

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Employment and Appeals Committee
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WARD(S): All

PART I **FOR APPROVAL**

SMART WORKING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Employment Appeals Committee on the proposed new Smart Working Policy and Procedure.

2. Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

The Committee is requested to approve the policy and procedure which also supports the Council's Accommodation and Hub Strategy.

3. Supporting Information

Smart working describes an approach to working hours, location and methods that enable employees to perform to a high level and to provide excellent customer service. It is becoming more common in recent years across the public sectors as it can play an important part in meeting the challenge of doing more with less. New technologies support smart working by enabling more mobility of work, and legislation is encouraging flexible working and new trends in workplace design.

In light of this the OD/HR service have undertaken a review of modern working practices in enabling our employees to maximise their performance in the delivery of our five year plan; it is also aimed at supporting the delivery of the Council's Accommodation and Hub Strategy.

Research suggests that there are a number of benefits of smart working and these include the following:

- Greater productivity - 'Think Money' suggests that a third of employees are distracted at work for up to three hours a day.
- Improved communication – most of us will have experienced 'meetings for meetings sake'. Most communication with colleagues can be achieved effectively by telephone, email or through other online means or using virtual meetings. These are more direct focusing on key points.
- Reduction in commuting time – the average daily commute in the UK is around 49 minutes each way to work – this would also reduce CO2 emissions.
- Reduction in the frequency and duration of sickness absence
- Improved recruitment and enhanced reputation as 'employer of choice'; removing geographical limits when trying to fill hard to fill posts will increase the pool of individuals applying.
- Increase in retention and helping us keep our best employees with a reduction in costs associated with covering vacant posts, recruiting and training new employees.

The aim of the policy and procedure is to support the development of a flexible and agile workforce that can effectively respond to demands for services and resources. The policy outlines the types of smart working arrangements that are available and the procedures that should be followed.

A summary of the key points have been outlined below.

- The policy details three different work styles that support smart working and provides a framework that focuses on the job being undertaken.
- The roles and responsibilities of line managers, Heads of Service and employees are outlined with reference to the Employee Code of Conduct.
- A summary of the process for working hours and leave arrangements are also provided.
- Work Stations and Supply of Equipment is outlined within the policy and details how designated areas of the Council will be used for Smart Working and the employee responsibilities for the supply of equipment.

Some services within the Council have already started to implement Smart Working within their areas due to the benefits outlined above, particularly recruitment. This policy and procedure would help guide them in managing the actions of employees and provide a common understanding and agreement of how things should be done.

Consultation

Consultation has taken place with the Trade Unions, Employee Engagement Forum, Disability Forum, Accommodation Hub and Strategy Board and Senior Managers - all have responded positively to the draft.

Implementation Process

The launch and implementation process will include various methods of communication including;

- Newsround
- Grapevine staff newsletter
- E mail to all line managers
- HRBP's to provide update at Senior Management Team Meetings

The HR team will also be leading the culture transition element of the Accommodation strategy which will support staff and management teams in adapting to the change. This work will begin with the launch of the Smart Working Policy. The OD/HR service will introduce initiatives to support the implementation and this will include Workshops and E-Learning Training programmes.

A separate document providing guidance for managers and employees has also been drafted to support staff and management with the implementation process.

4. Background Papers

None

5. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Smart Working Policy and Procedure

Appendix 2 – Slough Borough Council - Travel Hierarchy