# Hybrid Working Policy

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# 1.   Introduction

The council is committed to having working practices that enable staff to maximise their performance and productivity to deliver the best outcomes for residents through the Corporate Plan, whilst maintaining a good work life balance. Our Hybrid Working Policy supports our [Future Workplace](#), a transformation project looking at how we can deliver our services in innovative ways to our residents and customers. Further information on our [Future Workplace Principles can be found here](#) .

In addition to this, our technology makes it easy to access information remotely and work from a variety of locations whilst promoting joined up services.

Our approach to hybrid working also supports the Council's vision to address the climate emergency, placing emphasis on the importance of sustainability and the health and wellbeing of both staff and our residents.

# 2.   Scope

The hybrid working policy applies to all non-schools-based employees, agency workers, volunteers and casual workers working at any level within the organisation.

The Hybrid Working Policy is non contractual. Where employees have contractual flexible working arrangements already in place, these are not changed by the content of this policy.

# 3.   What is Hybrid Working

Hybrid working is a flexible working model which allows staff to work from a variety of locations. It enables staff to achieve a work life balance whilst still meeting the needs of the organisation.

# 4.   Flexible Working Requests

Unlike Hybrid Working, flexible Working requests usually change the number of hours worked, or work pattern on a permanent basis. Hybrid working does not replace the statutory requirement for managers to consider flexible working requests.

Flexible working requests include requests for Part-time working, Job-share, Compressed hours and Term Time hours.   More information on [flexible working requests can be found here](#).

# 5.   Hybrid Working Principles

Introducing hybrid working practices will involve developing a new work culture, with new ways of working using new tools, new processes, and new approaches to management and teamwork.

Increased flexibility of where and how work is carried out must ensure the best possible outcomes and services are maintained for residents and service users, both now and in the future.

RBK hybrid working principles include:

- All teams must have a Team Charter in place that details arrangements for communication, support and housekeeping rules.
- All decisions regarding hybrid working will start from what provides the best possible outcomes and services for our residents, service users, customers, stakeholders and staff.
- The immediate line manager will ensure the arrangements work for service delivery with an awareness of wider service needs that need to be met. The best possible service should be maintained for residents and service users, both now and in the future.
- Hybrid working is informal and subject to ongoing review based on operational effectiveness.
- Performance will be managed on [results and personal and team outcomes](#).
- An open, fair and consistent approach is applied within teams based on service needs. Personal preferences will be considered in line with team requirements and service needs.
- Staff may be required to attend the office on particular days at the request of their line manager or head of service.
- The amount of time spent in the office, or remotely will depend on the role and what is most effective.
- Working remotely must not be used as a substitute for childcare or similar carer responsibilities. It is the responsibility of the individual to ensure that adequate provision is in place to avoid conflict with work performance when they are working from home.

## 6.    Benefits

Hybrid working can provide a number of benefits to residents, employees and the council.

- Enable staff to have a better work life balance resulting in better engagement, outcomes and performance.
- Staff can manage their working day more effectively and focus on activities/tasks that require greater concentration.
- Staff can work flexibly from a range of locations across the borough, building stronger links with residents and communities.
- It minimises the cost and time spent on commuting.
- It enables positive environmental actions, for example avoiding unnecessary travel and minimising paper printing and hour carbon footprint.
- Improved work life balance for employees which in turn supports their wellbeing.

- It can reduce stress and provide greater job satisfaction, motivation and engagement.

- It can help achieve savings for the Council by downsizing office space, and using the office space we have more effectively.

## 7.    Team Charters

Teams that have adopted a hybrid working approach must have a team charter in place.

Team charters are a useful way of documenting a team's purpose, objectives, resources, agreed operational working arrangements, expected outputs, communication, and support. Team Charters can include both elements or working remotely and where face to face interactions can be set out.

Team charters should be created in a group setting with managers facilitating discussions. Hybrid Working must not affect the provision of services. Therefore managers must ensure that they and their teams have systems in place to maintain suitable service presence as required and to monitor the level of available front line staff on duty at any one time.

Team charters are open to review at any time, however should be reviewed on an annual basis as a minimum. Team charters should be reviewed following service redesign, changes in the team, service objectives and how the service is delivered.

More information on Team Charters and examples of good practice can be found here.

## 8.    Equipment

Staff will be provided with the necessary IT access and equipment to work in a hybrid way.  To request IT access and equipment for a new starter (permanent or temporary) managers should complete the Starter form found on the Support hub.

Staff that require additional equipment such as a monitor or headphones should complete the Home Working Assessment Form and discuss their requirement needs with their line manager.

Staff leaving the organisation must return all equipment that has been provided. Managers must ensure that IT are notified by completing the leavers form so arrangements for the return of equipment can be made. More information on reporting a leaver can be found here.

Printers will not be provided for use at home, our Hybrid Working model supports the Council's sustainability ambitions and helps Kingston to become a greener, cleaner borough. Staff that are required to print will need to attend the office to do so.

All staff must take care of any equipment provided. It will remain as council property, and employees should notify their line manager and Digital Customer Support of any faults with the equipment.

Prior to being provided with any technological equipment, it is essential that staff read the Acceptable Use Policy.

Some employees may require specific equipment to support the working arrangement. Specific needs/ reasonable adjustments will be considered on a case by case basis with guidance from Occupational Health and Access to Work.

## 9. Booking a Desk

To ensure the best use of desks and meeting spaces, in some buildings a booking system has been introduced. Please see the link to our booking system https://kingston.zipporah.co.uk/spaces. Staff are also reminded to cancel a booking should the desk or meeting room no longer be required.

## 10. Minimising our Carbon Footprint

The council is committed to reducing the impact on the environment by making Kingston a greener place to work and live. Where possible employees are encouraged to use technology to engage and communicate and avoid non-essential travel. Where a physical meeting is necessary employees are encouraged to use public transport, walk or cycle. If a van or car is essential to attend the meeting or event, employees can arrange one through our corporate car club or a pool bike, where appropriate.

## 11. Attending Work Locations

Some staff may not live in close proximity to council offices, however all staff must be willing and able to travel into the borough when required and in line with agreed Team Charters. Staff should be reminded that it is their responsibility to make alternative arrangements for dependants when it is necessary to attend work locations and should be discussed with your line manager in advance.

There may be occasions when staff are asked to attend a location within the borough at short notice. for example in response to an emergency situation to support the Council's response, ensuring business continuity and delivery of essential services and elections.

Staff are not permitted to hold face to face meetings at their home.

## 12. Financial Assistance and Costs

There is no reimbursement of expenses for household bills for employees who are eligible to predominantly work from home. This includes but is not limited to:

- Broadband
- Heating
- Lighting
- Water
- Landline

## 13.  Tax Relief When Working From Home

Staff may be able to claim tax relief for any household expenses incurred as a result of working from home, provided the expenses are solely work related. If you wish to benefit from this tax relief, see the Government's guide on claiming tax relief for your job expenses at www.gov.uk/tax-relief-for-employees/working-at-home.

## 14.  Health and Safety

All staff have a responsibility for their own and others health and safety whilst they are carrying out work activities.

Where staff use council locations to work, they should familiarise themselves with local arrangements for managing health and safety, for example, action to be taken in the event of a fire or hearing the fire alarm signal.

Staff should ensure the following:

- All staff have completed the online Fire Safety, Hybrid Working module on My Learning.
- Where a member of staff has a disability that would affect their ability to evacuate, managers should ensure that a suitable Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) has been completed and, where appropriate suitably trained "buddies" have been identified.
- Emergency contact information is kept up to date
- Working patterns are agreed
- Breaks are scheduled to ensure that staff are not over working
- Focus time is a useful feature of Google Calendar that allows you to set aside time to work away from distractions
- Setting up and displaying your work locations and working hours in Google calendar makes it easier to manage hybrid working and for others to see your availability
- Lone working arrangements are considered with the appropriate risk assessments completed.
- Wellbeing is considered with appropriate support in place. Managers are responsible for monitoring the wellbeing of staff with regular contact and reviews via 1-2-1 meetings. Managers and staff are encouraged to discuss wellbeing on a regular basis. More information on the Kingston's wellbeing plan and support can be found here.

- Staff working from home must review the [Home Workstation Guidance](#) and complete a Home Working Assessment Form.
- Diaries must be open to your manager and team at all times to ensure availability and location is known at all times
- Regular 1-2-1 meetings are in place to ensure on-going support. Where these are held remotely staff should ensure that cameras are on to support with effective supervision.

## 15.   Data Protection, Security and Confidentiality

All staff are responsible for ensuring that information associated with  the Council is kept  secure at all times.

Staff are required to:

- Practise good IT security, including using a unique password for your work laptop and any other devices you use for work.
- Return confidential waste to the council as soon as reasonably practicable to ensure that it is disposed of in a secure way.  Council information must not be disposed of with household rubbish or other locations such as cafes.
- Keep all hard copies of work-related documentation secure, including keeping documents locked away at all times except when in use.
- Ensure that work-related information is safeguarded when working in public spaces, for example by:
  - positioning your laptop so that others cannot see the screen; using a privacy screen guard, not leaving your laptop unattended.
  - Not having confidential/business-sensitive conversations in public spaces.
  - Chromebooks and other equipment provided by the Council must be used for work related purposes only and must not be used by any other member of your household or third party at any time or for any purpose.

Data Protection Principles:

Employees should ensure they know their responsibilities under the Data Protection Act and the Council's Security policies.

  - Staff must complete the Mandatory [Data Protection and Cyber Training](#)
  - Staff must not send  work related emails or sensitive data to their own personal email address
  - Staff must not save work related files on a personal computer
  - Staff must report any loss of information or equipment immediately to their line manager.
  - Staff must ensure that their screen is locked when moving away from their desk.

- ○ Other individuals (including family members) should not have any access to personal data either on paper or as electronic records
- ○ All printed or other paper records must be safely locked away when not in use

## 16.    Insurance

Chromebooks and other IT equipment will be covered by the council's insurance policy.

Staff should ensure that their home insurance provider is aware that they are working from home for a percentage of their working week.

## 17.    Mortgages and Tenancy Arrangements

Staff are responsible for ensuring that they are not in breach of any covenant or agreement by working from home. Staff should check terms of any mortgage, lease or tenancy agreement and, if necessary, obtain any permissions required to work from home.

## 18.    Terms and conditions

The hybrid working arrangements are informal and will not alter staff's terms and conditions of employment. Kingston will remain as employees' regular  base location. Staff that are working within the Shared Service this will include Sutton Council Offices.

## 19.    Working hours

While working remotely, it will be assumed that staff will work their normal working hours. If this is not the case, employees should agree with their line manager what their working arrangements will be and the team should be aware of when an employee is available and working.

## 20.    Travel expenses

Travel expenses cannot be claimed from your home to your regular base location. For staff that are working within a shared Service this will include Sutton Council Offices.

## 21.    Sickness

If an employee is sick and unable to work, the Council's sickness reporting procedure applies as it would if employees were attending the workplace. Where employees are not well enough to either attend their workplace or participate in

remote meetings or activities then they should be recorded as sick.  Please refer to the Council's [Managing Health and Attendance Policy](#) for further information.

## 22.    Working abroad outside of the UK

Working from abroad will not generally be permitted. Guidance on temporary working abroad in exceptional circumstances can be found [here](#).

Due to the potential complex legal and tax implications, the council is unable to support long term arrangements or requests for permanent relocations outside the UK.

## 23.    Details of approval and variation process

The policy is not contractual and does not form part of the employee's terms and conditions.

This policy will be continuously reviewed in line with changing organisational requirements, employee needs; legislation and good practice. Where the Council wishes to amend, replace or revoke/discontinue this policy, it will inform and discuss proposals with the relevant trade unions, and staff networks. Any resulting change will be communicated with reasonable notice to employees.

## Document Control

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