their own merits, taking into account resources, impact on colleagues and working relationships.
- 3.7 When working from home employees are responsible for ensuring they are contactable during normal working hours. This should be via a Council mobile telephone (where provided) or the employee's home or mobile telephone numbers. Microsoft Teams and/or Zoom is also an acceptable means of being contactable. Details of personal telephone numbers will remain confidential within the Council; messages will be taken and forwarded on.
- 3.8 As a general rule it is not considered necessary for those working from home to require supplies of stationery etc. Large volumes of printing and collating of documents should be carried out on Town Council premises.
- 3.9 Under no circumstances should home working be used as an alternative method of meeting carer requirements
- 4.** We reserve the right to terminate your homeworking or hybrid working arrangement, for example, due to a change in business needs, performance concerns or if your role changes such that homeworking or hybrid working is no longer suitable, subject to 4 weeks' notice.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 Employer Responsibilities

- 5.1.1 **Health & Safety** - In line with the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 ("the Act") and their Health & Safety Policy the Council will ensure, as far as reasonably practical, the

health, safety and welfare at work of all employees, including those working from home. The Council reserves the right to inspect home working premises in order to ensure that the Act, current risk assessments and Council policies and procedures are being adhered to. Reasonable notice will be given to employees before any inspection.

5.1.2 **Insurance** - The Council accepts liability for accidents which are proven to have been caused by the authorised use of equipment provided by them in line with any instructions issued.

5.1.3 **Data Protection, Security & Confidentiality** - Council employees will be instructed that in instances where their colleagues are working from home, they will not disclose any personal details e.g. telephone numbers to anyone outside of the Council.

5.1.4 **Running costs and expenses** – Where the employee is choosing to work from home, the Council will not contribute towards costs – for example, heating and lighting.

5.2 **Employee Responsibilities**

5.2.1 **Health & Safety** - Employees are expected to carry out their work in such a way as to ensure, as far as reasonably practical, that there is no risk to health and safety to themselves, members of their family or visitors.

5.2.2 **Insurance** - Home working may have an affect on domestic insurance policies. Employees wishing to work from home must inform their insurance company of the change in circumstances and the use, and identity, of equipment owned by the Council. An employee's mortgage provider may need to be informed. Employees living in council or privately rented accommodation should notify their landlord and/or examine the terms of their lease. Any equipment belonging to the employee but being used for Council business should be operated in line with any instructions issued. It is reasonable for the Council to assume that this done.

5.2.3 **Accidents, Incidents & Dangerous Occurrences** - In line with the Council's Accident Reporting Procedure, employees must inform their line manager of any accidents, incidents or dangerous occurrences which take place whilst working at home. The initial report should be via telephone with the appropriate paperwork being completed on the employee's return to the workplace.

- 5.2.4 **Policies and Procedures** - All work carried out on Council business is covered by the requirements of the Council's policies and procedures, even if this work is undertaken at home.
- 5.2.5 **Data Protection, Security & Confidentiality** - Arrangements for home working should ensure that the employee can maintain the security and confidentiality of documents within the home environment whilst complying with Data Protection legislation and the Council's Email, Internet and Computer Use Policy & Procedure (employees should be aware that even when using their personal equipment to undertake Council business they must comply with this procedure). Employees should make sure that when leaving your computer that the desktop is locked through a password protected screen saver - ensuring data and information security.
- 5.2.6 **Remote Access** – To enable remote access, employees can use their Council issued laptop and Citrix / office 365 account allowing full remote working with collaboration tools including Microsoft Teams, Outlook, Word and Excel. All Data Protection, security and confidentiality measures and policies must be adhered to.
- 5.2.7 **Council Tax** - If the area of the house being used for home working is also used by the rest of the family at other times there are no implications regarding Council Tax. However, if the area is used solely for business and is not available to the family there may need to be a change of definition. In such cases the employee should check the details with the Billing Authority.
- 5.2.8 **Taxation** - Employees choosing to work from home are not entitled to tax relief on additional outgoings. As there is no requirement to work from home there would be no tax relief on any proportion of the costs for heating, lighting and rent on rooms used for business purposes.
- You may be able to claim tax relief for additional household costs if you must work at home on a regular basis, either for all or part of the week. This includes if you have to work from home because of coronavirus (COVID-19).
- 5.2.9 **Equipment** - Equipment required for home working will depend on the nature of the work being undertaken. The type and extent of equipment beyond the Council issued laptop, monitor, keyboard and mouse will be based on the risk assessment. If any equipment owned by the Council is subsequently lost or damaged by an employee

that employee shall be expected to pay for its replacement, if not covered by insurance.

6. MAKING AN APPLICATION FOR HOME WORKING

- 6.1 An employee requesting occasional home working should complete the application form and risk assessment form (Appendix 1) and forward it to their line manager. Employees are encouraged to complete the form electronically providing as much information as possible.
- 6.2 The line manager will discuss the application with the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk and the employee in person. Discussions should confirm the type of work which can be undertaken, arrangements for covering other duties in the office and the exact pattern of home working being requested.
- 6.3 If the risk assessment highlights any cause for concern the line manager should seek Health & Safety advice before any further action is taken.
- 6.4 The line manager will sign the application and risk assessment form and return a copy to the employee whilst advising them of the decision on their application. This will normally be within two weeks of the request being submitted.
- 6.5 If an employee wishes to appeal against the decision, they may do so by using the Council's Grievance Procedure.
- 6.6 Home working arrangements will be reviewed on an annual basis, or sooner if circumstances change.
- 6.7 Employees must be aware that any abuse of the home working arrangement may result in the Council taking disciplinary action

Appendix 1

Occasional Home Working: Application form and Risk Assessment

To be reviewed annually or if circumstances change

Employee Name:

Job Title:

Service Area:

Date of Risk Assessment:

Home telephone number:

Mobile telephone number:

Work / personal – please indicate

Home Address:

Statement of need for home working

Benefits for Town Council

Benefits for Employee

Employee Declaration

I confirm that the attached risk assessment was carried out in relation to the facilities and equipment which I intend to use when working as part of the home working arrangement and that I understand my responsibilities under the policy in respect of occasional home working and confidentiality of Town Council data

I understand that should any equipment provided to me by the Council for use during the home working arrangement is lost or damaged then I will be required to fund its replacement and that on leaving the Council I will be required to return any equipment provided to me.

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Risk Assessment on the home working environment

Questions	Yes / No	Comments
1. General		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed a DSE assessment? 		
2. Chair		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the chair height adjustable? • Is the back rest adjustable in height & tilt? • Does the chair have a five-staff base? • Is the chair comfortable? • Do you need a footrest? 		
3. Desk / work surface		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the area large enough for all the equipment and the full range of tasks to be undertaken there (Employees should adopt a clear desk approach)? • Is there sufficient clearance beneath the area for thighs and knees and to stretch the legs? • Have you sufficient space to access your desk as well as more space around it? • If you use a document holder is it positioned at same height and distance as your monitor? 		
4. Keyboard		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there sufficient space in front of the keyboard to place a wrist rest? • Are all the keys present and in working order? 		
5. Mouse		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there sufficient space adjacent to the keyboard for the mouse to be used comfortably? • Is it positioned close to the keyboard to prevent over extending or cramping of the wrist? • Do you have a mouse mat? 		
6. Screen		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the monitor positioned firstly in front of you? • Is the monitor positioned at the correct height? <i>(when looking horizontally eyes should be resting just below the top of the screen)</i> • Does the screen tilt and swivel easily? • Is the image on the screen clear and stable? 		
6. Environment		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any manual handling issues relating to you working from home? 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the work area free from trip hazards – including the tidying of cables and leads? • Does the route to your workplace involve using a loft ladder? • Are there access problems if you carry large or heavy items? • Is the general lighting adequate? • Can you eliminate strong light sources / reflections? • Is the temperature and ventilations adequate and free from draughts? • Is the work area free from distracting noise? • Will your home working activities involve significant use of the telephone? • Are you intending to use a mobile phone for this purpose or will you have access to a land line? • In relation to your electrical equipment is there any evidence of damage to plugs or leads? • Is there any evidence of overheating? • Are combustible materials kept away from sources of heat? • Do you have a smoke alarm fitted? • Do you know what action to take in the event of a fire? 		
<p>7. I.T. Equipment</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have a suitable broadband internet connection and good wi-fi or a cable to the router 		

Line managers response to employee’s self-assessment of the proposed working arrangements, following discussion with the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk:

<p>Actions taken in relation to any risks identified:</p>
<p>I have reviewed the employee’s request for home working with their line manager and:</p> <p>a) I agree to the proposed occasional home working arrangements OR <i>(delete as appropriate)</i> b) I do not agree to the proposed home working arrangements for the following reasons:</p> <p>Signed:.....</p> <p>Date:.....</p>