

REPORT OF HR COMMITTEE
(Meeting held on 23 June 2021)

1. WORKSMART (MINUTE NO 6)

The Committee has considered proposals for the implementation of the WorkSmart initiative, the next step in the Council's Smarter Working Programme, and recommends a related new HR Policy.

The significant majority of the Council's c400 office-based employees work in roles that have been working from home since the middle of March 2020. WorkSmart introduces a policy to allow staff to continue to work from home or an alternative base. Working from an alternative base is not possible for our Operational and field-based employees. The investment made by the Council in recent years in its ICT equipment and infrastructure meant the Council was in an excellent position to respond to the immediate challenge faced by enforced home working in March 2020.

Staff surveys have shown the majority of employees prefer a hybrid approach between working at home and at the office. With their manager's agreement, employees would be able to work flexibly outside of the current 'core hours'. There would be some exceptions that are role dependent. Performance management measures would be incorporated.

Moving to a hybrid way of working enables the Council to make a good contribution towards its sustainability agenda. Employee travel in 2019/20 was in the region of 480,000 miles. A reduction in travel was anticipated from employees who have a new flexible working arrangement in place, which could generate financial and time benefits. The proposed policy sets out expectations relating to:

- Hours of work / Visits to the workplace
- Equipment and materials / Telephone and Internet accounts
- Mileage claims
- Health and safety issues / Insurance, mortgage or rental agreements
- Requests to work from home or an alternative location

It is accepted that amendments to the Policy may have to be made subsequently, due to external factors such as the NJC pay negotiations, which include a homeworking element. The initial applications for flexible working can be granted for up to 12 months. The arrangement will be reviewed throughout the agreed period with a more formal review at the end before any further extension is agreed.

The Business Case for the proposal was considered separately by the Corporate Affairs and Local Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel and the Cabinet, a report on which appears elsewhere on the Council agenda.

RECOMMENDED:

That the Worksmart Policy (attached as Appendix 1 to Agenda Item 6 of the HR Committee) together with related documents, be approved.