

The Ivers Parish Council

FLEXI TIME AND COVID-19 HOME WORKING POLICY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Parish Council employees have been working to satisfy operational need and have, with managers' agreement, then taken 'time off in lieu'. This practice has worked well however with an increased workload and a continuing requirement for evening meetings, alongside the necessity of home working, a flexi time working policy and a Covid-19 home working policy are felt to be appropriate for this Council.

The flexi time system proposed enables employees, subject to certain conditions, to adjust their working hours according to operational need and personal demands. The aim is to improve the efficiency of the council and give flexibility to employees to factor in certain individual requirements.

A flexi time scheme provides for authorised time worked beyond the weekly contracted hours to be 'banked' as 'credit', and taken as time off within a specified period, to suit both the employee and the employer.

The second part of this policy looks to provide operational guidelines for operating under a home working arrangement. The UK government currently requires persons to work from home if they can do so and if it is appropriate. Guidelines have been released that set out operational requirements for return to work processes and risk assessments however the emphasis remains to work from home if possible and it is anticipated that this will continue for some time.

1.2 Posts to which this policy relates

1.2.1 The home working policy will relate to:

- Clerk
- Assistant Clerks
- Administrator
- Employees who are 'shielded' in accordance with government advice

1.2.2 It is proposed that all employees are offered an opportunity to work flexibly within operational and health and safety requirements. Currently the posts that undertake out of hours working are:

- Clerk
- Assistant Clerks
- Administrator

2.0 FLEXI TIME

Within the limits of the working day and core time, employees have the discretion to choose and/or vary their start and finish time. However, this is subject to general agreement with their line manager, whose responsibility it is to see that the council is adequately staffed during normal hours.

2.1 Working Day

The normal working day of The Ivers Parish Council is 0800 – 1700. All members of staff are required to take a lunch break of at least 30 minutes that does not count towards normal hours worked.

2.2 Core Time

During core time all members of staff will be at work unless otherwise stated in their contracts eg part time workers. These hours are from 1000 – 1200 and 1400 – 1500. It is important for home workers to be given clear guidelines for work hours that provide opportunity for their management of their home environment. Working at home can become very stressful if a quiet working environment cannot be maintained for the periods of work and the core time approach contained within this policy enables an employee greater flexibility to maintain a stress-free working environment at home.

2.2.1 Reception staff

Staff providing reception duties for the core opening hours of council are required to seek manager approval of any absence from the office. This will enable alternative arrangements for staffing to be made.

2.3 Flexi Period

A flexi (accounting) period is of one month duration with 12 flexi periods in a year. All relevant employees will complete flexi time sheets that will be submitted to the line manager for sign off at the end of the flexi period.

2.4 Time credit/debit

If an employee works more than their monthly contracted hours, this is a flexi time credit. A maximum of 8 hours' credit may be carried forward into the next flexi period, including into the next flexi year. If an employee works fewer than their weekly contracted hours, this is a flexi time debit. Flexi time debit is carried forward into the next flexi period, including into the next flexi year, and should not exceed 8 hours. Employees are responsible for ensuring that their flexi time accrued for carrying forward does not exceed the 8 hours and if they are having difficulty maintaining this then they must refer the issue to their line manager.

2.5 Taking flexi-time

Time off may be taken to use up flexi credit. Under normal circumstances, flexi time off will only be permitted if an employee is in flexi credit. Those employees in flexi credit may request one flexi day off in any one month flexi period - up to a maximum of 12 flexi days off per calendar year. In cases of demonstrated need, the line manager can agree to further time off within the flexi arrangements. All flexi time off requests will be submitted to the line manager using the leave request forms.

3.0 WORK OUTSIDE OF NORMAL WORKING DAY

Such time may be counted towards hours worked, providing that arrangements have been authorised in advance by the line manager and the hours spent on such work are recorded on the Council's flexi time sheet.

Employees may be required to attend meetings in the normal course of their work outside the limits of the working day. Hours spent attending the meeting and for required travel time will count towards working hours when agreed in advance by the line manager and will be recorded on the Council's flexi sheet.

4.0 MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS

It is expected that, when possible, employees on the flexi time system will make health-related appointments outside core time whenever possible. Flexi time can be taken to cover medical appointments (e.g. hospital appointments) and should be authorised in advance by the line manager.

5.0 SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR GROUNDS TEAM

It is not anticipated that the grounds team will complete flexitime recording sheets as the team work defined hours and do not complete out of hours working on a regular basis. It is proposed that the team operate within the concept of flexi working and, with permission of the line manager, are able to take time off for urgent matters such as medical appointments and then 'repay' the negative hours to the council as agreed with their line manager.

6.0 COVID-19 HOME WORKING

The arrival of Covid-19 necessitated the emergency introduction of home working for all office-based staff. At the current time home working is still encouraged however preparations have been made to provide socially distanced working within the council office and staff are able to undertake an amount of work from home.

The Council has provided a laptop to each office-based homeworker. All software and documents can be accessed online only and are not to be stored remotely. Home workers do not have access to double screens that are recommended for online working, nor printing and photocopying facilities. This system is not ideal however for the short term is an appropriate response of the Council to Covid-19 home working.

Following the release of lockdown and further government advice the council will continue to review the homeworking policy.

It is emphasised that, at this time and under the current arrangements, staff remain responsible for undertaking health and safety risk assessments in their homes and that the system remains in its current form until further detail and guidance is available from the government. If any staff member identifies concerns these must be raised with the line manager.