

CHESHIRE EAST

CABINET

Date: 3 FEBRUARY 2009
Report of: HR LEAD OFFICER
Title: HR FLEXIBLE WORKING POLICIES

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To consider HR flexible working policies which will support service delivery and provide benefits for employees in Cheshire East.

2. Decisions Required

- 2.1 To agree policies on::
- (i) Flexible Working Arrangements (Appendix 1); and
 - (ii) Flexi-time Policy (Appendix 2)
- 2.2 To note that a further report on Mobile and Home Working will be brought forward at a later date when consultation with the trade unions has been completed.

3. Financial implications for transition and 09/10

- 3.1 Flexible and Mobile Working will be a long-term programme of projects that will require considerable up front investment. Although it will contribute towards achieving major corporate savings for Cheshire East Council, it is envisaged that these savings will not be realised within the first two years of the estimated five year programme.
- 3.2 The long term strategy and business case for Flexible and Mobile working has yet to be developed. The following costs relate specifically to day one priorities which need to be offset against longer term property and efficiency savings and possible redundancy costs incurred through unreasonable travel:
- 3.3 In some of the District councils an electronic time system is used to clock in and out and calculate flexi-time. If a new flexi-time system is introduced costs may be incurred to re-configure the systems to reflect these new arrangements. Further investigations would need to happen with the current suppliers to ascertain the estimated cost.
- 3.4 At this stage it is not possible to bring forward to the Cabinet the proposals on Mobile and Home working as consultation with the trade unions is continuing. It is hoped to complete this in the next few weeks. There will be further up front costs, which should produce later savings, as a result of that policy.
- 3.5 No transitional funding has been allocated.

4. Legal implications

- 4.1 The Authority has a legal obligation to consider requests to work flexibly. Employees who have caring responsibilities for a dependent adult, or parents of children aged under 6 (will change to under 16 from April 09) or with a disabled child under 18, have

a right to apply to work flexibly. There is also a legal requirement to ensure that Health and Safety is fully considered.

5. Background

- 5.1 Flexible and Mobile working a cross cutting project bringing together HR, ICT and Property to deliver improved ways of working in every part of the new Cheshire East authority. This is based on a vision for a Council that is organised around the needs of customers and employees rather than the constraints of building design, fixed hours and location.
- 5.2 Corporately, accommodation costs for Cheshire East council are likely to be the authorities' second highest cost after staff. It will be essential to maximise the use of these assets through programmes like Flexible and Mobile working in order to help achieve the corporate aims of rationalising and disposing of surplus buildings and negating the need for additional office space.
- 5.3 It is anticipated that the realisation of this vision may take up to five years and will require the development of a long term strategy and business case. The initial focus however is to address the fact that a considerable number of Cheshire East employees currently live and work in and around Chester. Flexible & mobile working approaches may be able to support the organisation and the employees minimise the impact this will have.

6. Policy framework

- 6.1 The key organisational drivers of the policy framework are:

- improved customer service delivery
- improved efficiency and productivity
- improved work- life balance for employees
- reduction in carbon footprint

- 6.2 There are three strands to the policy framework:

When we work: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flexible working patterns• Flexi-time	Where we work: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mobile and home working	How we work: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Modern working environment</i>• <i>ICT security and data protection</i>
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7. Key HR policies and considerations

- 7.1 This report covers two relating to the first strand of 'Where we Work'. These are attached as Appendices, but a brief summary is provided below.

Flexible working patterns

- **Objective** – to provide flexibility in when an employee works by offering a range of working patterns which enable the delivery of more responsive services, reduce the requirement for overtime and help to attract and retain employees.
- **Key elements** – incorporates a range of working patterns available to an employee including part-time working, annualised hours, term time working, job sharing, compressed hours, reduced working hours, occasional temporary arrangements and flexible working hours.
- **Existing Council arrangements** – only one District council and the County Council currently offer these types of flexible working arrangement.
- **Key considerations** – demand for greater flexibility in working arrangements will require managers and teams to work differently.

Flexi-time policy

- **Objective** – to provide where possible maximum flexibility in when an employee chooses to work during the day whilst maintaining high standards of service delivery, recognising that Council services are increasingly provided around the clock and traditional 9 to 5 working hours may no longer be appropriate.
- **Key elements** – to balance the requirements of flexibility and manageability it is proposed that the scheme is based on a **twelve week period broken down into three, four week sections**. As a general guide an employee would have no more than 5 hours debit and 30 hours credit per 4 week period with a maximum of 2 days flexi-leave. However recognising that some services have significant peaks and troughs in workload a wider twelve week view can be taken enabling up to 6 days flexi-leave to be taken nearer the end of the settlement period if planned and agreed by the manager. **Time worked can be claimed at anytime, including evenings and weekends**. In this way time off in lieu (TOIL) and the overtime would be the exception and would need to be agreed in advance by the manager.
- **Existing Council arrangements** – there are wide ranging differences within the current schemes. These range from 4 hours and 60 hours credit and between 2 hours and 30 hours debit. There are also some informal arrangements where a larger number of credit hours are carried over which become unmanageable.
- **Key considerations** – will require trust and co-operation of staff to give them greater control of their working hours whilst maintaining service delivery and support for managers who will need to manage differently. Messages need to be balanced in terms of some staff choosing to work say during the evening and weekends but this is not an expectation unless a core part of the job.

8. TUPE position

- 8.1 Existing Authority HR policies relating to Flexible working are covered by TUPE. This means that the terms and conditions of employees who transfer to the new Authority are protected (or are no less favourable).
- 8.2 With this in mind the proposed new although changed would be viewed as follows:

- Flexible Working Arrangements – no less favourable
- Flexi-time policy – no less favourable (apart from some local custom and practice)

9.0 Trade Union Consultation

- 9.1 The trade unions have been consulted on these policies and are happy with the proposals. They will be monitoring their application to ensure that the policies are not used to change existing working arrangements without agreement.

10. Conclusion

- 10.1 Truly embracing and embedding Flexible and Mobile working as the way of working within Cheshire East offers significant short and long term benefits. To realise these benefits however will require radical changes to working practices based on trust, co-operation and assessing performance and contribution through outputs and outcomes rather than time served. The HR policies proposed are a first step on this journey and provide a clear signal of the new Authority's commitment to work in this way.

For further information:

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