Homeworking Policy

Approved by:	Full Council Meeting – ref 109/24.1
Date adopted:	21 October 2024
Annual review date:	October 2026

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Policy Purpose:

This policy describes the working arrangements and expectations that will apply if you work from home.

1. Scope of this policy

1.1. It applies to all staff who are home based whether full-time, part-time or fixed term. It does not apply to office based staff who work from home on an ad-hoc basis. If you are considering whether to request home based working, please refer to the Flexible Working Policy.

2. Safe working environment

2.1. Health and safety for home based staff applies in the same way as office based staff, insofar as is reasonably practicable, that you work in a safe manner and that you follow all health and safety instructions issued by Meriden Parish Council.

2.2. You must complete and submit a 'Home Based Workers Risk Assessment' to the Clerk. This is a checklist for you to identify any possible hazards in your home working area. Following completion of the checklist, measures may need to be taken to control any risks identified. This checklist should be completed annually, or more frequently if there are any changes to your arrangements such as new equipment or changes to your home office space.

2.3. You will be offered a home Display Screen Equipment (DSE) assessment to ensure your home working station is correctly set up.

2.4. You must complete and submit a workstation risk assessment and ensure that this remains up-to-date. If you have any questions about the risk assessment, or if you identify any potential risks when carrying out the assessment, you should refer these to the Clerk in the first instance.

2.5. Some of the most important considerations include:

2.5.1. If possible, an area should be set aside form the rest of your living space to ensure that you are able to work from home without distractions,

2.5.2. Your home office should have adequate space for you to work safely and comfortably,

2.5.3. Your desk should be large enough to accommodate your equipment and paperwork,

2.5.4. You should have sufficient storage and your workspace should be organised so equipment is close to hand,

2.5.5. Your work area should be well lit, with natural lighting if possible,

2.5.6. Equipment and sockets should be situated to avoid potential trip hazards, and,

2.5.7. You must also ensure that you visually check the cables of any electronic equipment, supplied to you regularly (and at least every 6 months) and report any defects.

We reserve the right to visit you at home at agreed times for work related purposes, including health and safety matters and to inspect, service or repair equipment (e.g. for PAT testing).

3. Facilities and equipment

3.1. The Council will provide you with the following equipment for you to work from home and we will maintain and replace these items when necessary.

- 3.1.1. Desk,
- 3.1.2. Office chair
- 3.1.3. Filing cabinet (which will be lockable for those staff who hold personal data)
- 3.1.4. Printer/scanner/photocopier
- 3.1.5. Laptop computer, mouse, computer stand, keyboard
- 3.1.6. Mobile telephone

3.2. It is your duty to ensure that proper care is taken of the equipment provided to you and to let the Clerk know of any need to maintain or replace the equipment. Should the risk assessment identify any further equipment that is necessary, please discuss this with the Clerk.

3.3. All equipment provided by the Council is for you to work safely and effectively at home and cannot be used for personal use by you or your family.

3.4. All equipment will belong to the Council and you will be required to return it promptly on your last working day should you leave the Council's employment. If the Council is unable to make suitable arrangements for collection of items on your last working day, the equipment and any documents may be collected before your last day of employment.

4. Hours of work

4.1. As a home based worker, your contract of employment will specify the hours when we expect you to be at work and contactable by telephone or email. There may be times during the working day when you are not available in which case these should be flagged to the Clerk (or the Chair of the Council) with prior authorisation.

4.2. You must be mindful to take adequate rest breaks which should be, as a minimum:

- 4.2.1. A break of at least 20 minutes during each working day over 6 hours,
- 4.2.2. A daily rest break of at least 11 continuous hours, i.e. the time between stopping work one day and beginning work the next day, and,
- 4.2.3. At least one complete day each week when no work is done.

5. Potential conflicts of interest

5.1. During your hours of work, the Council expects that your work environment enables you to work effectively and that you are not distracted by domestic matters. It is not appropriate to combine homeworking with caring for a dependant.

5.2. If there is an emergency and you need to attend to a non-work matter, then you should notify the Clerk (see the Dependant Leave Policy).

6. Data protection

6.1. As a home worker you are responsible for keeping all documents and information associated with the Council secure at all times. Specifically, homeworkers are under a duty to:

6.1.1. Keep filing cabinets and drawers locked when they are not being used,

6.1.2. Keep all documentation belonging to the Council in the locked filing cabinet at all times except when in use,

6.1.3. Set up and use a unique password for the laptop computer, and,

6.1.4. Ensure that documents are saved to the server rather than the laptop computer's hard drive.

6.1.5. The laptop computer and other equipment provided by the Council must be used only for work related purposes and must not be used by any other member of the family at any time or for any purpose.

6.2 If you have a telephone conversation where you are discussing confidential work matters, you should ensure that such calls take place in privacy to avoid an inadvertent breach of confidentiality.

7. Visits to work premises

7.1. On occasions you may need to attend Council offices for training, performance assessment meetings, team briefings etc. This will normally not be frequent, and the dates and times of such visits will be agreed in advance.

8. Insurance, mortgage or rental agreements

8.1. Whilst the Council's Employer's Liability Insurance extends to home based staff, and any Council equipment installed in your home will also be covered, you should ensure that any agreement with your landlord or mortgage lender allows you to work from home, and that your house buildings and contents insurance will not be invalidated by you working from home.

8.2. This is a non-contractual procedure which will be reviewed from time to time.