SURREY HEATH BOROUGH COUNCIL

Human Resources

AGILE WORKING POLICY

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1   We encourage our employees to adopt a flexible, collaborative working _style, which supports the delivery of effective customer service, whilst also offering the benefit of staff flexibility in how they work. Agile technology enables us to work remotely, and allows staff to access the information and tools, that they need to carry out their work at any time from any location. Surrey Heath Borough Council is aware that staff are increasingly diverse and this includes a high percentage of parents and individuals with caring responsibilities. We want to be able to support our staff with working as flexibly as possible to meet the demands of their role.

1.2   In general terms, all staff are required to attend the office a minimum of 1 day a week. Your actual pattern and place of work will be determined by the role that you deliver for the Council, and the arrangements that are agreed between you, your manager and your team. This could range from you being in the office 1 day a week to 5 days a week, as and when required and this will be kept under review.

1.3   Section 3 categorises how some roles within the Council will require staffemployees to have a fixed work location., W working at different locations other than Surrey Heath Borough Council,SHBC but, for all other employees there will be an expectation that staff will be flexible regarding their working arrangements in their work location. We are working towards achieving remote working and bookable desk arrangements for the majority of staff.

1.4   There are also long term advantages associated with improved employee work-life balance and greater job satisfaction resulting from greater individual ownership over the ways in which people work. Agile working can also have a positive impact upon performance and customer service. This will be monitored and if it proves otherwise, time in the office many need to be increased.

1.5 Workspace modernisation has taken on new importance ~~with~~ since COVID-19. ensuring that our working environment is as safe as can be. We need to be highly adaptable to respond and adjust to the changing situation now and in the future. ~~with any virus which may become prevalent.~~

2. Purpose and Scope

2.1 This document sets out the Policy, Procedure and standards for remote and mobile working and applies to all staff~~employees~~ working for the Council whose work location may be flexible. Our continued aim is to increase the rate of retention of staff, reduce absence, attract new talent, promote work-life balance and reduce employee stress. In doing so, this will improve the Council's efficiency, productivity and competitiveness.

2.2 In addition to 1.2, the following employees will normally be excluded from working from home:

- Employees who are subject to formal support arrangements under the Capability Procedure.
- Employees who are subject to a formal warning under the Disciplinary.15.3
- Procedure for a breach of this procedure or other relevant misconduct.
- Employees who are subject to temporary close supervision in order to obtain quantitative or qualitative data on work outputs.

2.3 Agency workers may be assigned as agile or home workers depending on the nature of the role, and the service should assess what equipment will be necessary for them to undertake the duties associated with the role.

2.4 This Policy will be applied fairly and consistently to all staff employed in the Council regardless of the work location and number of hours worked.

2.5 This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Statement of Terms and Conditions of Employment (individual)
- Flexible Working Policy
- Health and Safety Information for officers
- Information Security Policy
- Grievance Policy and Procedure
- Off- site Working Policy and Procedure
- Information Governance Policy & Strategy
- Leave and Special Leave Policy
- Family Fiendly Policy(to discuss possible paid leave)
- Carers Policy (June 2025)

COVID working guidelines.

3.   Policy

3.1   Categorisation of workers and definitions:

Category	Description
Office Worker	Workers will need to be office based for the majority of their working week. and will work in a fixed office location at a fixed desk. The nature of the work dictates that work must be mainly carried out at the office (e.g. acting as a 'hub' for the team or continuously responding to clients from a fixed building).
Non Office Worker	Some workers are required to work off site at other locations for example in the Car Parking or Theatre.
Agile Worker	Workers who can work effectively for part of the week at a different location and can choose to split their time between home and a Council office with bookable desk arrangements (where appropriate).

Homeworker	Workers who work the majority of their working week away from the office. These workers will either work from home or another suitable location and attend a Council office with ~~flexi~~ desk arrangements when necessary.

Equipment

For some specialist packages, such as Photoshop we will need to review the employees requirements on a case by case basis.

Where appropriate, all employees will be provided with laptops that can be used with desktop docking stations with dual monitors at many desks across any Council offices, or for homeworking. The laptops will pick up the corporate Wi-Fi and / or, a direct wired internet connection automatically from any Council office and, employees will use personal Wi-Fi and / or a direct wired internet connection when working from home.

In current circumstances some employees may be using their own equipment to work from home, in this case employees need to ensure they have completed and signed a bring your own device agreement form. ICT can only provide limited support while using personal equipment.

For day-to-day activity staff need to use their SHBC issued equipment to access work resources in Okta. In the event of an issue with SHBC equipment short-term access to browser-based applications via Okta from own equipment is possible. The ICT Service Desk is unable to provide support on non-Surrey Heath equipment but can provide user notes for assistance.

Telephony is built into the laptops provided or via the 8x8 mobile app.

3.2   No existing employee whose job is assessed as suitable for an agile or home working arrangement will be required to work away from the office environment if they choose not to do so. All existing staff (at the time of this policy being adopted) choosing to become agile or home workers, do so on a voluntary basis.

3.3   Existing employees who work under an agile or homeworking arrangement will be expected to do so on a permanent basis or until operational requirements are redefined. Because of office accommodation requirements it may not be possible to allow employees to change to different office working arrangements. However, it is recognised that there may be exceptional circumstances where a line manager in conjunction with HR may agree to a change a role to office based working, and these should be assessed on a case by case basis.

3.4   Employees will be provided with ICT support by raising a ticket through Fresh Service, including equipment (Laptop, riser, keyboard, mouse), software, training and technical support and advice, as appropriate to their work style.

3.5   Employees who work at home as part of their working arrangement will be provided with advice and information on appropriate insurance. (Please see 15.3 for further information).

3.6   Employees working away from the office (at home or at other work locations) must be contactable by telephone or virtually through MS Teams or Zoom during pre-defined working hours.

3.7   Employees who volunteer to become agile or home workers or, new employees who are recruited as agile or homeworkers are expected to provide themselves with a suitable workspace within the home where they can work effectively. All working environments (including the home 'office') will be subject to a risk assessment to ensure the health and safety of relevant employees. Employees may be prevented from working from home where their workspace within the home has been assessed as not compliant with health and safety requirements (see 12.3). The Facilities

Team are contactable regarding suitable office equipment for homeworking.

3.8 All employees working at home must have suitable dependent care arrangements in place. Employees should enquire with their managers if they need further support and/or flexibility. It is the employees responsibility to ensure they have suitable care provisions in place allowing for minimal distractions when carrying out their role.

3.9 Council office locations which accommodate agile workers will have adequate arrangements for 'flexi desks', including workstations (laptop docking stations) and meeting spaces.

3.10 For employees working at SHBC who do not have a permanent desk they will be required to use a cloud based booking system. The Council SHBC have a clear desk policy and staff employees will be able to keep personal items in either moveable pedestals or lockable lockers for security purposes.

3.11 We To ensure that staff employees are working in a clean and safe environment at Surrey Heath Borough Council. SHBC will continue with their current cleaning processes. There continue to bewill also be supplies of antibacterial wipes and sprays for employees toregular use. The Facilities Team can provide additional supplies of cleaning materials.

3.12 All equipment provided to the employee is for the exclusive use of that employee (i.e. not for use by family/friends).

3.13 Managers and staff employees will be provided with procedures, training and support, as necessary, to ensure that performance and conduct can be managed for agile and home workers.

4. Procedure for approving Office, Agile and Homeworking Arrangements

4.1   The line manager, in conjunction with the Strategic Director/ Head of Service and HR, will determine the business requirements within their teams.

4.2   The line manager will meet staff ~~employees~~, as necessary, to discuss the implications of transferring to agile or homeworking, and will ensure that they have access to any relevant guidance documents and to discuss any concerns. HR or ICT can provide further information or answer specific queries.

4.3   If an employee cannot work remotely due to a change of circumstances, a fixed office base will be considered if there are sound reasons that affect the employee's ability to work flexibly.

4.4   In cases where the employee has been excluded from working from home (see 2.2 above), in exceptional circumstances the line manager may, in conjunction with the Strategic Director/ Head of Service and HR, determine that agile or homeworking may commence or continue. This decision should take account of the operational needs of the service, the nature of the problem, and be subject to suitable management arrangements being in place.

4.5   Agile working arrangements may be suspended for short periods for operational reasons, after consultation with affected employees.

5   Hours of work

5.1   Staff ~~Employees~~ working away from the office must be available to work between 7.30am and 6.00pm Monday to Friday as specified in the bandwidths contained in Council's Flexible Working Scheme, unless the post specifically requires work to be carried out outside these hours, or where alternative arrangements have been agreed with the line manager, subject to service provision.

5.2 Full time staff ~~employees~~ should always be at work between any core hours (Monday- Thursday 10.00am-4pm and Friday 10.00am – 3.30pm) agreed by the service, and must take a lunch break of at least ½ hour between 12.00 noon and 2.30 pm unless, otherwise agreed with their line manager that a break may be taken outside this time. The minimum requirements for staff ~~employee~~ rest breaks are at least a 3~~2~~0 minutes break during each working day where their work pattern is longer than six hours.

5.3 For part time staff ~~employees~~, the line manager and employee should agree the normal daily working hours, during which period the employee should be contactable by telephone, virtually and email, as appropriate.

5.4 ~~Following a conversation the line manager may agree with the employee to take reasonable 'time out' during working hours in order to improve work life balance (e.g. to take children from school to an after school activity, walk the dog or attend appointments).~~If there are times where you may need to take time out of your working day, for example to attend an appointment then this must be firstly agreed prior to the event and recorded on Itrent under flexitime. The link is enclosed Flexi time policy and the policy is found on Warbler and on the home screen in iTrent there is information regarding how to record flexitime.

5.5 Staff ~~Employees~~ working from home need to consider their dependent care arrangements. Homeworking is not a substitute for dependent care arrangements, and employees working from home should not do so whilst in sole charge of dependants requiring care and supervision. Consult with your line manager if support and flexibility is required.

5.6 All workers~~employees~~ have a responsibility to adhere to the Working Time Regulations (WTR) with respect to weekly working hours and rest breaks. Line managers should monitor the number of hours staff~~employees~~ are working flexibly to ensure that WTR are not breached.

6. Contact and cover

6.1   Line Managers should ensure that staff ~~employees~~ are clear on the standards that apply to them locally in terms of contact, availability, telephone cover, office cover, working from home etc.

6.2   Staff ~~Employees~~ who are unable to work due to being unwell should contact their line manager in accordance with the normal Sickness Absence procedure regardless of the location they are working from. It is the managers responsibility to ensure iTrent is updated to reflect any sickness absence on day one.~~.~~

6.3   All staff ~~employees~~ working flexibly should be contactable by their line manager and other officers of the Council during their normal working hours or the hours specified in their Outlook Calendar. Where appropriate, they should also be contactable ~~by customers~~by customers/clients. Agreed 'time out' should clearly be blocked out in the Outlook calendar to indicate that the employee cannot be contacted during these hours. Use of 'private' in Outlook should be used wisely and only when necessary.

6.4   All workers~~employees~~ should keep their Outlook calendars up to date with their location and times of meetings and make them available to the whole team or service. Managers should ensure this is adhered to for Health and Safety reasons as well as knowing who is where in their team.

6.5   All staff ~~employees~~ should adhere to the Council's Telephony Usage Standards. Suitable personal voicemail messages should be recorded so that callers have the right information if the employee is unavailable or away from work. Please see the enclosed link from Warbler https://warbler.workvivo.com/search?query=8x8+message

6.6   Flexible workers should ensure they are always logged onto the 8x8 system when at work. This ensures that calls to their telephone extension are routed to and from their preferred device (lap top with or without head set, mobile as appropriate). Employees are required to constantly update their status on 8x8 to ensure that the system is live and accurate.

6.7   Agile and homeworkers may be required by the line manager to participate in a rota system to cover office hours or essential services such as customer help lines and duty systems. This requirement will be determined on a case by case basis in each workplace/team.

6.8   Agile and homeworkers will be required to attend meetings, training, seminars etc. as appropriate to the job, and to provide reasonable cover for absent colleagues at the request of the line manager.

7.   Office Environment and Parking

7.1   Agile and Homeworkers will be allocated a 'designated office' which is deemed to be their place of work when not working from home or at other locations.

7.2   The Council will provide workstations (also known as 'flexi-desks') for Agilefor Agile and Homeworkers to use when they are in the office. They will be required to use whichever convenient workstation is available through the booking system (where applicable) and therefore employees will not have the right of exclusive use of a particular workstation. All flexi-desks should be cleared at the end of the working session and left clean and tidy for the next occupant.

7.3   Although Teams will have designated area's within the Council Offices, if a desk is not available immediately within that area, then look for an alternative desk on the booking system. If you are not attending the office all day, only book the desk for the time required to allow other staff to search on the booking system and use.

7.3   Agile and Homeworkers will have access to lockable storage in the designated office for their personal files, papers, ICT equipment and stationery.

7.4   Where an Occupational Health assessment has determined that an Agile or Home worker requires specific workstation equipment to carry out their work, they may be given priority use of a specific workstation if this is the only practical way to provide it.

7.5   The Staff Car Parking Guidelines remain in place for all Staff.

8.   Team Ethos

8.1   Good communication is essential to agile working and under flexible working arrangements it will be the manager's responsibility to ensure that they maintain team ethos within their team. Managers will therefore need to consider:

The use of effective communication which may include regular contact and supervision meetings, updates, team meetings, informal break chats.
Planning team building and team activities.
Inducting new staff members into the team including their socialisation into the team.
Ensuring emotional support is available as required either through access to managers or through the introduction of a buddy system within the team.
Creating opportunities for team working, mentoring and training opportunities.

Managers will be supported in sourcing appropriate training to meet their needs in supporting their particular teams to work effectively and promote team wellbeing, and training will also be available to wider staff members where required. Contact HR if you need any further support.

9.   Management of performance

9.1   Managers must put in place arrangements to ensure that the performance of each employee can be managed effectively without continuous direct supervision. Under remote working arrangements, performance

management and regular contact is more important and therefore needs to be more planned and formalised.

9.2   Performance management should include;

Regular 1:1 meetings with the employee to discuss work issues, including progress towards objectives. These should occur at least once every 4 to 6 weeks, and give the manager and the employee the opportunity to raise any matters of concern. The manager should seek advice from HR to discuss next steps regarding the member of their team.

The use of updates between managers and employees in between supervision meetings through effective communication.
The use of 'SMART' work objectives in performance review and 1:1 meetings.
Regular feedback from customers and other data on work output (where appropriate).

Effective communication mechanisms such as team briefings, team meetings, team building days etc.

Providing support mechanisms and a supportive environment to staff who find remote working challenging.

For new employees, ensure they have all they need in order for them to settle into their role as quickly as possible. Complete the 1 month, 3 month and 65 month probation form to identify any training, support, access to software and anything else a new member of staff may require.

The manager must record detailed notes on the probation form which is recorded on staff files.

9.3   Home and Agile working arrangements require employees to be well-organised and motivated, with clear objectives and timescales for achieving them. Management of home and agile workers must take into account the need for support, and training if necessary, to manage their own workload without direct supervision.

9.4   If the line manager has any concerns about the employee's conduct or performance, these should be raised as soon as possible with the employee. The line manager should consider with the employee whether any additional advice or support is required to help them to reach the required standards. Consideration should be given as to whether the home or agile working arrangement should be suspended after taking advice from HR.

9.5   Serious concerns about underperformance should be addressed through either the Capability Procedure, or the Disciplinary Procedure if the behaviour constitutes misconduct.

9.6   Managers and employees are able to access training, support and advice on the effective management of home and agile working arrangements through the corporate training programme and HR.

10. Equipment

10.1   The Council's ICT service will provide support and advice to an employee working remotely, however the service is unable to support an employee's home internet connection. Where an employee's home internet connection does not work they must contact their line manager who should advise them that they need to come into the office to work until the problem is resolved.

10.2   Agile and Homeworkers must have broadband installed with a wireless router or a wired (R45 Ethernet) network connection. Employees who do not wish to purchase broadband may not be allowed to work from home. Employees should not use Council-issued 3G cards to access the network when working from home. Any specific requirements which may be required needs to discussed with ICT as there needs to be assessment for security.

10.3   Equipment supplied by the Council is for business purposes. Employees should refer to the ICT Policy regarding the use of Council equipment for

personal use for more information. The equipment must not be used by anyone (e.g. members of the family, friends etc) other than the employee.

10.4 Where Council owned equipment requires maintenance or repair, this must only be carried out by the Council's ICT Service.

10.5 For security and support reasons employees will not be provided with a home printer unless in exceptional circumstances a business case for home printing has been investigated and approved.

10.6 All equipment remains the property of the Council and must be returned on demand. By raising a ticket through Fresh Service requesting IT equipment it will enable the ICT Team to keep an inventory of all equipment issued to employees.

10.7 Managers must work with the employee and ICT to ensure that adequate precautions are taken to maintain confidentiality of information assessed or stored in an off-site/home working environment in accordance with the Council's Data Protection Policy for Home Working, the, Data Protection Act 2018 https://www.gov.uk/data-protection and related legislation or guidelines.

10.8 Employees are expected to take reasonable precautions to keep Council property and information secure. Confidential and personal data must be shredded or returned to the Council for proper disposal.

10.9 In the event of loss, theft or damage to Council equipment, employees must report the incident to ICT, Strategic Director/Head of Service and/or local police (as appropriate) within 24 hours. If data is lost, this must be reported to the Information Governance Manager.

10.10 Purchase of office equipment or stationary for use at home will not be reimbursed but obtained through the Council's Facilities Team or ICT.

11. Expenses and allowances

11.1   Employees will not be entitled to any allowances or reimbursement of utility bills for working from home with the exception of 17.1.

11.2   Mileage is not payable when the Agile or Homeworker attends the designated office as detailed in your terms and conditions of work. Any other mileage incurred will be paid at the relevant mileage rate depending on the reason for travel and any car user status attached to the post. (see car user policy)

11.3   For Homeworkers who are not based in a Council office and are attending site visits throughout the day, working time will begin when travel to the first site commences and ends when reaching home at the end of the day.

12. Health and Safety and Risk Assessment

12.1   Most of the regulations made under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 apply to employees working at home as well as to employees working at Council accommodation.

12.2   Managers have a responsibility to ensure that a health and safety risk self-assessment is completed for the employee's work area in the home, to ensure that work can be undertaken safely without endangering the health of the worker or their family. ~~Corporate Guidance~~ Risk Assessment Policy Risk assessment focus on prevention, as opposed to reacting when things go wrong. It is therefore possible to prevent accidents and injuries that could ruin lives. Once a risk assessment is completed, the significant risks must be communicated to the staff, to enable their co-operation to ensure that they work in a safe working environment.

12.3   The Workrite on-line Homeworking Assessment for Mobile and Flexible Working should be completed as a joint exercise between the line manager and employee. Employees have responsibility for implementing any actions identified in order to reduce/mitigate risks in their home and to make their work environment safe. The cost of any adjustments to the home working

environment to meet health and safety requirements should be borne by the employee (with the exception of 3.7).

12.4   Managers should be reviewing health and safety on a regular basis and should be discussed on a frequent basis during 1:1 meetings. Where there are concerns, appropriate advice should be sought.

12.5   Where employees are visiting clients/sites etc. they must ensure they make frequent contact with their office/line manager, usually after each visit in line with the Service's Off Site Working Policy.

12.6   Any accidents whether they occur in the work place, whilst working from home or on a visit should be reported to the line manager as normal and recorded on an accident report form.

12.7   Employees with particular needs will be assessed by the Health and Safety Officer and/ or Occupational Health. Recommendations will be made about the specific equipment needed (e.g. special computer mouse, or a specific type of chair). This equipment will be provided for the employee to use at their main work location. If the main work location is not the office, the cost of providing additional/specialist equipment for working at home will be considered however, if this cost is judged unreasonable, the Council may determine that the worker should be required to work in the office. Prior to making this decision the line manager should seek advice from HR.

12.8   Electrical equipment supplied by the Council should be regularly tested, in line with the annual frequency at the employee's designated office location.

12.9   Employees must never use handheld mobile phones or email devices whilst driving and employees should be stationary when making or receiving telephone calls whilst driving. (see car user policy)

12.10 If the line manager determines that a new employee cannot safely work at home, they must work in the office at a flexi-desk.

12.11 Mental Health considerations will be at the forefront of how new working arrangements are affecting individuals and we encourage you to speak to your manager or HR if you are experiencing any issues.

13. Corporate standards

13.1   All employees should respect others when it comes to the working environment and be aware of how their behaviour might impact on others working in a flexible environment. It is recommended that locally services agree to a list of standards that are then communicated to employees to follow.

13.2   The standards below represent the minimum that is expected from employees, it is not intended to be an exclusive or exhaustive list and should be used as the basis for local agreements:

- Be aware of noise levels in the office.
- Leave all ~~flexi~~ desks clean and clear for the next user.
- There should be no attempt to 'claim' or personalise ~~flexi~~ desks.
- 'Fixed' desks should be left clear when employees are on leave to allow other employees to use them.
- Time keeping should be adhered to both at the start and end of meetings as a courtesy to those attending the meeting as well as to the next user of the room.
- Leave meeting areas tidy (e.g. clearing up dirty cups at the end of a meeting)
- Avoid eating smelly foods at desks.
- Avoid having meetings at desks as this can disturb others. Where possible, meetings should be held either in meeting rooms or in break-out areas.
- Earphones should be used for Teams meetings attended at the desk to reduce noise levels.

Where problems develop with working environments these should be reported using the management structure in place to resolve issues as they arise.

14. Security

14.1   Employees must ensure that all Council data and equipment (including laptops, handheld email devices, mobiles phones etc.) are stored securely, and that it is not at risk of loss or theft. Guidelines for employees on data security when working away from the office is provided in the Off Site Working Policy.

15. Liability

15.1   Employees working away from the office are covered by the Council's insurance policy for employer's liability and personal accident in the same way as office-based employees.

15.2   Equipment supplied to employees working away from the office is covered by the Council's insurance arrangements providing it is used for work purposes only, and in line with manufacturer's instructions.

15.3   All employees working from home for part of their working week should contact their own insurance company to advise that they will be working from home. The Council will not reimburse any increase in premium should this occur. Employees undertaking authorised off- site work are covered by the Council's employee liability insurance to the same extent as office-based workers. However, the extent of the insurance will in some cases be limited by the circumstances and the nature of the loss/damage incurred.

15.4   It is the employee's responsibility to check with relevant third parties (e.g. insurers) to ensure that they have relevant permissions to work from home without restrictions or penalty. The Council will not be liable for any charges related to investigating or obtaining such confirmation.

15.5   If an employee is home working in rented accommodation they should advise mortgagees or landlords that they intend to work at home. However, using a room or part of a room to work in would not normally

require planning permission. Working from home should not affect Council Tax liability.

16. Changing circumstances

16.1 When one of the circumstances below arises, the Council reserves the right to reconsider the working arrangements under which the employee works. No changes will be made without consulting the individual concerned.

The employee moves to a different job role, either permanently or on a secondment or acting up basis. The suitability of the new role for agile or homeworking will need to be assessed.

The employee moves home. Arrangements for homeworking will need to be reassessed.

The Council undertakes a reorganisation of the work area. All job roles will need to be reassessed in the light of changes to job profiles and person specifications.

16.2 Managers are responsible for reclaiming equipment where an employee leaves or moves posts in order for it to be reallocated to the next post holder.

16.3 Managers are responsible for keeping a record of work arrangements in their team and informing HR of any changes to their regular hours.

17. Tax and Allowances

17.1 Employees should be aware that the guidelines around claiming tax relief for working from home has changed for any claims on or after 6th April 20232 due to the increase in the cost of living. For additional information and to see if you can claim please see the enclosed link and contact the HR Team for further guidance. https://www.gov.uk/tax-relief-for-employees/working-at-home

First aid

18.1 Staff are covered under the Council's accident insurance policy in their home. Accidents must be reported immediately to the nominated person set out in the Council's Health and Safety Policy.