



# SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

## FLEXIBLE WORKING POLICY

### AIMS OF THE POLICY

The purpose of Shrewsbury Town Council's Flexible Working Policy is to lay out the process for staff who wish to apply for flexible working arrangements in order to undertake their employment.

### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Shrewsbury Town Council recognise that flexible working can play a critical role in helping staff achieve the right balance between their personal and work lives, promoting equality among the workforce, protecting staff health and delivering benefits to Shrewsbury Town Council, most notably through:

- Retention of valued and talented members of staff, thereby reducing recruitment costs;
- Improvement to staff productivity and commitment;
- Reduction in sickness absence;
- Recruitment from a wider talent pool of diverse skills.

Flexible working options available to staff will be publicised widely across Shrewsbury Town Council utilising the full range of communication channels available such as email, noticeboards, meetings etc.

To ensure that the scheme is applied fairly and consistently, management training will stress:

- The value of flexible working to the organisation;
- The objective criteria used to judge applications;
- The advanced planning methods needed to ensure that work schedules allow the scheme to function smoothly.

The scheme will be based on a presumption that flexible working options should apply to all roles, regardless of occupation or grade, unless a compelling case can be made to justify exclusion.

All staff will be able to request flexible working from the first day of their appointment.

Outside of the working hours applied in flexible working schemes, Shrewsbury Town Council recognises that staff have a "right to disconnect" from mobile phones, laptops etc. Therefore, during that time they have no responsibility to respond to communications unless it has been agreed by their line manager that a temporary emergency situation applies.

The scheme will be subject to monitoring and scheduled review on a regular basis. Review will take account of the scale and composition of take-up as well as consideration of systematic gathering of feedback from staff. Review will take account of the changing opportunities for flexible working that can often arise from the introduction of new technologies into Shrewsbury Town Council's operations.

When the scheme is revised, consideration will be given to piloting the new features for ironing out teething problems before full adoption.

Recognised unions will be involved in decision making throughout the planning, implementation, monitoring and revision of the scheme via the Joint Consultative Committee.

## **FLEXIBLE WORKING ON AN AD-HOC/DAY-TO-DAY BASIS**

Some members of staff are already working on a flexible basis day to day and this policy is not looking to disrupt these informal arrangements. We encourage managers to embrace flexible working and encourage staff to do the same where possible.

However, it is important to recognise that not all jobs are the same and some job roles won't be suitable for flexible hours or remote working based on the nature of the employee's responsibilities, for example grounds maintenance or face to face customer service. In this case, it may still be possible to work from home on occasion to focus on a specific task e.g. writing a report.

The key to flexible working being successful is:

- Ensuring that there is appropriate cover. Depending on the department this could include: assigning a deputy to manage in your absence, asking a colleague to attend a meeting on your behalf, ensuring at least one member of the team is available during core hours.
- For managers to judge their staff based on their output and outcomes, not how often they are present at their desk. However, employees will still be expected to work their contracted hours.
- Effective communication: in particular, everyone keeping their electronic calendars updated and being contactable by phone if working out of the office.
- Recognising that staff have commitments that need to fit around work e.g., hospital appointments, family commitments.
- Recognising that working patterns could be affected by seasonal demand e.g., busier during summer/winter.

## **FORMAL FLEXIBLE WORKING OPTIONS**

The range of flexible working options that will be made available to staff will be as follows:

### **1. Part-time working**

Consideration of fulfilling a role on a part-time basis, where part-time working is taken to mean a contract based on less than 30 hours a week

### **2. Flexitime**

As prescribed in the Flexi-Time Policy (please see this policy for full details).

### **3. Job sharing**

Consideration will be given to allowing two staff to fulfil a single full-time role by sharing the hours between them.

### **4. Compressed hours**

Consideration will be given to allowing staff to follow a regular working pattern of extended hours in order to meet their contracted hours over a shorter time period and allow additional regular non-working days.

The most typical arrangement will be working the contracted hours for 10 days over nine and so allowing the tenth day to be taken as leave.

## **5. Home working**

Consideration will be given by a line manager to allow staff to work from home on both a regular cycle and an ad-hoc basis as work / personal demands permit.

## **6. Term-time working**

Consideration will be given to allowing staff to work solely during the term times of their dependants.

## **7. Temporary arrangements**

Consideration will be given to allowing staff to drop their hours for a temporary period while setting a clear date for returning to a standard working week.

## **PROCEDURE FOR HANDLING FLEXIBLE WORKING REQUESTS**

Staff requesting a flexible working arrangement shall set out their application in writing to the line manager, with a duplicate going to the HR Team.

The application shall state the date of the request, whether any previous application has been made (with the date of that application) and what change to working conditions is being sought.

The request shall state if it is being made on the basis of fulfilling the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 as a reasonable adjustment.

A meeting shall be held with the member of staff to discuss the request within 28 days.

The purpose of the meeting will be to clarify how the arrangement may work and consider compromises / alternatives if the request is problematic.

If the employer refuses the request they should confirm that in writing giving clear reasons for the refusal, based on one of these factors:

- Additional cost;
- Inability to reorganise work among existing staff;
- Inability to recruit additional staff;
- Detrimental impact on quality;
- Detrimental impact on performance;
- Insufficient work for the proposed periods of work.

A decision will be communicated to the member of staff within 14 days of the meeting at the latest.

The member of staff will be able to appeal a decision by setting out their reason for appeal in writing to the HR Team, who will then appoint a different senior manager to the line manager to consider the appeal.

An appeal meeting will be held within 14 days of receipt of the application and the final decision will be communicated to the member of staff in writing within 14 days.

Accompaniment by a trade union representative or another member of staff should be permitted at all meetings throughout the process.

Members of staff should be made aware that any request that is accepted will make a permanent change to the employment contract, so consideration will be given to trialling an arrangement if the employee is uncertain, with a review to be held at the end of the trial period.

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| <b>Approved by Personnel Committee</b> | <b>7 December 2023</b> |
| <b>Adopted by Council</b>              |                        |
| <b>Review Date</b>                     |                        |