

South Lakeland District Council

Human Resources Committee - 26 March 2019

Working Arrangements and Flexi Policy

Portfolio:	Housing, People and Innovation Portfolio Holder
Report from:	David Sykes – Director People and Places
Report Author:	Kerry Johnson-Metcalf – HR Manager
Wards:	Not applicable
Forward Plan:	Not applicable

1.0 Expected Outcome

- 1.1 The Committee approves the new working arrangements and flexi policy.

2.0 Recommendation

It is recommended to the Human Resources Committee that they:

- (1) approve the new Working Arrangements and Flexi policy as attached at Appendix 1 for implementation with effect from 1 April 2019.**

3.0 Background and Proposals

- 3.1 At the July 2018 meeting, the Committee received a report on the HR restructure principles relative to the Customer Connect Programme. These principles are being delivered in line with the detailed design process, change, engagement and transition management activities.
- 3.2 These activities are transforming the Council from the old to the new ways of working that the model commands. To support the new model requires the Council to perform differently in a multitude of ways. With Phase 1 nearing completion and transformation of this phase imminent policies and procedures are being reviewed and developed and this Policy will be one of the many key enablers that will support this transformation.
- 3.3 This Policy enables the ability to work more flexibly and in line with our customers' requirements. In order to achieve this we are increasing the flexibility around our working arrangements in the vast majority of the Council. This means that existing core working hours will be removed.
- 3.4 Access to services between the hours of 8.45am and 5.00pm will remain, however, not all employees will work within the rigidity of these times.
Employees may start earlier or later than 8.45am and finish earlier or later than 5.00pm. However services must be covered by employees during our opening hours.
- 3.5 Flexibility in the workplace will allow the Council and its' employees to make arrangements about working hours that suit the Council, our customers and our employees. This will support the service provision but also promote and maintain a healthy work/life balance for our employees.

- 3.6 This type of flexibility has countless benefits which in turn leads to the improvement of productivity and efficiencies, e.g. reducing the cost of sickness absence. It can lead to increased employee morale, engagement and commitment. It can also lead to the enhancement employment reputation and can ultimately lead to the Council becoming an employer of choice in the area. It can therefore lead to retention and reduced turnover.
- 3.7 In 2017, a study of UK businesses and employees conducted by HSBC found that 9 in 10 employees (89%) considered flexible working arrangements to be the biggest motivator to their productivity levels within the workplace. This was a view shared equally among male and female employees (87% and 90% respectively). More so than financial incentives (77%).
- 3.8 Alongside this, 81% of workers said they believe that the opportunity to work remotely would also help them to improve productivity, making a clear link between flexible working cultures and increased productivity levels. This will be updated in line with our proposed homeworking policy.
- 3.9 The study also suggests that companies providing a better work/life balance may well be paving the way for a more productive workforce as employees feel more motivated.
- 3.10 Flexible working arrangements supports the agile model and provides a clear leadership vision around the creation of an environment that is built on trust.
- 3.11 Implementing such flexible working arrangements may introduce a risk as such arrangements could be open to potential abuse. In the event of a breach of trust and confidence this may lead to imposing prescribed working hours for employees and/or the service area. However the aim is to manage any breach of trust and confidence on a case by case basis.
- 3.12 This policy does not replace an employees' statutory right to apply for flexible working.
- 3.13 The policy also includes the existing arrangements surrounding the accrual of flexi. The rules on accruing and taking flexi are the same as the original policy. This is explained below.
- 3.14 Employees who work under agreed flexible working arrangements policy will be able to accrue flexi.

Employees will be able to accrue up to a maximum of 13 working days flexi leave per annum. Employees will be allowed to take half a day or a full day in lieu. Only one full day's flexi leave or two half days flexi leave can be taken per settlement period – every 4 weeks (pro rata to part time staff). All flexi leave is to be agreed in advance with the Lead, Director or Chief Executive and is to be approved through the system.

In addition to the 13 days flexi employee's will also be able to accumulate up to 5 full additional working days flexi to be taken during the year, by banking them on the system. In these circumstances the hours must have been accrued in advance.

- 3.15 Members are asked to consider and approve the adoption of the new Policy for implementation with effect from 1 April 2019 when the new structure is implemented.

4.0 Consultation

- 4.1 The formalised introduction of flexible working arrangements is a distinct advantage for eligible employees. Those employees who are positively affected by the changes are primarily represented by Unison. Discussions have taken place with the Unison representative who is fully supportive of changes and understands the all-round benefits. The proposed policy was presented to JCP at its meeting on 12 March 2019 and was recommended to HR Committee for approval.

5.0 Alternative Options

5.1 The alternative option is to retain the existing working arrangements and flexi system. It is considered that retaining the status quo position would not release all the benefits of working in the new model, with the consequence that this will have a less positive effect resulting in higher absence, low morale, employees being less effective and potentially providing poor customer service.

6.0 Links to Council Priorities

6.1 The Council Plan 2014-19 states that “through a flexible and skilled workforce” and “through our customer connect programme,” staff will have the ability to work more efficiently for the customer and our workforce plan development will set out future requirements for the organisation. We will continue to develop our skilled workforce with more digital skills and a more flexible, coordinated approach to working across services....”

7.0 Implications

Financial, Resources and Procurement

7.1 There are no financial, resources or procurement activity related to this policy.

Human Resources

7.2 There are no relevant human resources implications relative to the introduction of this policy. During the transition period training will be provided for employees along with associated communications detailing the policy changes.

7.3 Whilst this type of flexibility has significant benefits there are clear expectations surrounding the levels of productivity. Flexibility drives increased productivity, however, where it is abundantly clear that productivity levels are reduced a review will be undertaken and, depending on the outcome, addressed accordingly.

Legal

7.3 None arising through this briefing.

Health, Social, Economic and Environmental

7.4 The introduction of the policy aims to support a healthy work/life balance. The ability to work flexibly will support employees with the increasing environmental and social pressures faced in society today.

Equality and Diversity

7.5 Directors and Leads will have responsibility for ensuring that a consistent approach is adopted which demonstrates that all employees are treated equally.

Risk

Risk	Consequence	Controls required
The system is open to potential abuse	Employees who are not compliant with the ethos of trust and confidence	Communication and understanding of the new Policy Introduction of prescribed working hours as required and/or potential disciplinary action

Contact Officers

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Appendices Attached to this Report

Appendix No.	Name of Appendix
1	Working Arrangements and Flexi Policy
2	2014 Flexi Scheme Policy

Background Documents Available

Name of Background document	Where it is available
N/A	N/A

Tracking Information

Signed off by	Date sent
Legal Services	-
Section 151 Officer	-
Monitoring Officer	-
SMT	-

Circulated to	Date sent
Assistant Director	N/A
Human Resources Manager	N/A
Communications Team	N/A
Leader	N/A
Committee Chairman	N/A
Portfolio Holder	N/A
Ward Councillor(s)	N/A
Committee	N/A
Executive (Cabinet)	N/A
Council	N/A