

WORK LIFE BALANCE POLICY AND FLEXIBLE WORKING

1. Principle Statement

The Council recognises the benefits to be gained by developing existing working arrangements and introducing new provisions under the auspices of a Work Life Balance Policy. The Council workforce is diverse, women make up more than half the workforce and many employees are working parents, some are lone parents. Most employees will experience child and/or elder care responsibilities during the course of their working lives.

Work Life Balance is about introducing flexible working practices so that all employees, regardless of age, race or gender, can find practical arrangements that allow them to balance/combine their working life with their social, health, family, caring and other responsibilities or aspirations.

Good working practices and the benefits that the Council and its employees derive from them are a key to delivering effective services, increasing morale, commitment and improving recruitment and retention of skilled and experienced employees. Flexible working also increases access to employment for disabled job applicants and existing employees who may need to work differently.

This policy is intended to provide a framework for introducing flexible working arrangements to the mutual benefit of employees, the Council and users of the services the Council provides. It takes account of the all relevant employment legislation including the Flexible Working (Eligibility, Complaints and Remedies) (Amendment) Regulations 2009.

2. Related Provisions

The existing family friendly provisions within the Conditions of Service are an integral part of the Work Life Balance Policy. These are:-

- Maternity Leave
- Adoption Leave
- Fostering Leave
- Parental Leave
- Maternity Support Leave
- Time Off To Care For Dependents
- Leave Connected With Bereavement
- Leave For Medical etc. Treatment
- Other Leave

3. Flexible Working

The ability to work flexibly is a further key component in assisting individuals to balance work and life responsibilities. The introduction of flexible working can either be employer or employee led (whether individually or collectively). This policy provides a framework, which facilitates flexible working arrangements being considered and where practicable, applied in circumstances where it meets the needs of both parties i.e. the employee and the applicable Service.

4. Eligibility

All employees with 26 weeks or more continuous services can apply for flexible working.

It is recognised that the concept of work-life balance is not only relevant to those with family/caring responsibilities. Eligibility for flexible working is therefore not restricted only to employees with statutory rights to request flexible working i.e. employees with children 16 years and under, (if disabled 18). Flexible working may also be relevant to employees who have elder care responsibilities and/or disabled members of the family or who may prefer different patterns of work for various reasons such as further education, religious observance or interests, responsibilities outside the workplace. It will however be necessary in some circumstances to give priority to employees who have statutory rights to apply for flexible working.

In some cases flexible working arrangements may only be practically and effectively introduced if applied to a distinct group of employees. The policy therefore, allows for either the Council or recognised Trade Unions on behalf of a collective group to initiate proposals.

The Council reserves the right to reject requests and/or review arrangements, where it is apparent that there is a clear conflict of interests and/or the performance of the contract is seriously affected/limited.

5. Procedure For Individual/Collective & Employer Led Requests

The Flexible Working Procedure provides detail on the procedure for individual/collective and employer led requests for flexible working and how these should be managed and administered.

6. Core Flexible Working Arrangements

The following are considered to be the core flexible working arrangements which can be considered as options:-

- Job Sharing
- Flexible Working Hours
- Reduced Hours/Part-Time Working
- Term Time Working
- Home/Teleworking
- TOIL Arrangements
- Compressed Working Hours
- Shift Working
- Annualised Hours

The above is by no means an exhaustive list of options and others may be considered such as a request to work at a different work location, adjusting the way the pattern of contracted hours are worked, staggered hours etc.

The Council must ensure however, that the advantages of invoking this policy are balanced against the needs of the service and best value. It will be for Heads of Service to determine and assess those arrangements, which are or may/may not be suitable for the various categories/functions within their Service.

Section 6 of the Flexible Working Procedure provides an outline explanation on how each of the arrangements will operate and the key principles the Council would expect to apply in terms of pay, leave etc. in order to provide a level of consistency and equity.