

**Homeworking Policy**

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## **1. Policy Statement**

- 1.1 This document sets out Wirral Council's policy and guidance on homeworking and provides information for employees and managers on the process they should follow to implement homeworking arrangements.
- 1.2 Homeworking forms part of the Council's Agile Working framework which sets out a range of different working methods which differ from the traditional working models of fixed location and regular working hours.
- 1.3 Homeworking supports the Council's strategic aim "to create an excellent Council" by maximising use of the Council's land and assets, specifically through making the most efficient usage of office space and supporting employees to work away from traditional office-based accommodation.
- 1.4 Not all roles are suitable for homeworking and it is acknowledged that some employees may not wish to or are unable to work at home.
- 1.5 In all cases homeworking agreements will be entered into by employees on a voluntary basis, but will only be agreed where there are clear benefits to the Council in doing so.
- 1.6 Prior to implementation, all agreements for homeworking require an assessment of IT requirements to establish if homeworking is feasible and an assessment of health, safety and welfare arrangements. Managers should refer to the Council's Health and Safety Policy and Management Arrangements.
- 1.7 All homeworking arrangements must be monitored and reviewed to ensure that they remain effective and there is a continuing benefit to the Council.
- 1.8 All employees are required to comply with the terms of this policy.

## **2. Scope**

- 2.1 This policy applies to all employees.
- 2.2 However, in accordance with the guidance set out within this policy it may not be suitable for employees:
  - Who are in their probationary period.
  - Who are not yet fully conversant with their role.
  - Where there are concerns about capability.

### **3. Roles and Responsibilities**

#### 3.1 Managers have a responsibility to:

- Comply with the terms and requirements of the policy.
- Identify roles that may be suitable for homeworking and bring business benefits and ensure that employees are aware of that opportunity.
- Monitor and manage effectiveness of the homeworking arrangement.
- Ensure that there is a continuing benefit to the Council from a homeworking arrangement.
- Comply with the terms of a homeworking agreement where this is appropriate.
- Ensure that homeworker has appropriate equipment.
- Comply with health and safety requirements for homeworkers.
- Manage performance and maintain communication with homeworkers.

#### 3.2 Employees have a responsibility to:

- Comply with the terms and requirements of the policy.
- Comply with health and safety requirements.
- Comply with the terms of a homeworking agreement where this is appropriate.
- Maintain communication with managers and colleagues.

### **4. Business Case or Homeworking**

#### 4.1 The case for homeworking may be initiated in a number of ways:

- Management may identify a particular job that has the potential to be undertaken at home for some or all of the time and by doing so would bring benefits to the Council. For example opportunities for homeworking may be identified as part of an office rationalisation or relocation exercise where the Council wishes to maximise the potential of office space.
- Employees may identify the potential to work at home and express an interest in doing so.
- Employees can request homeworking under the Council's Work Life Balance policies.
- Homeworking may be considered as part of a 'reasonable adjustment' under the Disability Discrimination Act if such an arrangement would assist an employee to fulfil their job role.
- Opportunities for homeworking may also be driven by changes in service delivery, large or small scale re-organisations and reviews of office space and accommodation.

## **5. Benefits of Homeworking**

5.1 There are many potential benefits of homeworking to both the Council and employees.

5.2 Benefits to the Council include:

- More flexible and effective use of office accommodation.
- Reduction of travel and unproductive time between appointments by providing the opportunity to plan journeys and visits more efficiently.
- Support for green travel plan initiatives.
- Greater employee productivity.

5.3 Benefits to employees include:

- Reduction of travel and travel costs.
- Assistance with work life balance commitments.
- More effective use of time.
- Increased flexibility over working arrangements.

5.4 There are various ways that homeworking may operate, ranging from infrequent, ad hoc occasions that arise and do not form a routine, to permanent homeworking arrangements that may be agreed by a variation to contract.

## **6. Evaluation and Review**

6.1 All homeworking agreements will be subject to regular evaluation and review to ensure that they continue to deliver benefits for the organisation and employee.

### **Three month review**

6.2 An initial evaluation meeting should be held between the homeworker and their line manager after the first three months.

6.3 The meeting should revisit the assumptions made on the initial agreement to ensure that the anticipated advantages and disadvantages of the arrangement have been managed appropriately and that the arrangement is working for both parties.

6.4 To enable the organisation to achieve a satisfactory return on investment, the expectation is that permanent home workers work from home for a minimum of six months other than in exceptional circumstances or where performance in the role is consistently below what is required.

- 6.5 Where actions are identified to improve the effectiveness of the arrangement, the manager and home worker must agree together responsibility for taking these forward.

### **Six month review**

- 6.6 A further formal review should be conducted by the line manager after six months. At this stage it may be agreed to maintain the arrangement or revoke it and return to a conventional office base. The outcome of this review must be referred to the relevant senior manger (Head of Service) and HR before a final decision is reached.

### **Ongoing review and evaluation**

- 6.7 Homeworking arrangements should be reviewed annually by the manager and employee as part of the annual Key Issues Exchange. These meetings should continue to use the criteria for effective homeworking set out in this policy as a means for determining success.
- 6.8 A homeworking agreement may be revoked at any time, at the Council's discretion, in the event of poor performance, poor attendance or other serious conduct and disciplinary issues.
- 6.9 Employees may also give notice that they wish to withdraw from the arrangement provided there is reasonable reason for doing so (For example, change in domestic circumstances). In the case of a permanent homeworker, who may not have an office base, the manager will need to consider whether alternative accommodation can be provided.

### **7. Procedure for introducing homeworking**

- 7.1 Homeworking arrangements are voluntary and cannot be imposed on employees.
- 7.2 Employees do not have a right to be granted homeworking if they request it as there must a benefit to the Council in implementing such an arrangement.
- 7.3 Employees may request that their manager considers a homeworking arrangement if they feel that their role is suitable for homeworking and it would bring benefits to the Service. There are other reasons for homeworking arrangements, such as work life balance or as part of a reasonable adjustment to their working arrangements.
- 7.4 All proposals for regular or permanent homeworking will be subject to a formal process to determine suitability.

- 7.5 However, the process does not apply to ad-hoc requests to work from home, which may be agreed locally at the discretion of line managers, with guidance from Human Resources.
- 7.6 It is not intended for this process to be unduly bureaucratic and it is expected that there should be open and detailed dialogue between an employee and their manager and not simply a series of lengthy pro-forma to be completed.

**Step 1: Reaching Agreement**

- 7.7 The process must commence with a meeting between manager and employee to discuss the proposal.
- 7.8 In order to assist those involved with this discussion, a homeworking checklist has been produced with guidance around the issues that a manager and employee needed to consider prior to implementation. The homeworking check list is attached at Appendix A.
- 7.9 This template should form the basis for the discussion as it will ensure that all relevant issues are discussed. It can be completed jointly either during the meeting or once the meeting has taken place.
- 7.10 The process is designed to assess the extent to which staff satisfy the criteria for effective homeworking and will form the basis for any homeworking agreement.
- 7.11 If there is agreement that a formal homeworking arrangement should be progressed, step 2 should be undertaken.

**Step 2: Assessing Health and Safety and IT requirements**

- 7.12 At this stage the manager has responsibility to:
- Contact IT, to assess whether the technology requirements to support the homeworking arrangement can be met. IT will advise on what solutions are available, cost and the timeframe for implementing arrangements.
  - Undertake risk assessments and complete appropriate health and safety forms (Appendices A and C).
- 7.13 If following the meeting there is agreement that the homeworking arrangement should be progressed, the manager, employee and Head of Service should sign the Homeworking Checklist (Appendix A).
- 7.14 A copy of this agreement and the health and safety forms should be held by both manager and employee and copies also retained on the employee's personnel file.

### ***Step 3: Homeworking Agreement***

- 7.15 If there is agreement for a regular or permanent homeworking arrangement to be implemented, the Homeworking Agreement form (Appendix D) should be completed.
- 7.16 This agreement is designed to ensure that manager and employee are clear about the expectations from the homeworking arrangement.
- 7.17 Managers should contact Human Resources (HR) should they require further advice and guidance on any aspects of this agreement.
- 7.18 Once complete and signed by both manager and employee, a copy should be held by both parties and a copy also retained on the employee's personnel file. A copy of this agreement must also be sent to the HR Helpdesk.

## **8. Homeworking Options**

### ***Permanent Homeworking***

- 8.1 Permanent contractual homeworking is where the employee works from home on a permanent basis, rather than a Wirral Council site or office.
- 8.2 Working from home on a permanent basis may be suitable in the following circumstances:
- Where the job can be done just as effectively and efficiently from home.
  - Where ICT systems exist, or can be created, to support the job at home.
  - Where communication systems exist, or can be created, to support the job and the employee effectively.
  - Where the home environment and working arrangements meet with health and safety requirements.
- 8.3 Permanent homeworkers will be provided with all the equipment they need to do their job in their home. An assessment of ICT requirements and health and safety (Display Screen Equipment Self Assessment) will assist in determining the equipment required.
- 8.4 Permanent homeworkers will still be required to attend meetings and training at Council sites and offices as required, they will not maintain a permanent office base or desk.

### ***Regular homeworking***

- 8.5 Regular contractual homeworking is where an employee works from home for a percentage of their normal working week as part of an agreed working pattern.
- 8.6 The individual may make outside visits or come into a Council office for the balance of their normal working week as appropriate.
- 8.7 This may be suitable in the following circumstances:
- To facilitate a more flexible work pattern, perhaps to accommodate other demands.
  - Where an individual is able to plan their work arrangements to enable the achievement of defined outputs each week/month from home.
  - The job involves frequent/regular outside visits.
  - Where ICT systems exist, or can be created, to support the job at home.
  - Where communication systems exist, or can be created, to support the job and the employee effectively.
  - Where the home environment and working arrangements meet with health and safety requirements.
- 8.8 Regular homeworkers will be provided with the appropriate equipment to undertake their role. An assessment of ICT requirements and Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment Self Assessment) will assist in determining the equipment required.
- 8.9 In all cases of formalised, *permanent or regular* home working, there should be a Homeworking Agreement in place (Appendix D).

### ***Occasional Home Working***

- 8.10 Occasional homeworking is where the employee works from home on an occasional basis or for a temporary period. This may be suitable in the following circumstances:
- Where a specific task needs dedicated and focussed input and/or could be dealt with more efficiently at home e.g. saved travelling time and lack of interruptions.
  - Where it is difficult for staff to get in to work e.g. adverse weather, a short but unavoidable commitment at home, or field work is being undertaken out of the office near to home.
- 8.11 Occasional home workers will normally not receive permanent access to any special equipment or furniture to support this type of working arrangement. It may be helpful for team or pool laptops to be available.



- 8.12 Occasional home working is an informal arrangement. The Council will not usually incur any additional costs, unless there are particular benefits to the service in doing so.
- 8.13 Managers must be aware that where there is an increase in hours or change in the pattern/regularity of homeworking, they have a responsibility to review the ICT and health and safety requirements.

## **9. Suitability of jobs for homeworking**

- 9.1 Many jobs may be considered appropriate for homeworking and it is the responsibility of the manager and the employee to agree on the suitability of the job to such arrangements.
- 9.2 Consideration should be given to:
- The effect on the ability to meet service demands, including access by the public.
  - The ability to organise work among existing employees.
  - The impact on relationships with other jobs, including access to/by colleagues.
  - Access to required information and communication technology (ICT).
  - Costs implications.
  - Efficiency savings.
  - Health, safety and welfare of the employee.
- 9.3 The following job characteristics may lend themselves to homeworking:
- Specialist/Knowledge based work.
  - Defined output tasks.
  - Discrete projects or functions.
  - Relatively autonomous jobs.
  - Jobs requiring frequent travelling.
  - Jobs requiring high periods of concentration.

## **10. Suitability of people for Homeworking**

- 10.1 Having established the suitability of the job for homeworking, the suitability of the employee also needs to be considered.
- 10.2 Homeworking does not suit everyone. Office dynamics and informal information flows may have a significant impact on an employee's performance and preferred working styles.
- 10.3 Some employees may work, learn and develop better in a traditional office environment, and those without very much experience in their role may need closer supervision which would not be possible if they were working from home.

- 10.4 Employees may have little recognition or understanding of the potential drawbacks or risks of working from home and it is important that both the advantages and the disadvantages are considered.
- 10.5 Employees must be performing satisfactorily and it is very unlikely to be appropriate for those involved in a capability or disciplinary process to work from home.
- 10.6 There is a greater personal responsibility to achieve outputs and work effectively at home. Managers should discuss the benefits and potential issues of homeworking in depth with employees to identify areas of strength and weakness and to prepare for the latter.
- 10.7 A trial period is recommended in order to gauge suitability before any longer term arrangements are put in place.
- 10.8 Managers and employees must give consideration to the following issues:
- Preferred working style.
  - Ability to maintain communication.
  - Suitability of home for homeworking: sufficient space, calm environment, minimal distractions.
  - Home and family commitments.
  - Technical competence to manage relevant technology and deal with minor problems.
  - Personal qualities of the employee.
- 10.9 Personal qualities that may be more conducive to homeworking include:
- Self-motivated.
  - Self-disciplined.
  - Enjoy the challenge of working on their own.
  - A flexible approach.
  - Able to organise working time effectively.
  - Able to work without direct supervision.
  - Confident to work away from the office environment.
  - Able to work on their own without day to day social interaction with colleagues.
  - Able to travel to meetings and site visits.
  - Able to 'switch off' from work and maintain a proper balance between working and non-working hours.

## **11. Managing Homeworking**

- 11.1 To ensure that homeworkers are performing the job to the level required managers may need to adapt their style of management from

the conventional one based on day-to-day contact, to “management of output”. Existing job descriptions may need to be reviewed.

- 11.2 The critical issue for managers is that any homeworking arrangement should allow them to manage the performance of the employee at least as effectively as if they were in a more traditional working situation.
- 11.3 If the homeworking arrangement is drawn up and applied, they should feel no loss of control or influence on the work undertaken by the employee working from home. Some key points for managers include:

### **Measuring work performance**

Define and agree the job with the employee:

- The ultimate aim of the job.
- The distinct tasks and projects.
- The objectives.
- The responsibilities.
- The accountabilities.
- Expected outputs.

### **Define and agree the expected outputs**

- The actual tangible work output(s) to be delivered.
  - Qualitative measurement systems e.g. define task, projects or objectives to be achieved by the employee and the level of detail required e.g. outline or final version.
  - The quality standards expected.
  - Quantitative measurement systems e.g. agreed deadlines and/or targets/milestones.
  - A monitoring and review system.
  - Standards and procedures to maintain quality.
  - Frequency and method of communication.
- 11.4 Arrangements must be discussed with the employee and should be clearly agreed and documented.

### **Monitoring and Supervising Work**

- 11.5 Systems to monitor and supervise the work should be put in place at the outset. These should form part of any agreement reached with the individual.

A combination of the following methods is likely to be required depending on the work:

- Regular visits to the office.
- Regular face to face meetings at a mutually agreeable location.

- Regular phone conversations; e-mails; teleconferences.
- Regular progress reviews.

### **Time record keeping**

- Consider if working time needs to be measured whilst the employee is working at home, given the focus on achievement of agreed outputs (i.e. is there any reason why the work needs to be done at a particular time of day or for a specified length of time each day, or is it the case that it just needs to be done regardless of those factors?)
- Consider what balance of time versus output needs to be measured e.g. does the employee need to maintain a physical presence (either at home or in the office) as part of a rota to provide telephone and email cover for the team.
- Agree regularity of reporting.
- If appropriate, agree a method of recording working time (electronically if possible).
- Be able to monitor number and pattern number of hours worked by employee to identify any concerns from health, safety and welfare perspective.

### **Link with other Staff**

- Review the role of other staff whose jobs interact with that of the homeworker, to ensure that any secondary effects in terms of duties, responsibilities, working methods etc. are taken into consideration and adjustments made to job profiles etc. as appropriate.

### **Training and support needs**

11.6 As with all jobs, training and support needs should be identified to meet the job requirements. It is also important to ensure that homeworkers do not feel cut off from the usual development and promotion opportunities.

Training for the homeworker may include:

- IT Skills training e.g. to operate equipment.
- Self-management – e.g. time management, communications, career management.
- The opportunity to attend conferences, seminars or discussion groups.
- Health and safety training including e-learning.

Training for the manager may include:

- Managing performance of homeworkers.
- Management by objectives.

- Setting performance standards.
- Managing communication networks.
- IT skills.

## **Regular contact**

- 11.7 As well as the contact established under ongoing management and communication needs, the manager should make arrangements for the homeworker to be updated on office news, both work-related and social; these might include circulars, legal advice, professional and corporate information, copy reports, personnel notices and health and safety information.
- 11.8 The manager may also need to agree the circumstances in which a visit to the homeworker might be necessary or desirable and gain agreement from the homeworker to permit such access.
- 11.9 Some homeworkers may experience feelings of isolation through loss of contact with colleagues, especially permanent home workers. The manager has a responsibility to ensure that appropriate support is offered. It should also be clear that permanent home workers may visit the office or work location when appropriate and have regular contact with colleagues.

## **12. Communication**

- 12.1 Clear communication systems are just as important as for the office based worker, and, as set out above, communication is a key element in effectively managing their performance. Employees working from home could easily be cut off from the usual communication channels, both formal and informal.
- 12.2 It is important to consider extending or refining communication methods to ensure home workers are included. This might involve:
- Setting up systems to ensure collection/delivery of work, regular updating and distribution of papers etc.
  - Establishing need for access to team and job related information and resources as required.
  - Ensuring regular meetings take place with the home worker and that there are opportunities for homeworkers to meet with colleagues.
  - Ensuring regular feedback on work performance.
  - Ensuring Key Issues Exchanges are undertaken.
  - Being aware that the status of the homeworker within the team could change, thus affecting the team dynamics.

- Ensuring that team and corporate information distribution systems are extended, in some form, to the homeworker e.g. access to Intranet; office memos, notice board material etc.
- Ensuring any accidents, incidents and any work related ill health absence is reported in line with current organisational requirements.
- Discussing with the team the value of establishing regular social/team building occasions to sustain the informal contacts and networks.
- Being clear about the expectations of the individual to make themselves available for contact.

### **13. Working Hours**

- 13.1 The contractual hours of work do not change for homeworkers. However, there is likely to be much more flexibility around when those hours of work take place.
- 13.2 This will need to be agreed with the manager/supervisor at the outset of the agreement to ensure adequate cover is maintained.
- 13.3 The Council's flexible working scheme does apply to homeworkers provided that the manager and employee agree on hours of work and availability based on service requirements.
- 13.4 Where employees are required to work additional hours to provide extra cover, this must be agreed in advance with the manager and an agreed amount of flexi time or time off in lieu will be granted.
- 13.5 In accordance with terms and conditions of service, Homeworkers may be entitled to overtime and premium payments in the same way as 'regular' workers, subject to the prior agreement of their manager.
- 13.6 The Working Time Directive continues to apply to staff based from home or remotely.

### **14. The Home Environment**

- 14.1 Managers are responsible for ensuring that the relevant risk assessments are undertaken for homeworkers. Please see Appendix B for further guidance.
- 14.2 Managers must also ensure the employee is provided with suitable equipment, and a safe system of working which would include information, instruction and training.
- 14.3 The employee needs to take personal responsibility for the health and safety aspect of homeworking and to follow safe systems of work. An employee needs an environment at home which offers the following:

- Suitable work space, ideally a separate room but at the least a dedicated space where they can set up and use any equipment provided without risk of harm to themselves or others in the home.
  - Freedom from interruptions and distractions.
  - Security and confidentiality.
  - Ability to meet health and safety requirements (see section below).
- 14.4 It is not considered appropriate to combine home based working with dependant care. As such, home based working will not be viewed as an alternative to paid dependant care responsibilities within contracted hours.
- 14.5 In addition to this, employees need to be aware that the Council reserves the right to ask them to attend Council premises at short notice should there be a reasonable requirement to do so.
- 14.6 The right of an employee not to disclose his/her home address and telephone number except to immediate colleagues and the manager should be respected.

## **15. Health and Safety**

- 15.1 The regulations of the Health and Safety at Work Act continue to apply to employees working at home and guidance for managers and employees is provided at Appendix B.
- 15.2 The manager is responsible for ensuring all appropriate risk controls are implemented prior to the homeworking application being agreed.
- 15.3 Employees have a responsibility for their own health and safety and must complete the home working self-assessment form provided at Appendix C. Employees must also complete a DSE self-assessment if their work involves the use of any display screen equipment and both of these assessments must be shared with the manager. In addition employees with any pre existing health condition that may be affected by the change to working from home must ensure they inform their manager.
- 15.4 The suitability of the home as a work location will be determined though the completion of the self assessment checklist by the employee, reviewed by the departmental Health and Safety Officer who would either agree with the assessment or seek further details of any issues. This could include requesting photographs and a discussion with the employee.
- 15.5 Where there remains health and safety issues of concern, the manager or employee should seek advice and support from a Council Health and Safety Officer. If necessary the manager may need to visit the employees home to undertake an assessment of the proposed space for use as a work environment and of the proposed workstation.

15.6 If the employee is a member of a recognised Trade Union or Association, they may invite their trade union safety representative to be present at the time of the on-site assessment.

The key points for considerations are:

- Will there be enough space to work safely, including space for a workstation and chair if required, arranged to avoid tripping hazards etc?
- Is there adequate lighting for the work tasks?
- Is the workstation, including the chair, suitable for the individual and work activity? It must allow enough room to change position and vary movement (see hot desk specification in appendix 5 of the Health and Safety Management Arrangements for DSE).
- Have portable electrical items provided for work been tested and labelled?
- Any other risks specific to the activity and or location, e.g. pets, visitors etc.

15.7 Should the assessment recommend any necessary adaptations or control measures; the Council will meet the costs of these measures as far as is reasonably possible for permanent and regular home workers only.

15.8 The Council does not have any control or responsibility over the employees home environment. The manager should ensure the home working self-assessment & the risk assessment is reviewed every 12 months or when there is a change in; the working conditions; equipment; or workstation location. Employees have a responsibility to inform their Manager of any changes in the work environment which may impact on their health and safety or that of others.

15.9 Any accidents or incidents (including violence and aggression) must be reported in accordance with existing arrangements.

## **16. Information and Communication Technology (ICT)**

16.1 The provision of ICT equipment and furniture are likely to be key aspects in the effectiveness of the homeworking arrangement.

16.2 Managers must discuss their technology requirements for implementing homeworking with IT Services, whether this is for a single employee asking to work from home, or a whole team who are relocating to an agile office environment which also incorporates homeworking.

16.3 This advice must be sought prior to any arrangements being put in place.

16.4 Once the individual or team's technology requirements have been identified, IT Services can recommend a solution. It is recommended



that any new technology is piloted to ensure it works in practice. IT Services can assist with testing, and the eventual implementation of a successful solution.

- 16.5 All equipment connecting to the corporate ICT systems will be provided, configured, supported and maintained by the Council.
- 16.6 All equipment is for the sole use of the employee. Use by family, friends etc is prohibited. All equipment provided will remain the property of and be insured by Wirral Council.
- 16.7 Employees are required to use all equipment in line with the agreed Code of Practice regarding electronic mail and internet usage and the Information and Communications Technology Security Policy. (Intranet: <http://10.107.1.50/personnel/Internet.htm>)
- 16.8 Equipment will be configured to prevent users adding hardware, software or changing the configuration. Under no circumstances will an employee's personal equipment be connected to Council services for example personal Printers, scanners or PDA's.

### **Larger Scale Implementation of Homeworking**

- 16.9 The proposal to introduce homeworking may also arise from a review of services or work place accommodation and may form part of a wider implementation of agile working arrangements for a team or department. All agreements for homeworking can only be implemented on a voluntary basis
- 16.10 It is important that the implications of homeworking and agile working practices of the team are fully understood in order to minimise any risks to service continuity of this new way of working.
- 16.11 For larger scale exercises managers may wish to set-up a project team to identify requirements and help oversee the process.
- 16.12 The Council's Change Team can offer assistance with agile implementation activities as required by the Workplace Transformation Programme and departmental operational and/or project teams. The Change team have core skills in project planning, facilitating workshops to identify issues and involve staff in designing new ways of working, and identifying technology requirements.
- 16.13 The Health and Safety Team can also provide advice and guidance regarding any health and safety concerns with home working.

### **17. Insurance, Mortgage and Tenancy Agreements**

- 17.1 It is the employee's responsibility to ensure that any relevant organisations are notified in writing of the change to homeworking in case there any implications of doing so.
- 17.2 The Council provides personal/public liability cover for employees working at home.
- 17.3 Employees must inform the company that insures their home (both building and possessions) that they will be working from home.
- 17.4 This should include their mortgage provider or where appropriate their Landlord, to ensure that their tenancy agreement allows them to work from home.

## **18. Security**

- 18.1 Employees working at home are responsible for taking adequate steps to ensure the security of Council equipment in their home.
- 18.2 Employees are responsible for ensuring that only Council employees have access to information and services (including internet access). When working at home, employees will be responsible for making sure they comply with the Data Protection Act and meet data protection and corporate confidentiality requirements. No other person must use the Council's equipment and server provided.

## **19. Costs/Expenses**

### **Costs Incurred by the Council**

- 19.1 These will depend on the nature and level of homeworking. For employees working permanently or regularly from home this may include:
- The costs of equipment provision
  - Installation costs
  - The cost of training and communications
- 19.2 The Council will also refund work-related telephone costs on production of an itemised telephone bill, where a dedicated phone line or mobile phone is not provided.

### **Costs incurred by the individual**

#### ***Travel***

- 19.3 When an employee is working from home as part of a homeworking agreement, journeys made to the normal working base will not be reimbursed.

- 19.4 In normal circumstances any travel incurred by a homeworking employee would be reduced by their notional home to work travel.
- 19.5 For permanent homeworkers, a designated office base will be agreed (For example, the employees former office base or headquarters) by the Manager, with advice from HR as required in order for normal home to office mileage to be deducted.
- 19.6 Where it is considered by HM Revenue and Customs that the home is the place of employment, it may be possible to negotiate with them for all mileage to be treated as business mileage. This must be approved by HM Revenue and Customs.
- 19.7 Travelling time to normal working base will not be recompensed; travel time for other journeys will be recompensed in the normal way.

### ***Council Tax***

- 19.8 Working from home does not affect the payment of Council Tax.

### ***Planning Permission***

- 19.9 Employees would not ordinarily require planning permission in order to work from home. A key test is whether or not the 'overall character' of the building will change as a result of employees undertaking work activities from home. More information is available from the Government's Planning Portal website: <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/england/public/buildingwork/projects/workcommonworkingfromhome>
- 19.10 Employees must check that there are no planning restrictions or covenants imposed on their home that may prevent them from working from home.

### ***Utility Charges***

- 19.11 Certain utility companies may consider that use of a home for work purposes incurs business charges rather than domestic tariff. This should be checked with the relevant utility companies.

### ***Income Tax/Personal Tax***

- 19.12 The Council does not know the full personal tax circumstances of its employee and homeworkers are advised to discuss this with their tax office.

## **20. Contracts of Employments**

- 20.1 The Council has the same legal obligations towards homeworkers as it does towards other employees.

- 20.2 Terms and conditions of employment for homeworkers are the same as for office-based employees, with a few additional elements to cover the fact that the workplace is the home.
- 20.3 Homeworkers will receive a letter of contract variation, which will detail the contract conditions relating to the homeworking post. These will be contained within a 'homeworking agreement'.
- 20.4 Homeworking agreements will be on a pilot/trial basis for a period of between three to six months during which time a decision can be taken that the homeworking arrangements cease and the employee reverts to previous working arrangements.
- 20.5 The homeworking agreement will include statements covering:
- Start date (and end date if appropriate).
  - Pilot/trial period.
  - Working pattern/hours of work/availability.
  - Statement of broad objectives.
  - Health and Safety.
  - Provision of Equipment and ownership.
  - Security/Confidentiality of information.
  - Supervisory arrangements.
  - Availability for contact, meetings.
  - Number of visits to the office required each week/month.
  - Payment of allowances/expenses (if applicable).
  - Personal responsibilities.
  - Arrangements for return of Council's property when contract of employment terminates.
  - Options and procedures for homeworkers to return to employment at the Council's normal workplace.
- 20.6 The above list is not exhaustive as the variation to the contract will depend on the particular circumstances.