

A nighttime aerial photograph of Wolverhampton, showing city lights, buildings, and a railway station with a prominent glass-fronted structure.

# SMART Working Policy

January 2018



**Stronger  
Economy**



**Stronger  
Communities**



**Stronger  
Organisation**

## INDEX

<b>Section</b>		<b>Page</b>
1.0	Policy Statement	
2.0	Benefits of Smart Working	
3.0	Scope	
4.0	Principles	
5.0	Smart Working	
6.0	Working Hours	
7.0	Time Recording	
8.0	Confidentiality and security of data	
9.0	Health and Safety	
10.0	Risk and Insurance	
11.0	Breach of Policy	
12.0	Management Responsibilities	
12.1	Employee Responsibilities	
12.2	Role and Responsibilities of HR	
12.3	Role of Head of HR	
12.4	Monitoring and Review	
12.5	Related Documents	

## 1.0 Policy Statement

- 1.1 City of Wolverhampton Council recognises the need to develop modern working practices to enable employees to maximise their performance and productivity whilst maintaining work life balance. Through our Smart Working approach, we will support employees to work in the most effective and efficient way possible.
- 1.2 This will involve ensuring we are all 'Smart' in the ways we work:
- **Supported-** through policies, processes, procedures, technology and buildings.
  - **Measured-** by the work we do, not by where we do it.
  - **Aware-** of any changes to the ways in which we work and able to have input into decisions about our working styles.
  - **Responsive-** to our customers' needs, no matter where, when or how we work.
  - **Trained-** to use any technology or policies that we are expected to use.
- 1.3 To enable this we encourage the use of flexible working arrangements in terms of when and where work is carried out, supporting this through communications technology, outcome based measurement of work and appropriate training in policy, management styles and technology.
- 1.4 Smart Working will help the Council to be more responsive to customer needs while ensuring the Council's vision, values and goals to attract, develop and retain high quality employees are realised.
- 1.5 Smart Working will empower employees to work with their manager to take a proactive rather than a reactive approach to flexibility in delivering their work. It is about taking a comprehensive and strategic approach to working practices across the Council, underpinned by:
- An approach where flexibility is the norm rather than the exception
  - Work being conducted at the most efficient location taking into consideration the task, the customer, the individual and the team. Depending on their role, employees could be supported to work from a range of Council buildings, within the community, at client sites or by varying degrees of home working and regular hot-desking.
  - Office space is allocated according to activities, not to individuals or based on seniority
  - Use of technology such as the tools in Office 365 and Skype to enable sharing of information in a timely manner and the ability to contact and work collaboratively with people from various locations
  - A collaborative approach to Smart Working which balances the freedom to choose where to work with the needs of the business
  - Performance measurement based upon managing by output rather than physical presence

- 1.6 It is accepted that not all roles within the Council can be categorised as totally flexible but there is scope for smarter ways of working. This will be dependent upon the demands of the business and individual preference. With the right planning it is possible for employees to carry out their duties from a variety of locations.
- 1.7 This policy sets out the Council's approach to Smart Working.
- 1.8 The Council will review the policy from time to time in line with statutory procedures and best practice.

## 2.0 **Benefits of Smart Working**

- 2.1 The Council recognises that Smart Working can have many benefits for the business and the employee, which include:
- Services delivered more efficiently, with customer needs met more effectively
  - Increased productivity and employee morale
  - Reduced costs associated with office space, travel to and from work/meetings
  - Reduction in our carbon footprint and time spent travelling for work related activity
  - Increase in candidate attraction, employee retention and talent acquisition
  - Reduction in stress by empowering employees to manage their time and enhance their personal responsibility

## 3.0 **Scope**

- 3.1 This policy and procedure applies to all employees of the Council including Senior Managers and the Managing Director.
- 3.2 It excludes NJC employees and Teachers employed by Governing Bodies who are covered by Schools HR Policies. Policies adopted by the City Council may, following discussion with relevant trades unions, also be recommended as good practice models for adoption by maintained school governing bodies.
- 3.3 It does not consider permanent flexible working options available to employees that they may request using the Council's flexible working policy and procedure. These are set out in the flexible working policy (examples include term time only working, reduced hours, compressed hours).

## 4.0 Principles

- 4.1 Managers and employees should consider Smart Working at every opportunity. The best working arrangements for the business and the individual should be discussed and agreed between the employee and their line manager before implementation.
- 4.2 When agreeing working arrangements, managers will consider the impact upon the business, the employee and the team. If there is a decision that an employee can work from an alternative location, this should not create additional workload for other employees nor affect operational efficiency and effectiveness. Where multiple employees are working from multiple locations, regular contact should be maintained between the team to ensure there is a joined-up approach to delivering the service.
- 4.3 As part of Smart Working, employees are expected to have personal responsibility for their workload and time management. Managers will be expected to manage employees by output as opposed to physical presence. This will require employees to provide regular progress updates to demonstrate the work they have carried out regardless of their working location.
- 4.4 Employees working away from the office must provide their colleagues and line manager with details of how they can be contacted – i.e. landline, mobile telephone number and/or skype calling. Employees should make and receive telephone calls and emails as they usually would within the office and within normal working hours.
- 4.5 Employees must be aware that some roles can only be performed from specific locations. Some employees therefore may consider being able to work smartly as a benefit. The right therefore should be respected and not considered an entitlement, contractual or otherwise.
- 4.6 There must be no compromise of health and safety, information governance, security of equipment or quality of service delivery when agreeing an alternative working location.
- 4.7 If working from home is a chosen suitable option, this will not attract any subsidy as the benefits are seen to be mutual
- 4.8 The Council's working hours policy and Working Time Regulations will apply in the normal way to smart working.
- 4.9 This policy will be applied fairly and equitably and no employee will suffer any detriment from making a request.
- 4.10 All other Council policies and procedures will still apply in the usual manner.

## 5.0 Smart Working

5.1 Smart Working involves work taking place at the most effective location and at the most effective time, respecting the needs of the task, the customer, the individual and the team. This could also include the use of technology (such as Skype for Business) to avoid travelling unnecessarily to meetings.

5.2 Where an employee has a usual office base, they can discuss the potential to work away from that office with their Line Manager on an ad-hoc basis. Their Line Manager should consider the following factors before agreeing to the employee working from a different location:

- Will working from a different location or at a different time help the employee be more efficient and more responsive to customer and business needs?
- Is the employee available at short notice if required and would they be required to be physically present in a specific location in an emergency?
- Would there be a positive or negative impact on team members and/or stakeholders?
- Could work be effectively organised amongst employees within the team?
- Would there be a positive or negative impact on work quality or performance?
- Have health and safety and data protection issues been addressed?
- Will the employee have the right tools for the job in the alternative location?
- Are there any planned structural changes to the service, department or the Council which may need the employee to report to a specific location?
- Are there Local specific arrangements in place (i.e. rotas)?
- Are there performance related issues which have been prior discussed between the manager and employee
- Are there any financial considerations related to the employee or the Council?

5.3 (Further guidance for Managers is available in 'Managing Smart Ways of Work – Managers guide').

5.4 Managers should treat all employees fairly and equitably. Where it is not deemed possible to allow an employee to work from an alternative location then a reason should be provided. This should not prevent an employee from making subsequent requests.

5.5 Smart Working arrangements are intended to be ad-hoc and suit a purpose (for example, a specific piece of work needs to be conducted without distraction and therefore an employee makes a request to work at home for a day).

5.6 Where a manager has agreed that an employee can work from an alternative location or an alternative time, then practical and operational arrangements should be agreed between Line Manager and employee. Expected work outputs and arrangements for communication, support and housekeeping rules need to be discussed and established prior to implementation.

- 5.7 Wherever an employee is based, they will be expected to record work undertaken (on a format discussed and agreed with their line manager) and report to management on progress where requested. Where the employee is working from an alternative location, the frequency and method of communicating progress will need to be agreed with their Line Manager.
- 5.8 Managers and employees must consider any health and safety implications and conduct a risk assessment if required.
- 5.9 Where an employee's performance is not acceptable, the manager can withdraw the employee from agile working arrangements as part of a performance action plan to support necessary improvements.
- 5.10 Employees must note that the ability to work from home is not a substitute for sickness, childcare or similar carer responsibilities. It is the employees responsibility to ensure adequate provision is in place, should they be able to work from home.

## 6.0 Working Hours

- 6.1 The Working Hours Policy will continue to apply in the usual manner and employees and managers should ensure this is adhered to unless there are other locally agreed arrangements in place.
- 6.2 Subject to service needs and with **managerial consent**, employees have the option of working flexibly between the hours of 7 am to 7 pm with no core hours. Full time employees should work a minimum of 37 hours a week between these times and do an average of 7.4 hours a day (i.e. where someone is employed to work Monday to Friday, 37 hours a week, they **cannot** complete 37 hours a week across less than five days). Part time employees must still continue to spread their contracted hours across the number of days they are contracted to work.
- 6.3 Employees must work a morning and afternoon in a day (where contracted to work a full day) – smart working cannot be used by employees to take a morning or afternoon off work – annual, flexi or other leave can be used for this purpose.
- 6.4 In agreement with their line manager, an employee can request to start work later, finish earlier, have a longer lunch and so forth to help manage personal commitments and fulfil their workload, whilst ensuring the team is adequately resourced to meet the business and service needs.
- 6.5 For employees who work 6 hours or above in a day a minimum break of 30 minutes must be taken.

## 7.0 **Time Recording**

- 7.1 Time should be recorded using the time sheet available for employees on the intranet. Managers may at their discretion use another time recording method – employees are requested to familiarise themselves with the local practice.
- 7.2 It is the employee's responsibility to keep accurate records of hours worked. Anomalies may result in disciplinary action. Employees should remind themselves of their responsibilities under their terms and conditions and observe and lead by our values and behaviours. Employees should also abide by Working Time Regulations.
- 7.3 The line manager should oversee the employee's record of hours – if they fail to do so, they may face disciplinary or capability proceedings in line with their responsibilities and expectations to observe and lead by our values and behaviours. In addition, managers must ensure employees are adhering to Working Time Regulations.

## 8.0 **Confidentiality and Security of data**

- 8.1 The Council will ensure that appropriate technical security measures are in place to protect the information used by the employee.
- 8.2 Employees should ensure they maintain the security of any documentation and equipment used to carry out work activities. Both paper and electronic records of information must be kept secure and confidential at all times. Wherever possible, when equipment or documents are not being used they should be locked away.
- 8.3 Any paper based documentation that contains personal or confidential information must be disposed of securely on Council premises using the Council approved secure disposal units. Employees are encouraged to use electronic files and documents wherever possible to reduce paper file storage, printing costs and increase security.
- 8.4 Laptops, tablets or work phones must be kept secure and in a 'locked state' when not in use. Where employees will not be returning to their usual base to store data or equipment such as a tablet, laptop or phone that holds confidential information, they should ensure they are stored at secure premises, inside a lockable cupboard or desk.
- 8.5 The Council will provide the necessary equipment to employees to enable SMART working. Employees should not use their own personal computer, tablet, USB stick, storage drive or any electronic device to process or store Council information. Council laptops are encrypted which will provide protection

of data in case of loss or theft. If a USB stick or external hard drive is required it should be requested from ICT after obtaining management consent as this will be encrypted.

- 8.6 The Council's policy on Acceptable use of ICT Assets and Social Media contents must be adhered to. This is available to view on the Council's intranet or from Human Resources.

## 9.0 **Health and Safety**

- 9.1 The Health and Safety at work etc. Act 1974 (HSWA) places duties on employers and employees. Under HSWA, employers have a duty to protect the health, safety and welfare of their employees. Employees have responsibility for their own and others health and safety whilst carrying out work activities regardless of location.

- 9.2 Where employees use other Council locations to work they should familiarise themselves with local arrangements for managing health and safety and fire evacuation procedures. Employees should also ensure they adhere to local signing in and out arrangements.

- 9.3 If working from home or other work locations is agreed (regardless of frequency), the employee has a responsibility to ensure they have an appropriate workspace with adequate security, storage and screening from activities and noise. There must also be adequate ventilation and lighting. It is necessary to ensure that any workstation used is not likely to cause employees any health risk. In view of this, employees should assess the risks for workstations that are occupied at irregular intervals as a result of flexible working practices such as hot-desking. The basic criteria employees should always check when working with display screen equipment can be found on the Health and Safety Intranet Portal (DSE – Self Assessment Form). Any risks must be discussed with management to help minimise these.

- 9.4 Employees must not carry out any work meetings in their home, though Skype meetings could be considered.

- 9.5 Employees who may be lone working should complete a lone working risk assessment (available on the Health and Safety Intranet) and request a Alertcom Device if necessary.

- 9.6 Health and safety issues and risks must be considered prior to an employee working from a different location or at a different time.

## 10.0 **Risk and Insurance**

- 10.1 The Council's insurance will cover third party and employer liability risk. Council provided equipment in the workplace and at home will also be covered. However, any equipment provided by the employee for work use will not be

covered by the Council. A home-based worker must inform their insurers that they are home based working (depending on how much they do from home – it is an employee's responsibility to check this with their insurer).

## 11.0 **Breach of policy**

11.1 In the event that the SMART working policy is misused, it will be treated seriously as it could constitute fraud. It may be considered gross misconduct and could result in disciplinary action – a potential outcome of which may be dismissal.

## 12.0 **Management Responsibilities** – managers should:

- Familiarise themselves with the managers guidance for Smart Working and follow the necessary advice provided therein
- Be responsible for their own and team members adherence to this guidance
- To regularly review smart working arrangements agreed within the team and amend these if necessary
- To ensure all employees within the team understand smart working guidance
- To ensure the concept of managing by outcomes has been fully explained to employees within the team and methods to monitor output have been mutually agreed
- To monitor output of all employees and any reduction in performance is dealt with as soon as possible
- To monitor all employees time recording and ensure they are completed accurately and employees are working in accordance with Working Time Regulations
- To ensure maximum flexibility and consideration is afforded to smart working requests whilst remaining focussed on the needs of the service
- To ensure employees are aware of their responsibility to adhere to Council policies and training linked to smart working is undertaken
- To ensure employees who are habitual users of DSE equipment conduct a risk assessment for any workstations used and raise concerns with management
- To conduct risk assessments as necessary and minimise these in relation to smart working and ensure employees meet their health and safety obligations
- To deal with misuse of the SMART working policy in conjunction with HR as soon as possible.

## 13.1 **Employee responsibilities** – employees should:

- Ensure they are familiar with this policy and others related to it
- Comply with all conditions and guidance within the smart working policy – for example, confidentiality, data protection etc

- To have joint responsibility with their manager to agree smart methods of working where applicable
- To ensure flexibility, openness and constructiveness in relation to discussions and agreements about smart working with their line manager whilst remaining focused on the needs of the service
- When working away from the office, to ensure contact is maintained via telephone, skype and email
- To record time worked and output regardless of location
- Understand and respect that working away from the office base is a mutual benefit and it is not an entitlement
- To adhere to Council policies and undertake training in relation to smart ways of working
- If working from home or hot desking conduct a risk assessment for each work station being used and discuss with management
- Maintain regular contact with the team and their line manager, regardless of work location
- Optimise meetings to minimise the amount of travel time when working off site
- Report immediately once known, any loss, theft or damage to Council equipment or the loss of confidential information.

## 10.2 Roles and Responsibilities of HR

HR will provide operational support to managers in the application of this policy and procedure. Under this policy HR has the specific responsibility to:

- Advise managers on using the standard appraisal templates and documentation including the guidance for managers and employees.
- Provide support and guidance throughout all stages of this policy
- Ensure the communication, maintenance, regular review and updating of this policy assess compliance, legality and effectiveness
- Monitor and review the delivery and impact of the policy
- Ensure policies are kept up to date and in line with this policy

## 10.3 Role of Head of HR

In consultation with the recognised Trade Unions, the Head of HR will exercise delegated authority for and be responsible for the on-going review and updating of this policy to ensure compliance with changes in statutory requirements and operational delivery, including responsibility for identifying the appropriate process for the regular evaluation of the effectiveness of this policy. Any fundamental changes to this policy will be brought before Cabinet (Resources) Panel for approval.

## 11.0 Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years following ratification or sooner if the necessity arises.

## 12.0 **Related Documents**

Travel and Subsistence Policy

Working Hours Policy

Clear Desk Policy

Flexible Working Policy

Acceptable use of ICT Assets and Social Media Policy

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