

<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>CABINET</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>19 DECEMBER 2023</b>
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>HYBRID WORKING POLICY</b>
<b>Report Owner / Corporate Director:</b>	<b>CHIEF OFFICER – LEGAL &amp; REGULATORY SERVICES, HR &amp; CORPORATE POLICY</b>
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	<b>PAUL MILES, GROUP MANAGER HR &amp; OD</b>
<b>Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:</b>	There is no impact on the policy framework or procedure rules.
<b>Executive Summary:</b>	<p>The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the reviewed Hybrid Working Policy.</p> <p>In October 2022 the Council implemented an interim Hybrid Working Policy. This policy set out a framework for hybrid working at the Council and in doing so sought to support the Council with its future service delivery model.</p>

## 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the reviewed Hybrid Working Policy attached as **Appendix 1**.

## 2. Background

- 2.1 In October 2022 the Council implemented an interim Hybrid Working Policy. This policy set out a framework for hybrid working at the Council and in doing so sought to support the Council with its future service delivery model.
- 2.2 Significant consultation took place with local trade union representatives in relation to the development of the policy.
- 2.3 Trade Union representatives, in supporting the policy, had some concerns about its practical implementation and impact on employees. It was therefore agreed to implement the policy on an interim basis in order to enable due consideration to be given to the concerns raised and to receive feedback from staff following implementation.
- 2.4 Interim application of the policy also allowed for consideration to be given to any updates on discussions that were happening at an all-Wales level on matters relating to homeworking.

## 3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 The interim Hybrid Working Policy has been in place since October 2022.
- 3.2 The annual staff survey held during December 2022 and January 2023 was utilised to obtain staff feedback with a section of questions specifically addressing hybrid working.
- 3.3 Feedback from staff via the staff survey in relation to hybrid working was positive. 62% of respondents confirmed that their work roles were subject to the new interim hybrid working policy that was introduced in October 2022. 72% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they were satisfied that the new interim hybrid policy supports working arrangements which enabled them to meet work demands. 70% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the flexitime working hours scheme and hybrid working allowed them to achieve a good work life balance.
- 3.4 Following this feedback, a dedicated meeting was held with trade union representatives to discuss and obtain their reflections. Trade union representatives confirmed that the feedback from the staff survey reflected the feedback which they had received from staff. No further amendments to the policy were recommended.
- 3.5 Trade Union representatives confirmed that the Council could seek to adopt this interim policy on a permanent basis.
- 3.6 The policy has been shared with Corporate Management Board (CMB) and Cabinet/CMB (CCMB).
- 3.7 In terms of discussions that are happening at an all-Wales level on matters relating to homeworking, the National Joint Council provided a commitment that employers should provide guidance on home working within the 2022 pay agreement. The Council's interim Hybrid Working Policy met this requirement.

#### **4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)**

- 4.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh Language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal.

#### **5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives**

- 5.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report.

#### **6. Climate Change Implications**

- 6.1 There are no climate change implications as a result of this report.

#### **7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications**

7.1 There are no safeguarding and corporate parent implications as a result of this report.

## **8. Financial Implications**

8.1 There are no financial implications as a result of this report..

## **9. Recommendation**

9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet approves the Hybrid Working Policy for full implementation.

## **Background Documents**

None

# HYBRID WORKING POLICY

## SCOPE STATEMENT

This Policy applies to all employees of Bridgend County Borough Council except:

- Those employed under the Conditions of Service for School Teachers in England and Wales.
- Those employed by Governing Bodies in educational establishments under delegated powers.

**Date of Issue:**

<b>DOCUMENT CONTROL</b>	
Document Title	Hybrid Working Policy
Previous Publication Date	31 October 2022
<b>DOCUMENT APPROVAL</b>	
This document received approval from:	Date
Group Manager HR & OD	02/05/2023
Trade Unions	10/05/2023
Corporate Management Board	
CCMB	
Cabinet/Council	
<b>REVISION HISTORY</b>	
Revision History	

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. The Coronavirus Pandemic of 2020 led to the council having to adapt and deliver many services virtually with employees often working remotely from their homes. Whilst not all services were impacted in this way, with some employees continuing throughout to work full time from service delivery locations, these experiences created an opportunity to review the council's operating model with a view to ensuring that the council is fit for purpose moving forward.
- 1.2. A hybrid working model offers a blended approach that can take account of the wide range of services delivered by the council. The application of hybrid working is dependent on the demands and needs of the role undertaken by the employee and the service within which the role is based. It also offers employees greater flexibility in their work practices, promoting a better work life balance.
- 1.3. This policy has been developed alongside the Flexitime Working Hours Scheme.

## **2. Policy Statement**

- 2.1. The council is committed to a model of service delivery which ensures the provision of customer centric and IT enabled services across the County Borough, contributing to the council's digitalisation strategy of enabling a Digital Council by 2024.
- 2.2. The council is committed to improving the work environment of employees by enabling greater flexibility in relation to remote working. This will enhance work life balance and staff wellbeing and have a positive impact on the council's ability to recruit and retain staff.
- 2.3. The council is seeking to align its hybrid working model with the Welsh Government goal of achieving as a minimum 30% of workforce being agile and working from home at any given point by 2024.
- 2.4. The council is expecting the application of a hybrid working model to make a positive contribution to the net carbon 2030 agenda by reducing the need to travel to work.

## **3. General Principles**

### **3.1. Service delivery led:**

The council's model should be directed by its ability to deliver effective services across the County Borough demonstrating benefit to the council and its customers.

### **3.2. One administrative base:**

Civic Offices to be retained as the main administrative and democratic base for the council for the foreseeable future. In due course a rationalisation of other office buildings may be possible.

### **3.3. Blended models of working:**

The model will recognise the wide range of services delivered by the council. Some employees may need to work full time from service delivery locations whilst for others a hybrid agile model of office and remote working would be suitable. This must be service led whilst enabling employees to have greater flexibility in their work practices and promote better work life balance.

### **3.4. Contract of employment:**

Application of this policy does not affect current terms and conditions of employment.

## **4. Hybrid Working Arrangements**

- 4.1. Agreeing a hybrid working arrangement will not result in any changes to an employee's contract of employment.
- 4.2. The number of days an employee will be expected to attend their usual base compared with working remotely will vary depending on: the needs of the organisation, the needs of the service they work in, the nature of their role, what is happening within their role and team at any time and individual circumstances.
- 4.3. Employees can be asked to attend the workplace for several reasons including:
  - 4.3.1. to support front-line service delivery,
  - 4.3.2. to attend meetings best conducted in person such as appraisals, supervision, induction, other management meetings,
  - 4.3.3. operational reasons such as undertaking tasks that are better done at the workplace,
  - 4.3.4. in-person training or team days where teams come together for meetings, team development and wellbeing purposes.
- 4.4. Working arrangements should suit the needs of the service and must be discussed and agreed with the service manager. All decisions should be made in a fair and consistent manner.
- 4.5. Managers should consider trialling arrangements for a period for employees and/or teams to see how the new working arrangements operate in practice. If required advice can be sought from the HR Business Partner team.
- 4.6. Hybrid working arrangements will need to adapt to changing service needs and circumstances.



4.7. For changes to any other aspect of work e.g., reducing working hours, employees should use the Flexible Working Policy.

#### **4.8. Location**

An employee's contractual base remains unchanged as set out in their written statement of particulars. Within the hybrid approach work locations can vary depending on an employee's work and service demands; for example, an employee may work in one, or a range of buildings for part of their working week and work from home for the rest of their working week.

#### **4.9. Working hours**

Employees are required to work their contracted hours e.g., 37 hours per week if full-time and will have to be available during these hours whether working remotely or from the workplace.

Employees who utilise the Flexitime Working Hours Scheme should be mindful of meeting service opening hours and cover requirements as agreed with the manager.

#### **4.10. ICT & Equipment**

As part of hybrid working employees will be provided with relevant ICT equipment. All employees must complete a Display Screen Equipment (DSE) assessment which will identify any additional equipment required.

Equipment provided by BCBC must be used for work-related purposes and must not be used by anyone else at any time. Employees are responsible for taking adequate steps to ensure the safety and security of council equipment in their possession.

Employees will need to arrange their own broadband provision at their own cost when working from home. The broadband specification should be sufficient for an employee to undertake their role.

All systems and devices must be used in compliance with the ICT Code of Conduct, further information can be found by visiting the ICT pages on the intranet.

#### **4.11. GDPR/confidentiality/data security**

Household members should not be able to access BCBC equipment, see documents or overhear conversations. Headphones which can be accessed on request, will assist maintaining confidentiality whilst working at home or in the office. Employees should keep any BCBC documents at home safely until they are able to discard or store them confidentially at BCBC offices.

#### **4.12. Printing**

As the council seeks to reduce reliance on paper, the printing of any documents should be done as a last resort. Employees can access secure printers at Civic Offices. At home, employees will be able to send print jobs to a secure printer located in one of the council buildings and collect at their convenience. Employees

connecting their own printers to their home working setup is not permitted. Further information on printing can be found by visiting the ICT pages on the intranet.

#### **4.13. Telephone**

The council's telephony software, currently Cisco Jabber, must be active on all laptops for the purpose of incoming and outgoing calls. Employees have an extension number and a direct dial number on their laptop. Employees are then able to make and receive internal and external calls from their laptop. Hunt groups work through the laptops in the same way as in the office.

The council's current video calling software, Microsoft Teams is the standard method of making and receiving calls between staff members. Both voice and video calls can be made in this way. Calls to partner and external organisations (such as neighbouring Authorities, the NHS, WG etc) can also be made via Microsoft Teams. One of the authorised BCBC backgrounds should be used for video calls. Further guidance on how to use Teams can be found on the intranet.

For staff who are community based, lone-work or who need to make and receive calls and be contactable out of hours, a Smart Mobile Phone is available. BCBC provided smartphones have access to some systems such as Outlook for business email.

#### **4.14. Insurance**

Employees should check with their home and contents insurance provider that they have adequate cover for the fact that they work from home and that any of their own equipment is covered for work use.

#### **4.15. Rental agreements**

Employees are responsible for checking applicable rental agreements to ensure they are permitted to work from home, and for obtaining any permissions necessary to work from home.

#### **4.16. Working safely**

BCBC, as an employer has a legal and moral duty to ensure that work is undertaken in a healthy and safe way. The responsibilities outlined in the corporate health and safety policy apply, wherever work is being undertaken. Specific areas to consider include:

- Lone working / personal safety; Employees should agree a procedure with their manager to ensure that whilst working remotely, their location is known by their manager and colleagues, this could include updating calendars, implementing buddy systems, or using lone working systems depending on the risk assessments for the activities undertaken.
- Accidents / incidents; All accidents and incidents including near misses need to be reported. Any actions to prevent re-occurrence need to be discussed and where required an investigation by the health and safety team will be undertaken.

- Workstation set up and Display Screen Equipment (DSE); Setting up a workstation correctly at any location is equally as important as when an employee is in the office, and the same principles apply. A good workstation setup reduces the effects of poor posture on the body and prevents musculoskeletal injuries e.g., muscle fatigue, tension, strain, cramps.
- Fire and First Aid Arrangements: Employees should make sure that they are aware of the fire evacuation procedures for the office / premises from which they work. Information will be available on the first aid provision within the office / premises as well. If unsure, employees should ask their line manager for further advice.
- Management and staff reporting processes continue to apply and form an important part of hybrid working arrangements.
- Further advice in relation to working safely from home and the office is available from the Corporate Health and Safety Unit.

#### **4.17. Travel Expenses**

Travel expenses are in-line with the council's expenses policy and procedure. Mileage is not paid for travel from home to work / work to home.

However, where travel from home to a different location and/or the return journey occurs, mileage in excess of the normal home / work journey will be reimbursed. For more information you can read the council's [expenses policy and procedure](#).

#### **4.18. Employee Wellbeing**

A range of resources are available to support the wellbeing of all staff. Full details are available on the [Wellbeing pages](#).

Employees are encouraged to ensure that they take appropriate breaks and keep well hydrated when remote working. The daily [Employee Wellbeing Checklist](#) can be used to assist employees in formulating a schedule to maintain a healthy routine.

In addition, several learning opportunities are available to employees and managers. Full details can be found on the [Learning and Development](#) website.

### **5. Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **5.1. Employee responsibilities**

Employees are responsible for:

- Complying with this policy in a reasonable, constructive, and appropriate manner.
- Being flexible and open in discussing and agreeing hybrid working arrangements, whilst remaining focused on the needs of service.
- Maintaining regular contact with their manager.
- Working as agreed and abiding by all the council policies (available on the intranet) whilst working in this way.

- Complying with health and safety policy and procedures by informing management of any significant risks that need to be addressed, participating in and undertaking risk assessments; carrying out any necessary actions to minimise risk; maintaining a safe working environment and taking reasonable care of their own safety.
- Complying with confidentiality, data protection and information security policies.
- Ensuring that all reasonable care is taken of all council supplied ICT equipment.
- Reporting immediately once known, any loss, theft or damage to council ICT equipment or the loss of confidential information.
- Consulting with any necessary parties, such as landlords and insurance companies, regarding home working.

## **5.2. Management responsibilities**

Managers are responsible for:

- Ensuring employees are aware of all relevant policies and procedures.
- Ensuring flexibility, transparency, and constructiveness in relation to discussions and agreements about hybrid working with employees within their area of responsibility, whilst remaining focused on the needs of the service.
- Ensuring good communication with employees and agreeing clear communication lines and methods.
- Arranging individual and team meetings, ensuring regular communication is maintained between themselves and team members.
- Providing support for employees and implementing ways of measuring and monitoring work output that have been mutually agreed.
- Setting and monitoring defined performance measures in line with the council's performance framework e.g., appraisals, 1 to 1 supervision meetings.
- Allowing employees who are using their homes to work from to have a right to privacy outside of working hours and the ability to separate their working and home lives.
- Meeting their duties in relation to health and safety and welfare by undertaking appropriate risk assessments and acting on any areas of concern for employees for whom they are responsible.
- Undertaking a regular review of the hybrid working arrangements for their service area.

## **5.3. Human Resources**

Human Resources are responsible for:

- Providing support and advice to managers on the application of the policy.
- Providing advice to employees on the policy and support that is available.
- Reviewing the application of the policy and procedures considering operational experience.
- Taking account of good practice and national guidance.

- Identifying any learning and development needs as a result of the application of this policy.
- Developing and promoting employee wellbeing resources.

#### **5.4. Union Representatives**

Union representatives are responsible for:

- Working with employees, managers, and Human Resources in a constructive, flexible, and open manner in the application of this policy.
- Providing advice and support to employees.
- Participating in the monitoring and review of the policy.

### **6. Monitor and Review**

**6.1** This policy will be reviewed in accordance with the policy review timetable or sooner if there is a need, or due to any legislative changes.

**6.2** Employees should familiarise themselves with other council policies which include:

- [Flexible Working Scheme](#)
- [ICT Code of Conduct](#)
- [Display Screen Equipment \(DSE\)](#)
- [Lone Working Guidance](#)
- [Absence Management Policy](#)
- [Domestic Abuse, Violence Against Women and Sexual Violence Protocol.](#)
- [Employee Health & Wellbeing Protocol](#)
- [Corporate Health & Safety Policy and guidance](#)