

 <p>BROADSTAIRS & ST. PETER'S TOWN COUNCIL</p>	Flexible working/ Working from Home Policy
	BROADSTAIRS & ST. PETER'S TOWN COUNCIL Adopted: 26th March 2018 Reviewed: April 2026 Approved: TBC

1. Aims and objectives

1.1 This policy is intended to provide guidance and good practice to enable employees to work from home effectively and safely.

1.2 The policy is intended to assist both managers and employees in implementing working from home by highlighting areas for consideration and providing practical advice and information.

1.3 The policy recognises that for the majority of employees, working from home will be on an occasional basis and with prior agreement from the manager.

1.4 The policy should be considered alongside the Town Council's other strategies and policies, in particular those relating to:

- IT
- Health and Safety
- Lone Worker
- Web and Media
- General Data Protection

2. Background

2.1 Broadstairs & St. Peter's Town Council aims to create and provide modern and efficient ways of working for employees. This includes reducing accommodation and travel costs, and tailoring working hours to better support the needs of the service, its employees and customers.

3. Procedure

3.1 The prospect of working from home may be raised by managers or employees; either individuals or groups or it be set out in law. Please refer to Appendix 1 in the first instance if an employer or employee is considering working from home.

3.2 Consideration should be given to the guidance within this policy to ensure that everything is in place. Particular attention is drawn to matters relating to health and safety, IT, confidentiality, contact, training and support and the contract of employment.

3.3 Consideration should be given to different approaches to managing employees who are working from home, such as managing outputs and deliverables. This relies on collaborative working between the employee and the Town Clerk and regular review of performance targets and workload levels. The existing supervision and performance and development reviews process can be used in this process, in conjunction with the Competency Framework as detailed in the checklist in Appendix 2.

4. Health and Safety and Risk Management

4.1 Employees and managers need to understand and comply with the Council's policy regarding health and safety requirements for working from home, and complete a 'Self Assessment Checklist' prior to commencing any working from home arrangements. This form is attached as Appendix 2.

4.2 The checklist should be completed initially on the set up of working from home and thereafter if there is a change in circumstances. The Town Clerk and employee should review this form at least once a year at Performance and Development Reviews. The

checklist should also be reviewed by the Town Clerk for new and expectant mothers/fathers. Any accident or ill health directly related to the working from home arrangements, should also prompt a review and be reported using existing Town Council procedures.

5. Equipment

5.1 Equipment will be provided by the employer to the employee so that they can undertake the job safely and effectively at home. The equipment required for each individual will be identified from the Appendix 2 Assessment.

5.2 The employee must ensure that all equipment provided is used in accordance with instructions, safe methods and systems of working and must be returned at the end of employment, or at the end of the working from home arrangements.

5.3 Electrical equipment used when working from home will need portable appliance testing, as per the Electrical Equipment part of the checklist in Appendix 2. The employee and the Town Clerk will need to make appropriate arrangements for this testing to take place, prior to any working from home arrangements being agreed.

5.4 Regular trips to the Town Council offices should allow the employee to stock up on, for example, paper, printer cartridges and other stationery. Or, the employer might prefer/need to arrange a delivery to the employee in special circumstance.

6. Confidentiality

6.1 It is the responsibility of the employee and Town Clerk to ensure the confidentiality of all Town Council information whilst the employee is working from home. Consideration should be given to storing any Town Council documents safely and securely. Reference should be made to the GDPR Policy.

6.2 In order to maintain confidentiality and data security, the Town Council documents and equipment (laptops etc) must not be left in employees' vehicles when unattended.

7. Insurance Implications

7.1 In general, working from home should not give rise to any special difficulties from a risk management or insurance point of view. The guiding principle is that good practice should reduce or eliminate the possibility of injury or loss to employees, the Town Council or others. Insurance by itself does not prevent injury or loss, and good risk management techniques are required.

7.2 It is vital that employees and managers adhere to this working from home policy and associated guidelines, in order to maintain the validity of this insurance provision.

7.3 Liability insurance protects the Council and its employees jointly for accidental death, injury and loss of property where the Council has been negligent. This insurance will operate in respect of employees who are working at home with the knowledge and consent of the Town Clerk, subject to the appropriate risk, health and safety assessments, training and support being in place.

7.4 Personal accident insurance will apply to employees working at home including whilst travelling on Town Council business. This does not include commuting to work from home except where the home has been formally designated as the work base, in which case all journeys will be made whilst on duty.

7.5 Property insurance cover is provided by the Town Council. This will only apply to all items provided for use by the employee working at home with the knowledge and consent of their manager. The employee has a duty and responsibility to look after the Town Council's property. There is no insurance cover for theft if there is no forcible

entry to the property and only laptops or computers are covered in this instance. Losses arising from unattended vehicles are not covered.

7.6 Employees' own insurance policies are unlikely to be affected by working from home. However, employees are advised to consider whether they need to inform their insurers or inform others such as their landlord, mortgage company or loan company of the working from home arrangements, within the terms of any agreements. If in doubt the employee should let the insurance company know, as nondisclosure may sometimes invalidate any policy.

8. Financial considerations

8.1 It is considered that working from home is mutually beneficial and that the costs and benefits of working from home will cancel each other out, due the reduction in travelling to work costs which would be paid by the employee. Consequently, a working from home allowance will not be paid. **However, expenses will be paid at the current rate set by Government, relating to electricity, broadband usage and other utilities.**

8.2 An employee's home address will not be stated as their work address and therefore all tax implications will be the responsibility of the Town Council

8.3 Travel arrangements will be in accordance with national and local conditions of service. Where the office is the employee's work base, travel between home and the contractual work base will not attract travel allowances, whereas other business-related journeys will, as per the employee's contract of employment. If the employee's home is the work base, all business-related journeys will attract travel allowances as per the employee's contract of employment.

9. Other Considerations

9.1 Possible legal restrictions – employees need to check that there is no legal obstacle to them working from home, e.g. a restrictive covenant attached to the lease or deeds of the property forbidding non-domestic activity. If the property is rented, the landlord's agreement to the arrangements for home working may be necessary. If there is a mortgage on the property, it may be necessary for the lender to be informed or to give permission.

10. Other useful links

Display screen equipment (DSE) workstation checklist

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ck1.pdf>

Gov Expenses and benefits: homeworking

<https://www.gov.uk/expenses-and-benefits-homeworking>

Protect Home Workers

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/home-working/employer/stress-and-mental-health.htm>

Home working guide for employers

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/home-working/index.htm>

Employment Income Manual

<https://www.gov.uk/hmrc-internal-manuals/employment-income-manual/eim01472>

Other expenses: home: working from home

<https://www.gov.uk/hmrc-internal-manuals/employment-income-manual/eim32760>

Appendix 1

Guidance for Working from Home where home is the designated Work Base - ('Home worker' work style profile)

In addition to the guidance already outlined in the policy, the following areas are particularly relevant where the employee's home is their designated work base:

1. The importance of a Trial Period.

1.1 Where home is to be the employee's work base, it is particularly important that a trial period is undertaken before any permanent arrangement is confirmed (for detailed guidance please refer to Sections 5 and 7 in the policy above). The use of a trial period should ensure that both the duties of the job concerned and the employee are suitable for these arrangements.

2. Employment Contracts

2.1 During trial periods, no permanent changes will be made to employment contracts. The agreed temporary arrangements for the trial period will, however, be formally recorded and signed by both Town Clerk and employee. When a move to a permanent pattern of home working is agreed, contracts of employment may need to take account of the specific working arrangements.

2.2 Base – this specifies the usual place of work or base for administrative purposes, usually the employees work address. Where the employee does not have a work address, this will be the employee's home.

2.3 Hours of work – the level of contracted working hours is not changed by moving to working from home arrangements, including the use of Flexitime where applicable and adherence to Working Time Regulations. However, greater flexibility over when the contracted hours are worked may be possible in some circumstances, subject to agreement between employee and Town Clerk, and as long as the required level of service to customers is not disrupted or reduced. The working hours when the employee should be contactable and the attendance requirements for onsite meetings and other office-based duties should be agreed and defined as appropriate, and communicated to other team members.

2.4 Absence - procedures for reporting sickness absence and for requesting annual leave are unaffected and should be in line with existing Town Council procedures.

2.5 Should it be necessary to change or cease the working from home arrangements, employment contracts should be discussed and amended as required.

3. Communication

3.1 Employees based at home should receive the same level of information, with the same frequency, as their office-based colleagues. Contact needs to be two-way, so it is important that open channels of communication are set up and maintained. Regular contact will also allow the Town Clerk to pick up on early warning signs if something is going wrong, and offer appropriate support.

3.2 There should be clarity about the times in which an employee working from home should be available for contact, and about any requirement for the employee to make regular contact with the office. These should be established and agreed with the Line Manager, and communicated to the team.

3.3 Any visits to the employee's home must be made by prior arrangement and during agreed working hours e.g. Health and Safety reviews, equipment installation. It is

expected that all routine meetings e.g. Staff Appraisals will take place at the office base or virtually using video conferencing software. Meetings with Service Users or other employees must not be held at the employee's home, an appropriate office base should be used.

3.4 It is essential that the Self-Assessment Checklist (Appendix 2 in the policy) is completed as stipulated, by both the employee and line manager in order to minimise risk.

3.5 External mail should be directed to Council offices and not to the employee's home address. Employees should, where the facility is available, forward their telephone calls to a work mobile or other device, using existing phone.

4. Performance and support

4.1 Working from home arrangements require a high degree of trust, together with open and honest communication. The most effective way of managing the performance of the employee working from home is to concentrate on outputs and deliverables. This relies on collaborative working between the employee and the line manager and regular review of performance targets and workload levels.

4.2 Regular supervision meetings, team meetings, should be available to employees based at home, in accordance with the Council's policies and guidelines, and carried out in an appropriate office base.

5. Working Hours and Patterns

5.1 The Town Clerk and employee should agree working patterns and times when commencing the working from home arrangements, and communicate these to the team. Generally, recording methods should not differ from other colleagues eg Completion of timesheets or flexi-sheets.

5.2 The Town Clerk will need to consider whether a Lone Working Monitoring System needs to be used.

6. Stress and Mental Health

6.1 Home working can cause work-related stress and affect people's mental health. Being away from managers and colleagues could make it difficult to get proper support. Employers should be approachable, have consistent contact with employees and organise group meetings to avoid feelings of isolation.

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/signs.htm>

Appendix 2

WORKING FROM HOME HEALTH AND SAFETY AND WELLBEING SELF ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST (SR48)

Please complete this checklist prior to commencing a working from home arrangement (and review at least once a year at the staff appraisal) or if there are any changes e.g. Moving house; changes to the equipment/furniture or any health/wellbeing issues arise). The completed form should be given to the Town clerk and will help the Town Council to ensure that your working conditions at home are safe and healthy. **Please write in the form where new equipment needs to be supplied by the employer.**

Name:

Date:

Address:

Details of the work to be carried out at home:

Details of room / space used for working from home:

Detail Town Council equipment supplied, if any:

Will your job involve any of the following whilst working from home?
(please tick):-

Computer use

Manual handling

Use of electrical equipment

Workstation and Home Office (- where applicable)	Yes	No	Comments
Is the room/area separate from other living areas in the home?			
Is the room/area used accessible without climbing a ladder?			
Is there enough space to safely accommodate all necessary furniture and equipment?			

Are walkways clear of tripping hazards, such as trailing cables?			
Is there a source of heating to maintain a comfortable temperature?			
Does the room have an opening window for ventilation?			
Is there adequate light to comfortably see documents and your computer screen?			https://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/dse/index.htm
Can you reach storage shelves without having to stretch over the desk?			
Do you generally find your workstation comfortable to use?			
Do you know how your workstation should be arranged to achieve the most comfortable posture?			https://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/dse/home-working.htm
Do you have somewhere secure to store confidential Town Council documents in order to maintain GDPR?			

Safe use of computers	Yes	No	Comments
Do you use a computer/laptop at home for work purposes?			

Do you have to use a computer/laptop intensively on a regular basis when working from Home?			
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Electrical Equipment	Yes	No	Comments
Does your electrical equipment have any signs of damage?			Look for obvious faults such as loose cables, cracked plugs, split covering to leads etc. This is a visual inspection only - you should not open plugs or take covers off the equipment.
If you have any items of Town Council equipment at home, are they marked to show they have received a portable appliance test?			There should be a label on the equipment showing the date it was checked.
When was this equipment last checked?			
Do you know how to safely use the equipment you use to work from home?			

Emergencies	Yes	No	Comments
Do you have an escape plan in case of fire?			
Do you have a smoke alarm fitted?			It is strongly recommended that you fit a smoke alarm. This should be tested weekly to ensure that it is working.
Do you know what to do in the event of having an accident at home?			

Wellbeing	Yes	No	Comments
If your job involves lifting and handling at home, have you received training to do it safely?			
Do you have regular supervision with The Town Clerk?			
Do your working hours at home comply with the current Working Time Regulations?			
Does the Town Clerk review your working from home arrangements with you at supervision or at EPDR (Employee Performance and Development Review)			
Are you aware of the requirement of the Council's Attendance Procedure that requires you to report any sickness, whether working from home or at any other work base?			
Do you have the opportunity to contact and meet with other team members as appropriate ('Home worker' work style employees only)?			

Do you have any other comments about your working conditions or any other health and safety concerns?

Employees signature:

Date:

Town Clerks Name:

Town Clerks Signature:

Date:

Please detail the action that is to be taken, if any, to address any issues highlighted in the assessment.