
Flexible Working Policy

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils





Change Record

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1 Vision and Values

Our Vision

We are customer focused and approachable. We are honest and open and are committed to providing high quality cost-effective public services.

Our Values



Working Together

We are a committed professional team, who embrace change and help one another improve



People and Planet

We care about each other and the environment we share



Respect

We act with integrity, and champion diversity and inclusivity



Accountability

We take ownership, do what we say, strive for clarity and welcome feedback



Approachability

We are open, honest and accessible



2 Introduction

2.1 Purpose

Our flexible working policy outlines the provision for employees who want to request a change to their working hours (number of hours, start/end times), where they work, days, or weeks they work. This is a statutory request made under the flexible working regulations and is different to South & Vale's annualised hours scheme which is a local policy to allow day to day flexibility to manage work/life balance.

2.2 Scope

This Policy applies to all permanent and temporary employees of the councils excluding Contractors/Agency Workers who are the employees of third parties.

The councils reserve the right to revise, withdraw or replace policies at any time and to introduce new policies from time to time to reflect the changing needs of the organisations.

This policy document supersedes any previously existing or alternative policies, agreements or arrangements relating to flexible working at the councils.

2.3 Contractual Status

This policy forms part of your contract of employment. The councils are entitled to introduce minor and non-fundamental changes to this policy by notifying you of these changes in writing. The council will consult all employees on any major changes to the policy.

2.4 Relevant legislation

- Employment Rights (Flexible Working) Act 2023
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Flexible Working Regulations 2014 (SI 2014/1398)
- General Data Protection Regulation (2016/679 EU)
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010



2.5 Alternative formats

Please do not hesitate to contact a member of the People & Culture Team if you would like this policy in an alternative format. Email: equalities@southandvale.gov.uk



3 Policy

3.1 Introduction

The councils believe that flexible working can increase staff motivation, promote work-life balance, reduce employee stress, improve health and wellbeing, make employment more accessible, improve staff retention and recruitment, create more diverse and inclusive workplaces, and improve performance and productivity.

3.2 What is flexible working?

Flexible working covers a wide variety of working arrangements that can provide flexibility on how long, where and when you work. The councils recognise that there may be many forms of flexible working arrangements which can meet the needs of both the councils and staff. Some examples of flexible working include:

- Starting work early / finishing early
- Compressed hours
- Job-sharing
- Part-time working
- Term-time working
- Requesting a change in working hours

3.3 Who can work flexibly?

The councils will consider informal and formal flexible working requests for all employees from the first day of their employment.

In this policy you will find out more information about the options available, how to apply for a flexible working arrangement, the process you will go through and answers to the questions you may have.



3.4 Making an Informal flexible working request

Most flexible working arrangements are agreed informally between an employee and their manager. You may agree a change of working pattern with your manager either on a temporary or permanent basis. Your manager will advise the People & Culture team to ensure your centralised records are up to date. You will receive confirmation in writing and your terms and conditions will be altered as appropriate.

3.5 Making a formal flexible working request

If you prefer, you are also entitled to make a formal flexible working request. To make the request, you need to put it in writing to your manager what you are requesting including setting out the date of your request, the date you wish the change to be effective from and if and when a previous request was made. You may make two formal working requests in any rolling twelve-month period. The councils' response to any flexible working requests, including any appeal process, will be communicated to the employee no later than 2 months from the date of request although we aim to make decisions as quickly as possible and not have undue delays.

3.6 Appealing the flexible working decision

If your flexible working request has not been approved, you may appeal the decision by setting out your reasons for appeal in writing to the People & Culture Team within ten working days of being informed of the decision. In the event of illness, absence, or unforeseen causing delays in submitting your appeal an extension to the deadlines may be approved by your Head of Service and People and Culture Manager.

3.7 Withdrawing a flexible working request

You can withdraw an informal or formal flexible working request by writing to your manager. In the event that you do not attend scheduled meetings you are invited to for discussions regarding your request without good reason, either at the initial decision stage or an appeal stage, the councils may treat the application as having been withdrawn by you. The councils must notify you that it has decided to treat your lack of engagement as a withdrawal of the application.



4 Process

4.1 Process for making an informal flexible working request.

You will need to discuss and agree any informal flexible working request with your manager. Your manager will need to inform the People & Culture team of changes to working patterns and hours as this may have an impact on terms and conditions such as pay or holiday calculations. You will receive confirmation of your new working agreement in writing and your terms and conditions will be altered as appropriate.

4.2 Process for making a formal flexible working request.

All formal flexible working requests must be sent to your manager using the flexible working application form, and include:

- your personal details
- the date of the application
- details of the proposed flexible working pattern
- the date from when you would like the proposed change to come into effect.
- whether a previous application for flexible working has been made
- the dates of any previous applications

Your manager will arrange a meeting with you to consider the proposed flexible working arrangements, looking at the potential benefits, and any potential adverse effects, to you and to the councils in implementing the proposed changes. The meeting will normally be within ten working days of receipt of a request. In the event of illness, absence, or unforeseen causing delays in having a meeting, an extension to the deadlines may be approved agreed by the People and Culture Manager. The aim is to facilitate a conversation at the earliest opportunity to consider the request without undue delay.

Your manager will chair the meeting, a HR representative will take notes and you have the right to be accompanied by a colleague or trade union representative (and an interpreter or signer if required). During the meeting, your manager will:

- discuss the request and the reasons for making the request e.g. change in personal circumstances.



- find out more about the proposed working arrangements.
- how it could be of benefit to both the employee and organisation
- consider and discuss alternative options where the original request cannot be accepted in full.
- consider the impact of accepting or rejecting the request.
- potential trial periods

Your manager should inform you of the outcome of the flexible working request verbally and then confirm this in writing to you normally within ten working days of the meeting. The request may be granted in full, in part, or refused. The councils may propose a modified version of the request, the request may be granted on a temporary basis, or you may be asked to try the flexible working arrangement for a trial period. If the request is agreed, then you will be sent a confirmation letter which will include details of the new arrangements, the opportunity to clarify any further information required, dates for reviewing how the arrangement is working. The flexible working request may be rejected for one of the following reasons:

- the burden of additional costs associated with the proposed arrangement.
- an inability to reorganise work amongst existing staff.
- an inability to recruit additional staff.
- a detrimental impact on quality of the service provided to customers/service users.
- a detrimental impact on performance
- a detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand.
- insufficient work available for the periods the employee proposes to work.
- planned structural changes to the councils' business.

If your manager receives more than one formal flexible working request within the team, they should be considered in the order they are received. Your manager is not expected to make a judgement about the most deserving request but should look at each one on its merit. Your manager may choose to talk to everyone who has put in a request to see if there is any room for adjustment or compromise before deciding. Your manager may be unable to approve a request if there are already other members of the team with flexible working arrangements and the proposed working pattern would impact adversely on the team and its ability to deliver a service.

Each flexible working request will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Agreeing to one request will not set a precedent or create the right for another employee to be granted a similar change to their working pattern.



4.3 Right to appeal decision

You have the right to appeal the decision if your request is refused or is only agreed in part.

You may lodge an appeal within ten working days of being notified of a decision on your application. This should be done in writing and clearly state the grounds on which you are appealing. The appeal hearing will usually be heard within ten working days. In the event of illness, absence, or unforeseen causing delays in submitting your appeal, an extension to the deadlines may be approved by your Head of Service and People and Culture Manager.

You:

- will receive an invite to an appeal hearing stating the time and place of the hearing and will be given at least five working days' notice of when the meeting is scheduled to take place. In the event of illness, absence or unforeseen circumstances the meeting can be rescheduled.
- will be informed who will chair the appeal hearing (normally your indirect manager i.e., your manager's manager)
- will be informed that you have the right to be accompanied by a colleague or trade union representative at the appeal hearing (and an interpreter or signer if required)
- will be required to submit any documents supporting your appeal at least two working days in advance of the hearing so that these documents can be referred to in the hearing.

You will then be informed of the outcome of their appeal within ten working days of the appeal meeting (or as soon as possible after this if there is a legitimate reason why the meeting cannot be held within ten working days such as absence due to holiday).

The chair conducting the appeal hearing has the authority to uphold or reject the appeal and their decision is final. The chair will inform the employee of the outcome verbally and will also confirm this in writing, within ten working days of the appeal hearing.

4.4 Trialling new working arrangements

Where there is some uncertainty about whether the flexible working arrangement is practicable for an you and/or the councils a trial period may be agreed. If a trial period is arranged the organisation will allow sufficient time for you and your manager to implement and become used to the new working practices before taking any decisions on the viability of the arrangement and whether it can be a permanent change.



Where a trial period has been arranged the councils will provide you with written confirmation of your new working pattern and state that this is a temporary variation to the terms of your contract. You will be informed in writing of the start and end dates of the trial period (although the councils may reduce or lengthen the trial period where necessary with your agreement). The councils will reserve the right, at the end of the agreed trial period, to require you to revert to their previous working arrangement and will provide a reason for this.

4.5 Varying an employee's contract

Where flexible working practices are agreed as a permanent change, a variation will need to be made to your contract of employment. A change to terms and conditions letter will be sent to you within ten working days of the change to your working pattern being agreed.

If you have any questions or concerns about your updated terms or conditions, you should contact the People & Culture team to discuss the matter further.



5 Appendix

5.1 Request for Flexible Working Form

Form for making a request for flexible working	
Employee Name:	
Team Name:	
Service Area:	
<u>You may make two formal working requests in any rolling twelve-month period.</u>	
Date form submitted:	
Previous applications for flexible working	
Have you submitted a previous request for flexible working? (If yes, please answer the next question.)	Yes/No
When did you submit your last request for flexible working?	Insert Date
Have you submitted any additional flexible working requests within the last twelve-months?	Yes/No
When did you submit this flexible working?	Insert Date



I wish to submit a formal request for flexible working as detailed below.

Please set out the pattern of working that you are seeking. For example, if you wish to change your hours of work, please state what your current hours are and what you would like your new hours to be.

I would like the above change(s) to my working pattern to take effect on:

Insert Date

The councils' response to any flexible working requests including any appeal, will be received by the employee no later than two months from the date of request.

Once you have submitted a valid application for flexible working, the councils will contact you to arrange a meeting, which will take place within ten working days of the application being submitted, to discuss how the pattern of working you have requested might be made to work. If your request is granted, it will mean a permanent change to the terms and conditions of your employment, unless agreed otherwise.

It will help us to deal with your application if you provide as much information as you can about your desired working pattern.

Signed:

Date:

Please now email a copy of this completed form to your line manager and hr@southandvale.gov.uk.



Manager Comments.			
Outcome:	Approved/Rejected		
Manager Signature:		Date:	
HR Business Partner Signature:		Date:	