



<b>Report to:</b>	Employment and Staffing Committee 14 <sup>th</sup> January 2022
<b>Lead Cabinet Member:</b>	John Williams
<b>Lead Officer:</b>	Jeff Membery

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## New Hybrid Working Policy

### Executive Summary

1. The majority of the Council's office-based staff have been working primarily from home since March 2020, when the UK first went into lockdown. While this caused some initial difficulties, all departments have now put measures in place to allow the continued delivery of services to our residents while operating a remote workforce. There is a clear need and desire for a continued hybrid working approach in the long term, and the proposed policy outlines how this would work at South Cambridgeshire district Council.

### Key Decision

2. No

### Recommendations

3. It is recommended that the committee review the proposed new policy, provide feedback, and refer to Cabinet for their approval.

### Reasons for Recommendations

4. The introduction of a hybrid working policy will allow us to continue to meet our residents needs while also accommodating the needs and wellbeing of our employees, and the increased flexibility that the modern workforce expects. This should also impact on our recruitment and staff retention, as it demonstrates we are a modern and caring council.

## Details

5. Since March 2020, the majority of Council staff have been working primarily from home, with occasional visits or meetings in our offices. While this doesn't currently apply to all of our operational staff in the Shared Waste Service, we have had very positive feedback from colleagues in other service areas and local residents, with particular positivity about the benefits of hybrid working on flexibility and the wellbeing of our colleagues.
6. The move to home-working did result in some rapid changes in many service areas, especially regarding ICT and telephone systems, but measures have now been put in place that allow colleagues to continue delivering excellent customer services from any location. This includes all teams completing a Team Charter, which outlines how teams will be working in a hybrid manner, and how they will continue to meet their service obligations.
7. A survey of SCDC colleagues conducted in March 2020 found that over 70% of respondents would like to continue working from home regularly in the long-term, and several more recent survey's, including a report by ONS in June 2021, suggest that there is a strong desire for hybrid working across all office-based sectors. This means that in addition to our current work force, potential future employees will also be expecting more flexible work offerings in the future so the Council must adapt to this change if they wish to be competitive and appeal to good candidates.
8. We are therefore proposing the introduction of a Hybrid Working policy, which will outline the Council's approach to hybrid working and how it can be applied to individuals. While this will include the option for remote working, it does not mean that employees will have to work remotely if they would prefer to be based entirely in the office. There are also some roles which, due to the nature of the role, will not be suitable for hybrid working (e.g. a refuse loader).
9. Our suggested approach is for employees to identify which working profile they fit into, these being
  - a. Fixed profile
  - b. Hybrid – on the go
  - c. Hybrid – desk based
10. Teams will then be empowered to use their Team Charter's and individual conversations between employees and their managers to determine what working patterns would best accommodate the employees' wants and the services needs, and these will be continually reviewed to ensure appropriate support and cover is provided. This approach will allow for individual needs to be taken into account, such as childcare arrangements, disabilities, or home workstation set-up.

11. The proposed policy has been aligned with other HR policies and practices, and consideration paid to our Health and Safety and ICT/data requirements. In particular, we have considered the impact the policy may have on our staff engagement levels, and the health and wellbeing of our employees, and are hopeful that the continuation of flexible and hybrid working options may be of particular benefit to colleagues with physical or mental conditions. For example, those who benefit from being able to take regular breaks away from their screen, or who find the traditional office-based work environment causes them anxiety or distracts them from their tasks. We are aware that the change to remote working has been difficult for some, and are intending to continue our programme of webinars and training around remote working and managing stress.
12. Of final note, in the writing of the policy we have included an 'abbreviations and definitions' section, however would appreciate any feedback from members about any terms they feel should be defined or explained here.

## **Options**

13. The options open to the committee are to review the proposed new policy, and provide feedback to Cabinet.

## **Implications**

14. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk, equality and diversity, climate change, and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered:-

## **Legal**

15. The proposed policy has been written in accordance with all legal requirements and best practice.

## **Staffing**

16. By increasing our flexible working offering to staff, our aim is to better support our colleagues and their work-life balance while continue to meet our residents needs. Hybrid working is predicted to be a priority for future job-seekers, and our current work-force are strongly in favour of maintaining some hybrid working arrangements in the long-term.

## **Equality and Diversity**

17. The EqIA for the new policy will be completed in advance of the Cabinet meeting and form part of the approval process. By increasing the flexible approach to working we are better supporting colleagues who may have struggled with some aspects of fully office based work, such as travel or distractions that an office environment may present. Care has been taken to cover the Health and Safety aspects of hybrid-working, and the Council's commitment to providing safe and healthy working environments for all, including the provision of specialist equipment when needed.
18. Hybrid working also allows us to better support those colleagues who may have previously struggled to access work due to other ongoing commitments such as caring responsibilities, as it empowers them to make more decisions around their working schedules within the agreed upon frameworks.

## **Climate Change**

19. By encouraging hybrid working, we are allowing staff to reduce their carbon footprint by reducing the amount of travel they must do to and from the office. We are also allowing residents to complete tasks virtually, which reduces the amount of travel they must do to our offices as well.

## **Health & Wellbeing**

20. The new policy should help our colleagues maintain a healthy work-life balance, to the benefit of their health and wellbeing.

## **Consultation responses**

21. Consultation with unions has not been completed yet, but will be required before the policy can be introduced.

## **Alignment with Council Priority Areas**

### **A modern and caring Council**

22. By increasing our flexibility we are demonstrating a commitment to modern ways of working and providing our employees with a safe and nurturing working environment.

## **Appendices**

Appendix A: Hybrid Working Policy

Appendix B: FAQs

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