

# Staff Consultative Panel



<b>Title</b>	<b>Agenda</b>														
<b>Date</b>	<b>Monday 15 November 2021</b>														
<b>Time</b>	<b>3.00 pm</b>														
<b>Venue</b>	<b>Facilitated by Microsoft Teams virtual meetings platform only. Members and Officers attending this meeting are requested to see their separate Outlook meeting invitation to join the meeting.</b>														
<b>Full Members</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Chair</b> To be appointed by the Panel <b>Vice Chair</b> To be appointed by the Panel</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%;"></td> <td style="width: 33%; text-align: center;"><b>West Suffolk Council (7)</b> (Employer's side)</td> <td style="width: 33%; text-align: center;"><b>Staff Representatives (7)</b> (Employees' side)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Conservative Group (5)</b></td> <td>Carol Bull John Griffiths James Lay Birgitte Mager David Nettleton</td> <td>Lizzi Cocker Paul Davison Penny Mills (Vacancy) (Vacancy) (Vacancy)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>The Independent Group (1)</b></td> <td>Ian Shipp</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Labour Group (1)</b></td> <td>David Smith</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>				<b>West Suffolk Council (7)</b> (Employer's side)	<b>Staff Representatives (7)</b> (Employees' side)	<b>Conservative Group (5)</b>	Carol Bull John Griffiths James Lay Birgitte Mager David Nettleton	Lizzi Cocker Paul Davison Penny Mills (Vacancy) (Vacancy) (Vacancy)	<b>The Independent Group (1)</b>	Ian Shipp		<b>Labour Group (1)</b>	David Smith	
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<b>Note: This panel is not governed by the normal Access to Information rules (The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012) in the Council. Therefore, these meetings are not open to attendance by the public.</b>															
<b>Interests – declaration and restriction on participation</b>	Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any disclosable pecuniary interest not entered in the Authority's register or local non pecuniary interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda (subject to the exception for sensitive information) and to leave the meeting prior to discussion and voting on an item in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest.														

<b>Quorum</b>	Four members, comprising at least two employee representatives and two members of the council.
<b>Committee administrator</b>	<b>Sharon Turner</b> Democratic Services Officer <b>Telephone</b> 01638 719237 <b>Email</b> <a href="mailto:sharon.turner@westsuffolk.gov.uk">sharon.turner@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a>

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## Agenda

**Note: Whilst these agenda papers are not covered by the normal Access to Information Rules (see agenda front), where items are listed as containing exempt/confidential information, members of the Panel are requested to treat them as such.**

### 1. Substitutes

Any member (which includes councillors and staff representatives) who is substituting for another member should so indicate, together with the name of the relevant absent member.

### 2. Election of Chair: 2021/2022

The approved Terms of Reference for the Staff Consultative Panel requires that the Chair of the Panel shall be rotated between the Employer's and Employees' Sides. When the Chair is a Member of one side of the Panel, the Vice Chair shall be a Member of the other side.

In 2021/2022, the Chair is required to be elected from the Employees' Side.

Therefore, the Panel is requested to **ELECT** a Chair in accordance with this arrangement.

### 3. Election of Vice Chair: 2021/2022

The approved Terms of Reference for the Staff Consultative Panel requires that the Vice Chair shall alternate between the Employer's and the Employees' Sides.

As the Chair of the Panel shall be from the Employees' Side in 2021/2022, the Vice Chair is required to be elected from the Employer's Side.

The Panel is requested to **ELECT** a Vice Chair in accordance with this arrangement.

### 4. Apologies for absence

### 5. Minutes

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 29 March 2021 (attached).

- 6. Workforce Data Overview (Presentation)** **9 - 10**  
To receive an overview of the Council's workforce data.
- 7. COVID-19 Update (Presentation)** **11 - 12**  
To receive an update on managing data, managing the Offices and the ending of the Government's Furlough Scheme
- 8. West Suffolk Workforce Strategy Update (Presentation/attached)** **13 - 50**  
To receive an update on Learning and Development, Agile Working, the Intern Programme and the supporting of the Council's workforce.
- 9. Dates of future meetings**  
The following dates for future meetings of the Panel are listed below. All dates are Mondays starting at 3pm. The venue will be determined nearer the time of each meeting:
- Monday 31 January 2022
  - Monday 28 March 2022

# Staff Consultative Panel

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **Staff Consultative Panel** held virtually via MS Teams remote meeting platform on **Monday 29 March 2021** at **3.00 pm**.

Present: **Councillors**

**Chair** David Nettleton (Employer's Side)

**Vice Chair** Mark Johnson (Employees' side)

**Members (employer's side)**

Carol Bull

John Griffiths

James Lay

Clive Springett

Ian Shipp

David Smith

**Substitutes attending for a staff representative (employees' side)**

Richard Smith

27. **Substitutes**

The following substitution was declared:

Richard Smith was substituting for Julie Roberts (Employees' side).

28. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Lizzi Cocker, Penny Mills and Julie Roberts (Employees' Side).

29. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

30. **Workforce Overview (verbal)**

The Service Manager (Human Resources and Organisational Development) presented this item which provided a 'snapshot' of the West Suffolk Workforce Data as at 31 January 2020 and 31 December 2020.

The Panel discussed the data presented. Since the last update to the Panel, it was noted that there had been very little change to the Headcount and Full Time Equivalent (FTE) data. It was noted that the main differences in the data related to turnover, which had reduced to 6.11% (from 9.14%). This reduction was mainly attributed to the pandemic. The Council had continued to recruit throughout the last year via virtual processes. The stability of the

workforce was recognised, along with the support which the Council had provided to staff during the pandemic.

A further point of note was the reduction in sickness absence, which was at its lowest average of 5.19 days. Again, it was acknowledged that this may be due to much of the workforce continuing to work from home, which meant that they were able to work more flexibly around their sickness.

With there being no decision required, the Panel **noted** the update.

### 31. **COVID-19 Update (Verbal)**

The Service Manager (Human Resources and Organisational Development) provided the Panel with an update on how the Council was managing the effects of COVID-19 on its own workforce. The update covered the following areas:

#### - **Managing Vulnerability**

The Council continued to support its staff, who had been vulnerable due to health conditions, to work from home and had re-allocated tasks to others. Support was also provided to those staff who could not work from home and had to remain at home. During the third period of lockdown the Council had continued to support and work with staff, particularly with those who were advised that they were clinically extremely vulnerable.

As of 1 April 2021, those who had been advised to stay at home and could not work would be returning to roles which adhered to strict social distancing guidance.

#### - **Annual Leave Management**

Managing leave had been very well managed by staff who had engaged with the approach to taking leave throughout the year, with designated amounts of leave being taken for certain periods. A guide was set that all staff should have taken 17 days leave by the end of January 2021, with the normal ability to be able to carry forward the usual five days. Therefore, staff would not be carrying forward excessive amounts of leave into 2021/22.

#### - **Furlough Job Retention Scheme**

The Council had continued to operate the Furlough Job Retention Scheme, but only for those jobs which were income funded. Opportunities had been taken to flexibly furlough/redeploy staff where able to do so. The number of staff on Furlough would diminish alongside the Government's roadmap guidance.

#### - **COVID-19 Testing**

Staff working in the Offices were being encouraged to undertake lateral flow testing twice a week. A lateral flowing testing provision was also being provided, twice a week, at the West Suffolk Operational Hub. Unfortunately, it was not possible to roll this service out to the Council's smaller depots, as there were insufficient numbers of staff to be able to support this.

With there being no decision required, the Panel **noted** the update.

### 32. **West Suffolk Workforce Strategy Update (verbal)**

The Service Manager (Human Resources and Organisational Development) reported on the following actions within the strategic priorities of the West Suffolk Workforce Strategy:

- **Learning and Development**  
The corporate training programme continued to be provided by virtual learning, with a greater number of on-line courses and training being made available to staff, for example, via 'Watch and Go' videos and free HM Government digital courses on a range of topics. With the current challenges around providing learning and development, staff had taken the opportunity to upskill and take responsibility for their own learning and development and had engaged in the different offers now available.
- **Equality and Diversity**  
The local authorities across Suffolk had also been working together to deliver Equality and Diversity programmes/training. Work was in progress to finalise a video, which had been collectively developed, which highlighted some of the thinking and understanding around unconscious bias and stereotypical issues. Once available, the link to this video would be shared with the Panel.
- **Recruitment**  
The recruitment process continued to be supported, with virtual recruitment being rolled out at all levels. A virtual Assessment Centre would be held on 31 March 2021 for recruitment to the forthcoming intern programme.
- **Redeployment and Secondments**  
The approach to the utilisation of using the Council's own staff in redeployment and secondment had continued. This had mainly been in the provision of the response to Government initiatives and had also been used for other areas of service demand. The Council was also part of a Suffolk-wide resourcing cell, which met regularly to discuss and share resource demand for all parts of the sector, where able to do so.
- **Networking**  
The level of networking across the Suffolk councils had enabled a strong focus on collective responses to some of the issues being experienced and had been invaluable during the current challenges.

In addition, the focus on health and wellbeing of the staff continued to be embraced and the Panel were also provided with an update on some of the health and wellbeing initiatives within the Council, which had centred around:

- Group support sessions
- Parent and carer support group
- Home and working alone support group
- Anglia Revenues Partnership support group (for those dealing with vulnerable and distressed clients)

- E-module training on suicide prevention
- Mental health support
- Domestic abuse awareness training/champions
- Joint pain advisors, including desk physio

The Panel also acknowledged the amount of work which had been undertaken with regards to the health and wellbeing support for staff.

With there being no decision required, the Panel **noted** the update.

### 33. **Health and Well-being Update (verbal)**

The Assistant Director (Human Resources, Legal & Democratic) provided a presentation to the Panel which outlined the findings from the West Suffolk Wellbeing Pulse Survey which had been undertaken in Autumn 2020 across the whole organisation. The Survey had covered the areas of:

- Workload and productivity
- Work life balance and wellbeing
- Working with others
- Feeling supported
- Working at home

There had been a 51% completion rate of the Survey across the organisation and a summary of the findings were:

- Wellbeing across the organisation was generally positive with regards to how people felt about the contribution they made to the organisation
- A mixed view around acceptable workload levels and how productive people felt.
- As was to be expected, staff had found working during a pandemic challenging and stressful.
- Mixed response with regards to effects on work life balance and wellbeing.
- Positive results with regards to feeling supported by others and management, but mixed response in how well staff felt listened to.
- Working from home had impacted on how people felt about their physical health and how well they were able to stay connected.
- Mixed response on the usefulness of the wellbeing initiatives which had been provided by the Council.

The main points to note/consider centred around:

- People felt engaged with the work and felt that their work was worthwhile and that there was a strong sense of support and positive relationships.
- There were a number of areas where personal responsibility needed to be embedded and leadership skills developed to support staff (ie wellbeing, workload, stress management).
- A need for on-going corporate wellbeing initiatives, working on cultural shift around ownership.
- Monitoring of workloads and resilience.
- Communication and engagement on working to a new 'normal'.

The staff also suggested various areas for improvement on:

- Future working practices and returning back to the office.
- Continued information on safe working practices and PPE.
- Leadership culture.
- On-going connectivity and leadership communications and continuation of opportunities to talk about wellbeing and stress.
- Support for teams where COVID-19 had increased their workload.

As was expected, there were various warnings signs raised within the Survey, which related to personal resilience, workloads, stress management and the continual need to connect and communicate.

Following on from this Survey, the organisation had responded by:

- Granting an additional day's leave (wellbeing day).
- Establishing Health and Wellbeing staff network/Wellbeing Champions to support the wellbeing programme.
- Organisation wide and leadership specific sessions.
- Responding to lockdown roadmap and plans for return to offices.
- Managers encouraged to review their service reports, develop team action plans and to have regular discussions on wellbeing.
- The HR Team were also undertaking various initiatives in response to the Survey, which included health and wellbeing initiatives, ways of working and training.

The Survey was currently being re-run and would close on 1 April 2021.

The Panel acknowledged the results from the Survey and the work which was being undertaken to try to address some of the issues identified. It would be particularly important to be aware of the warning signs which had been raised.

With there being no decision required, the Panel **noted** the update.

#### 34. **Organisational Development Update (verbal)**

The Assistant Director (Human Resources, Legal & Democratic) provided a presentation to the Panel, which outlined the work being undertaken on the roadmap on returning back to the office (*#Work is an activity I do, rather than a place I go*).

It was anticipated that by 21 June 2021, COVID safe working practices would be revised in terms of the restrictions on social distancing and the impact on safe working practices in offices. This would mean that the office-based staff could transition from the current home working requirement to new agile ways of working. However, whilst planning for staff being able to return to offices in June 2021, this would be under review in accordance with the Government's timeframe for moving out of lockdown.

It was explained to the Panel about working differently in the future. It seemed that staff were looking for the following from their working environment:

- A hybrid working approach between home and office
- Ensuring the office provided social interaction and collaborative space
- A working environment that supported wellbeing and mental health

Home working would continue to be an important part of how the Council worked in the future. An agile working framework would be developed, along with ensuring the supporting of health and safety and data protection aspects of longer-term home working. The guidance would be reviewed as the roadmap was developed for future ways of working. There would be no fixed approach for how staff managed the balance between working at home and coming into the office. This would be left to the individuals and their managers to determine.

With regards to the redesigning of the desk space at West Suffolk House, there were plans to reduce the number of fixed desks available for staff. With the removal of these desks, there would be the opportunity for the creation of a flexible, collaborative working space for teams to utilise. Members would also be able to use these desks and participate in the collaborative working spaces.

The Panel also discussed the ability of continuing to hold virtual meetings, as the legislation was only in place until 6 May 2021. A Legal Challenge had been lodged with the High Court. However, if this legislation was not extended beyond this date, then plans would have to be formulated to the holding of Committee/Council meetings, in person, in a COVID safe environment.

With there being no decision required, the Panel **noted** the presentation.

### 35. **Dates of future meetings**

The Panel noted the dates for future meetings, as listed below. All dates were Mondays starting at 3pm. The venues would be determined nearer to each meeting:

- Monday 19 July 2021
- Monday 15 November 2021
- Monday 31 January 2022
- Monday 28 March 2022

Prior to the conclusion of the meeting, it was also reported that Mark Johnson (Vice Chair) would be retiring from the Council on 16 April 2021. Therefore, the Panel and Officers thanked Mark for all the work which he had undertaken in his role as UNISON Branch Chair and wished him well in his retirement. Mark thanked the Panel and Officers for their good wishes and expressed the importance of the work of UNISON within the Council, including having discussions with Members at these meetings.

The meeting concluded at 4.17 pm

**Signed by:**

**Chair**

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## Workforce Overview



	As of 31/12/2020	As of 30/09/2021
<b>Headcount (All)</b>	722	703
<b>FTE (All)</b>	670.65	649.52
<b>Headcount (Permanent)</b>	656	651
<b>FTE (permanent)</b>	608.78	603.05
<b>Full-Time v Part-Time</b>	79.09% / 20.91%	78.09% / 21.91%
<b>Average age</b>	45.4	45.8
<b>Gender</b>	49.86% male 50.14% female	50.64% male 49.36% female
<b>Turnover</b>	6.11%	10.46%
<b>Total days lost due to absence</b>	3432.32	3548.48
<b>Average days absence per FTE</b>	5.19	5.35
<b>Short term absence (days)</b>	1791.00	1778.37
<b>Long term absence (days)</b>	1641.32	1770.11

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# Covid-19 update



- Managing Covid data
- Managing the offices
- The end of furloughing

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# Workforce Strategy Updates



- Learning & Development
- Agile Working
- Intern programme



# Workforce Strategy - Interns

- *What I have loved the most about the internship is that all members of staff make you feel part on the team and the Council as a whole. I would thoroughly recommend the internship as I have had the most wonderful experience.*
- *The projects that I have worked on have not just interested me but also positively challenged me. I have had the opportunity to work on some extremely exciting projects, which I have loved every moment of*
- *It was good to work with the other interns on the group intern project about climate change and deliver a project which will be operational throughout West Suffolk Council.*
- *Really enjoyed my time working with the team. Whenever I have needed help, someone has always been there to assist or have a Teams meeting with. Everyone has been incredibly friendly and easy to get on with and work alongside*
- *I have really enjoyed this internship and I would recommend it to anyone who asked. The team have a reputation for being very friendly and a good team to be an intern in and they definitely lived up to this reputation*
- *I have gained many skills from this internship from both my day-to-day work and the training sessions I have been involved in, which will be very helpful in my degree and my future career*

# Workforce Strategy Updates



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- Parent & Carer Support Group
- New Norm Support Group
- Salary Finance/Cushon
- Staff awards
- Domestic Abuse Awareness/ 6 trained Champions
- Staff pulse survey
- Desk Physio and Exercise
- Pilates

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## **Learning and Development Update**

### **Bailey & French**

We have continued with the sessions we have offered since last year facilitated by Bailey & French. We continue to get excellent attendance at these online sessions and good participation and feedback. The sessions enable the connectivity across the council which is so important.

We have three autumn workshops and so far have delivered Module 1 and 2:-

- Module 1: Building Resilience - understand the benefits of resilience for both performance and wellbeing, such as improved goal attainment and reduced anxiety. Explore the relationship between stress, emotional intelligence, and resilience, understanding how building emotional intelligence can help us to remain resilient in the face of challenges.
- Module 2: Building Team Cohesion - focus on how we address challenges positively together, looking at the opportunities that change presents for individual, team, and organisational development. Introduce a number of approaches and techniques that can help us to meet challenges positively together.
- Module 3: Building Connectivity - explore how to build High Quality Connections (HQCs) with colleagues across the organisation, to support both performance and wellbeing. Introduce practical actions that we can all take to foster HQCs, including active constructive responding and task enabling.

These three areas are key to supporting agile ways of working, to make sure we take care of ourselves, to ensure we continue with a strong team ethic and to maintain relationships across the Council, not just in our own teams, something which becomes more challenging when working in different locations.

### **Leading Together**

We have introduced a new programme called Leading Together which focuses on our commitment to develop our managers, leaders, supervisors at all levels, supporting them to build their knowledge and skills. We need our managers to help continue to build an engaged and energised workforce where different ideas are valued, empowering, and trusting in staff to deliver, and being inclusive in all we do.

We have identified key leadership behaviours: -

Be authentic  
Be visible  
Engage with others to understand  
Lead with integrity  
Be enquiring and challenging

In order to support managers and leaders in a consistent approach we require them to engage and complete the "Watch & Go Management Essentials pathways" (a

series of videos which are connected through their themes) and also attend three workshops before their final PDR in September 2022.

The three workshops focus on

- Manager as a coach
- Leading and supporting change
- Storytelling

We will continue to tailor select future topics to the needs of the organisation.

### **Manager Peer Support Group**

On Thursday 4 November 2021, we held our first Manager Peer Support Group. A network set up for managers at all levels across the whole of the Council up to Service Manager, to come together and form a networking group who can support each other, and feel connected with other managers, those who they may not necessarily normally come into contact with. The focus being to create a group who can share ideas, issues, find solutions, ask advice, buddy up with others and discuss day to day problems with others who may have experienced similar situations. It is also an opportunity to support good communication from top down to a large number of managers, team leaders and supervisors.

### **New Take Time to Learn**

in our approach to embed a learning culture we have introduced Take Time to Learn. This approach focuses on continuous learning, encouraging our staff to take responsibility and accountability for their own learning, as well as the corporate offer of training. All staff are required to commit a minimum of one hour learning per month to new skills, updating current skills, sharing knowledge and experience with others – this can be through completing mandatory e-learning, recording continuous professional development, watching a webinar, reading an article, sharing information with others.

This will be further embedded by discussion through the PDR process and regular 121s to support staff on what training they have undertaken during the review period.

## **Agile working – staff guide**

**April 2021**

**Work is an activity we do, rather than a place we go**

Contact: HR, Legal and Democratic Services  
Email: [jennifer.eves@westsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:jennifer.eves@westsuffolk.gov.uk)

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 West Suffolk Council is committed to ensuring its workforce feels supported and valued and is recognised as being key to enable the council to deliver its aspirations.
- 1.2 Like most public sector organisations, we are going through a period of significant change. COVID-19 has enabled us to consider new ways of working and take every opportunity to assess how agile working can be at the heart of transforming the way we deliver our services both efficiently and effectively, balancing this with supporting the health and wellbeing of our workforce.
- 1.3 This guide has been developed to provide information on how to introduce agile working practices and address some of the common questions and challenges staff may face in developing more agile ways of working, supporting the transition to new ways of working across the workforce as the council further develops West Suffolk 2025 plans.
- 1.4 This staff guide should be read in conjunction with the full 'Agile working guide'.

## **2. Aim and benefits**

- 2.1 Our aim is to improve service delivery by changing the way we work and where we work (work is an activity we do, rather than a place we go). A culture change where we encourage and support where you work and empower you to challenge the way you work will bring about the following benefits:
  - allow us to focus time and money on services, not buildings, to ensure delivering services takes priority over occupying buildings and redesign and repurpose office space for the most cost effective use
  - focus our work on outcomes rather than processes
  - reduce unnecessary travel time, which in turn will increase productivity and reduce cost
  - create an environment which allows you to achieve an improved work life balance, encourages collaboration and innovation and provides greater job satisfaction, motivation, morale and productivity
  - lower our carbon footprint, through reduced emissions from reduced travel
  - improve the recruitment and retention of skilled and experienced employees by offering a range of work styles to match individual work preferences
  - reduce absenteeism and related costs.

### 3. Principles

3.1 We will support you to work to the following principles aligned to our approach to agile working:

Culture	The most successful agile working arrangements are built on a culture of trust and responsibility. Building trust in an agile working team can sometimes involve meeting several challenges that, with planning, openness, honesty and good communication, can be overcome.
Manage by performance	Staff will be managed by performance and outcomes rather than presenteeism, with clear and realistic objectives agreed between an employee and their manager, using goal setting managed through one-to-ones and performance review meetings.
Mutual agreement	The need for staff to come into the office is a two-way relationship and requires a balance between both an individual and the organisational need. Managers have a pivotal role in helping their teams shift to new ways of working and communicating with their teams, but individuals also need to take ownership and exercise their judgement on selecting the best place to work.
Availability of agile working	Flexibility in the way we work will be the norm rather than the exception and our staff will be encouraged and supported to work this way. However, teams will identify those who need a regular presence in the office for operational, personal or health reasons.
Effective place of work	Work will take place at the most effective location, taking into account the tasks to be undertaken and the customer, individual and team needs.
Updating individual availability	Staff will take responsibility to ensure email messaging and calendars are up to date so that colleagues, members, customers and partners know when they are available.
Health and wellbeing	We will all take responsibility for our own health and wellbeing and that of our colleagues, ensuring a good work life balance.
Collaboration and workspace allocation	Whilst workspaces will be available for collaborative and creative thinking, large scale team meetings should continue to be held remotely wherever possible, accepting that teams may also wish to hold away days as a service or directorate and make provisions for doing so.
Workspace availability	Flexible workspaces – that is, those not allocated – will be available via an audited bookable system and staff will be able to book part of full days.
Location	Location for agile working can be in our offices, home working or community based.

Travel	We support staff to work flexibly in support of agile working and to plan their working day around their individual and work needs. If staff travel into the office during the working day, this is not considered part of their working day.
Continuous learning and challenge	We all have to be flexible as we develop new work habits and be prepared to continually review what is working and what is not working individually and collectively and adapt our response accordingly.

## 4. Difference between agile working and flexible working

- 4.1 Agile working, also commonly referred to as hybrid working, is often mistaken as flexible working, but there are distinct differences. COVID-19 has created even more ambiguity between the two as the majority of the workforce has worked from home.
- 4.2 Flexible working is at the request of an employee, where a working pattern is required, which often supports commitments outside of work such as caring responsibilities. There are two types of flexible working:
- formal flexible working – such as part time working, fixed working pattern and term time – requested as a contractual change
  - informal flexible working – working predominantly within a framework of hours but with the opportunity for give and take, depending on the work demand – for example, flexible working hours such as late start, early finish and TOIL, accruing and taking back time at a later date.
- 4.3 Agile working is usually driven by business need but benefits both the employer and the employee, requiring employees to complete their duties at a time which suits the business.
- 4.4 Agile working is not just about homeworking but encourages employees to work differently – not necessarily in traditional offices – with homeworking and working at other suitable locations being other options. It recognises that work is not a place, but an activity, and can be done in an environment which suits delivery of that activity and is not governed by a rigid set of hours, but focuses on people, processes, connectivity and technology.
- 4.5 Homeworking will not be enforced but will be encouraged where you are able and willing to work differently and your role and tasks support new ways of working.

## **5. Contractual considerations**

- 5.1 Homeworking will not be a contractual change to terms and conditions, except in roles where a job is deemed a 100 per cent homeworking role.
- 5.2 You will still be able to request formal changes to your working arrangements in terms of formal flexible working, such as change of hours or work pattern.
- 5.3 You will not be required to formally request agile working. This is about new ways of working that are both business and individual driven and, therefore, agile working can and will change with the business needs. It is not an arrangement set in stone and you and your team will review ways of working to ensure they cover service needs whilst promoting different ways of working for employees.
- 5.4 Agile working does not change the contractual place of work.
- 5.5 You will retain your current designated base for travel claim purposes, although you may choose to work from an alternative location to allow for improved efficiency and a more effective service. Travel claims must ensure that home to work mileage is deducted before claims are submitted.
- 5.6 We will not reimburse any household bills associated with working from home, although you can apply for tax relief through from the Government – visit GOV.UK for information: <https://www.gov.uk/tax-relief-for-employees/working-at-home>. Increased costs of working from home are offset for most people in terms of reduced commuting and lunch costs.

## **6. Organisational and team charters and values**

- 6.1 It is important that teams have clear expectations of what their priorities are and agree how they work together to ensure good communication and collaboration.
- 6.2 Teams will need to consider what best works for them, accepting that not all teams will work in the same way but, at the same time, considering the wider corporate need.
- 6.3 Establishing a team charter can help ensure that that a team knows what is expected of them (our organisational remote working charter is shown in Appendix A) and should include:
  - how to respect and separate personal and work life
  - virtual meeting etiquette
  - how we will connect with others
  - having respect for flexibility
  - trusting each other to operate in an agile way

- setting meetings with purpose
- ensuring team alignment
- staying true to our values and behaviours.

6.4 It is also important to remember that, as part of flexible working, employees would often **work at home**, usually to have periods of concentration with limited interruptions. Agile working encourages employees to **work from home** to undertake their role. There is a difference. Teams will, therefore, need to agree how to communicate and manage this to enable staff to have those periods of uninterrupted time.

## 7. Responsibility of managers

7.1 Managers are key to the success of agile working which relies on good communication and keeping in touch with their staff on a regular basis, in the same way they would if they were 100 per cent office based.

7.2 Managers should jointly agree, with the employee, the agile working style and how this will be achieved, taking into account the needs of the team and the service.

7.3 Managers will manage by outputs and outcomes, ensuring that employees have clear objectives and goals and know what is expected of them, and have regular discussion and feedback about their performance.

7.4 Managers are responsible for regular communication and keeping teams up to date, supporting the work of their teams and ensuring they support their health and wellbeing. Managers will need to consider how best to support those staff working in agile ways with those who may be working in more traditional ways.

Good communication and contact include:

- regular one-to-ones
- performance management and reviews
- check in calls for wellbeing
- MS Teams catch ups
- team meetings
- face to face meetings when required
- normal contact during periods of sickness absence, checking in and keeping in touch
- creating and nurturing a sense of belonging when teams are working in multiple places.

7.5 Managers are responsible for managing and supporting the health and wellbeing of their teams which includes:

- acting as a role model to promote a positive work life balance, supporting staff to separate work from home
- making sure wellbeing is a regular agenda item for all team meetings
- supporting staff where there is work life conflict

- ensuring staff are not working excessively long hours on a regular basis, but balancing their hours and outcomes
- ensuring appropriate risk assessments and acting on any areas of concern for employees who they are responsible for
- reviewing agile working arrangements where there are issues, making every effort to resolve matters.

## **8. Responsibility of employees**

8.1 Employee engagement is essential to successful agile working. You must engage with regular communication and contact with your managers and teams, as agreed through team charters.

8.2 You must:

- agree your working style and working plan with your manager, ensuring this supports the operational and team needs
- commit to keeping diaries up to date to ensure you are able to communicate your availability to others
- be responsible for your own health and safety by complying with council policies relating to work, whether in the office, at home or other locations, and ensuring that risk assessments and training are carried out
- ensure that caring arrangements are in place so that you can work from home, in the same way you would if you were office based
- make sure your manager is made aware at the earliest opportunity (usually before normal work hours) should you be absent due to health, an unplanned caring situation or anything which prevents you performing your duties, in the same way you would if you were in the office
- optimise meetings to minimise the amount of travel time when working off site, respecting that travel time during the day to attend the office is not considered work time
- comply with confidentiality, data protection and Internet security policies
- ensure that any personally adapted equipment (for example, left-hand orientation or widescreen laptop) required in order to undertake your duties is available for your use wherever you are working under this arrangement
- take responsibility for personal insurance needs related to working in different locations

- act responsibly in terms of being aware of hours worked and taking regular breaks, to look after your own health and wellbeing, and raise concerns either through your manager or HR.

## 9. Workspace

- 9.1 Agile working allows us to repurpose our office space and consider commercial opportunities with excess office space.
- 9.2 We have approximately 200 employees who are based at West Suffolk House. With our new ways of working, there will be approximately 80 bookable desks at this location, with a variety of other operational workspaces. The desk space available, and the primary purpose for its use, is given below:

<b>Desk space</b>	<b>Reason for use</b>
Fixed desks	Long term use – primarily for those who are unable to work from home or other locations (for example, roles which are office based, to support health and wellbeing, for those who have no suitable workspace at home).
Bookable desks	Long and short term use – bookable when an employee considers that they need to carry out some of their working duties in the office. A desk can be booked for a half or full day.
Touch down points	Short term use – available for staff coming into the office for short periods of time, such as using the office as a starting point or to use as a workspace between meetings and appointments.
Collaborative open space	Long or short term use – bookable for teams, either within teams or matrix teams, to come together to work collaboratively to share ideas or work on joint projects.
Small meeting rooms	Long or short term use – bookable for small meetings considered sensitive or confidential and not suitable for open space working.
Break out areas and coffee stops	Available to support social interactions between our employees.

- 9.3 Any desk that is booked and then not needed must be cancelled immediately to enable the desk to be allocated to others. Desk bookings will be monitored.

## 10. Useful links

- Agile working guidance:  
<https://intranet.lan.westsuffolk.gov.uk/people/hrpolicies.cfm>
- Toolkit for managers, wellbeing conversations:  
<https://intranet.lan.westsuffolk.gov.uk/people/upload/Toolkit-for-managers-Wellbeing-conversations.pdf>
- Data security:  
<https://intranet.lan.westsuffolk.gov.uk/howto/upload/HomeworkingGuidanceOnDataSecurityDuringCOVID-19.pdf>
- Email and Internet usage:  
<https://intranet.lan.westsuffolk.gov.uk/howto/upload/EmailAndInternetUsagePolicy.pdf>
- Health and safety:  
<https://intranet.lan.westsuffolk.gov.uk/people/healthandsafety.cfm>

# **Appendix A: Organisational remote working charter**

## **Eight principles of how we work remotely**

#We'reAllInThisTogether  
#TeamWestSuffolk

### **1. Create clear separation between work and personal time**

Just because we can be connected 24 hours a day, seven days a week, doesn't mean that we should be. We respect each other's personal time, the need to disconnect and the importance of self-care.

### **2. Virtual meeting etiquette**

We will all actively engage in virtual meetings, which means limiting multi-tasking and being visible by turning on our cameras as required during the meeting.

We will make sure our backgrounds during meetings are appropriate and use background blurring if necessary.

### **3. Connecting with others**

We support each other's wellbeing and show empathy, care and consideration for others.

We encourage virtual breaks to check in, catch up and stay connected with each other.

Even when we are apart, we are all in this together.

We encourage people to share their ideas and regularly discuss how they are feeling.

We encourage people to make use of the range of ways we can communicate with others, reducing the over-reliance on emails and the necessity to send emails to multiple recipients for information purposes only.

### **4. Flexibility**

We understand that one size does not fit all, and we support all our staff to work in ways that work for them.

We respect the fact that people are working at different times and we will show consideration for their choice of when and how to work. We do not expect people to reply to emails outside of their working hours.

Staff are empowered to work flexibly, although their work patterns should be known by line management to ensure we manage our customers' expectations.

We want to focus on people working in smarter ways and in ways that work for them and our customers.

We encourage and expect managers to carry out regular wellbeing conversations and distinguish between supervision of work and personal support.

## **5. Transparency and trust**

Everyone is committed to and accountable for their performance, but we encourage people to find ways of working that work for them so that we can balance work and life and remain healthy and productive.

## **6. Meetings with purpose**

We respect each other's time and busy schedules and understand that not everything has to be a meeting.

We respect break and lunch times when scheduling meetings.

Meeting duration and time management should allow for productive positive meetings that don't overrun. We respect the needs of others for breaks away from screens.

Formal meeting objectives should be clear in advance, allowing for focused discussions.

## **7. Team alignment**

We encourage all teams to review their expectations and ways of working and communicate with each other in ways that work for them and their teams.

We encourage all teams to focus on their achievements and generate a positive working environment.

## **8. Upholding our values and behaviours**

We continue to focus on delivering exceptional service for our communities and we remain committed to providing a high quality, people-oriented service across the organisation.



## **Agile working – full guidance**

Work is an activity we do, rather than a place we go.

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 We recognise that the workforce does not need to be in set premises to effectively provide services. Agile working can support us to develop modern working practices to enable employees to maximise their performance and productivity and deliver the greatest value to the council, whilst maintaining a good work life balance. In addition, new technologies are making it easy to access information remotely and work from a variety of locations, whilst promoting a more joined up service.
- 1.2 This guide to agile working supports staff to build upon the positive experiences from home working during COVID-19 and to support the transition to new ways of working across the workforce as we further develop West Suffolk 2025 plans.
- 1.3 The future working environment needs to provide continued flexibility in terms of both working locations and hours, along with opportunities to connect and collaborate, which is a two-way relationship that supports both organisation needs and individual needs.
- 1.4 The approach to agile working outlined in this guide supports what people are looking for in future working environments, notably:
  - a hybrid working approach between home and office and other locations
  - ensuring the office provides social interaction and collaborative space (the office is about providing opportunities for collaboration, not individual contributions or work)
  - a culture of trust and a wellbeing focus – focusing on developing personal responsibility and accountability, self-management and autonomy
  - new approaches to leadership (manager as coach, recognising the importance of emotional intelligence, managing by outcomes, listening and celebrating success).

## 2. Scope

- 2.1 The Agile working guidance applies to all council employees working at any level within the organisation.
- 2.2 The nature and extent of agile working will depend on the job undertaken. Considerations will include the impact on the ability to meet customer demand (internal and external), employee welfare and GDPR implications of carrying out particular roles in a home or community context.
- 2.3 The guide will enable both managers and staff to gain a better understanding of agile working and the basic principles, which can then be considered and applied to specific roles.
- 2.4 Agile working allows staff to influence how they carry out their role and promotes varying levels of flexibility within the workplace, which meets both operational needs and service delivery. It must be noted, however, that there

is no expectation for staff to work at home and managers cannot force any member of their team to do so. It has been recognised that personal circumstances or personal preference may influence an employee's decision with regard to home working. In such cases where an individual does not want to work at home, other elements of agile working must still be considered – for example, working at touchdown sites.

- 2.5 As some roles are more suited to agile working than others, agile working will be adopted at varying levels within services.
- 2.6 The intention is for the agile working guidance and approach to be reviewed as we continue the journey of recovery, to make sure that it is fit for purpose and supports the transition to new ways of working. At this stage, there is no intention to review terms and conditions of employment. For administrative purposes and for the claiming of travel expenses, everyone's contractual base will remain unchanged.

### **3. What is agile working?**

- 3.1 Traditional flexible working in the workplace, whether it be formal and agreed contractually or informal such as flexi time, is the opportunity for employees to make choices that suit their needs about when, where and how they carry out their work.
- 3.2 Agile working differs in that it considers work to be an activity, not a place, where employees can work flexibly from any location, whether it is from a council building, partner organisation's premises, neighbouring premises, other appropriate space within the community or by varying degrees of home working and regular hotdesking.
- 3.3 The different ways in which agile working can be undertaken is dependent on the demands and needs of the role, the individual's preferences and circumstances, the service an employee is engaged in and the way in which an organisation wants work to be done.
- 3.4 Agile working provides staff with more options with regard to where, when and how they undertake their role by introducing an element of choice which will ensure that the needs of the service user are best met, whilst meeting the needs of the team, the service and the organisation.

### **4. The benefits**

- 4.1 It is anticipated that the implementation of agile working will offer benefits to our customers, employees and the employer. The key benefits are that it will:
  - allow us to focus time and money on services, not buildings, to ensure delivering services takes priority over occupying buildings, and redesign and repurpose office space for the most cost effective use
  - reduce unnecessary travel time, which will increase productivity and reduce cost

- create an environment which allows employees to achieve an improved work life balance, greater job satisfaction, motivation, morale and productivity
- lower our carbon footprint, through reduced emissions from reduced travel
- improve the recruitment and retention of skilled and experienced employees by offering a range of work styles to match individual work preferences
- reduce absenteeism and related costs.

#### 4.2 For employees, agile working can:

- provide an opportunity to manage their working day more efficiently
- increase engagement as a result of autonomy and trust at work
- improve work life balance
- enable them to work more effectively on a particular piece of work, where concentration is important, by avoiding the interruptions that are part of the office environment
- reduce travelling time and related costs
- increase their wellbeing, health and happiness – reduced stress, better sense of control.

4.3 However, it is acknowledged that, whilst some employees may feel agile working can be a benefit, others may not and it is, therefore, recognised that one size does not fit all. Some employees may have other family members working from home or may have inadequate or unsuitable work space, making it difficult to work in this way. It is important that managers and their staff work together to find the most suited work arrangement to ensure our staff are able to perform to their best ability whilst focusing on their wellbeing

## 5. Principles underpinning agile working

5.1 The following principles underpin the approach to agile working:

- Clear and realistic objectives should be agreed between the employee and their manager to enable their performance to be managed by outcomes rather than presence. This should be reviewed on a regular basis through performance appraisals and regular one-to-one discussions. Employees will be expected to deliver the outcomes agreed with their manager and the focus on determining the productivity of staff should be on outputs and not inputs.
- The need for staff to come into the office is a two-way relationship and requires a balance between both individual need and organisational need.
- Teams will determine which staff need a more regular presence in the office and how this will work, be it for health or work specific reasons.
- Staff will commit to keeping diaries up to date to ensure they communicate their availability to others.

- Large scale team meetings should continue to be held remotely wherever possible, accepting that teams may wish to hold away days as a service or directorate and make provisions for so doing (although this will require the whole team to book a desk).
- Staff can come into the office for part days and book desks for part days.
- The organisation supports staff to work flexibly in support of agile working and to plan their working day around their individual and work needs (and this includes part day attendance in the office). If staff travel into the office during the working day, they manage their working day accordingly – travel to the office in the middle of the day is not part of their working day.
- Staff should come into the office for identified training which is integral to their role or considered a corporate need
- Staff must accept that it is reasonable for a manager to require them to work in the office for performance, operational and/or team needs, as determined by the manager.
- Audits of desk booking arrangements and attendance at the office will be conducted.

## **6. Home working**

- 6.1 The most appropriate approach to working will be agreed with the manager.
- 6.2 Although agile workers will not necessarily work standard office hours (unless the role dictates this), it is important to agree a work programme so that other team members are aware of the individual's working pattern, where they are located and when and how to contact them. This allows employees who are using their homes as part of their agile working arrangements to have a right to privacy out of hours and be able to separate their working and home lives.
- 6.3 Agile working must not affect the provision of services and, therefore, managers must ensure that they have systems in place to maintain suitable office presence, as required, and to monitor the level of available frontline staff on duty at any one time. A team or service charter, based on the organisational charter approach to agile working, can set out an agreed framework, with parameters and expectations of how different working arrangements can support the way in which a team works. Our organisational charter is available on the website:  
<https://intranet.lan.westsuffolk.gov.uk/people/upload/OrganisationalCharter-EightPrinciplesOfHowWeWorkRemotely.pdf>
- 6.4 When working from home, caring arrangements for children and other dependents should be in place as they would have been if the employee was working in the office. There may be an occasional and exceptional circumstance where alternative arrangements need to be made. In these situations, managers will work with their teams to agree the best approach

and consider other options, such as annual leave and unpaid leave, if agile working is not possible.

- 6.5 Different working arrangements, however, may support staff with caring responsibilities if the way the employee works enables a more flexible approach to working hours – for example, working outside of traditional office hours. Managers must ensure that this meets the operational and team needs and also consider the wellbeing of the employee. If a more structured or permanent arrangement is sought by the employee, this should be requested formally via a flexible working request.
- 6.6 Should an employee request to work from home when unwell, their manager will need to consider whether this is appropriate. Each case will be assessed on its own merit with support from HR, as some illnesses may be more appropriately managed from home, resulting in a shorter recovery period.
- 6.7 It is the responsibility of the employee to ensure they have adequate mobile phone reception and an appropriate Internet connection to allow them to work from home with little disruption. Employees are advised to contact their Internet provider to ensure there are no restrictions to working from home for personal or business use. Those employees considering working from home on a permanent or ad hoc basis are responsible for checking that there are no restrictions in mortgage or tenancy agreements that could prevent this.

## **7. Costs of home working**

- 7.1 An employee who is an agile worker will be provided with the necessary ICT equipment and technology to work in this way.
- 7.2 The employee should use our equipment while agile working and will not be eligible to claim expenses for use of personal equipment such as home phone lines.
- 7.3 We will not make payments for any household bills, which includes but is not limited to Internet broadband costs, heating, lighting, water and landline connections. Employees should seek Government guidance (see link below) which clarifies tax relief that employees can claim if they are asked to work from home by their employer or the Government on a regular basis for all or part of the week. This allowance helps offset costs for utility charges. The council is **not** responsible for claiming this tax relief on behalf of employees. Visit GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/tax-relief-for-employees>
- 7.4 Agile working does not change an employee's contractual place of work. No member of staff should be at a financial disadvantage through working from home once they offset costs such as commuting. However, consideration will be given to individual circumstances with regard to an employee being regularly based at the council's premises and they should raise those concerns with their line manager in the first instance.

## **8. Working at other locations**

- 8.1 Agile or hybrid working enables employees to work at other locations in addition to the traditional office and home working. Employees may be able to carry out work in other locations such as organisational partners' premises, neighbouring authorities or appropriate locations in the community.
- 8.2 All West Suffolk Council laptops create a secure connection back to our systems across the Internet when being used remotely. The use of public hot spots is permitted provided you follow guidance laid out in our information security policy. For example, never leave your laptop unattended and ensure no one else can see what is on your screen. Once connected to a wireless network, your laptop should connect in exactly the same way as when working from home.
- 8.3 Employees must be mindful of confidential data, ensuring they do not leave their screen on full display. Be mindful of other people having sight of the screen and ensure screens are locked when not in use. When an employee leaves a non-council location, they should ensure they disconnect from the WIFI they have been using.
- 8.4 Employees are encouraged to carry equipment in bags, so as not to draw attention to the equipment they may be carrying, ensuring they take all equipment away with them when they leave. Employees should take care of transporting equipment, especially in a vehicle, making sure that equipment is not left on view to potential thieves.

## **9. Security of council equipment**

- 9.1 In the event of any council equipment being lost or stolen, employees should report this immediately to their line manager, who will inform ICT. Our Information Governance Officer should also be advised immediately.

## **10. Responsibilities**

### **10.1 Corporate responsibilities**

- The Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service), on behalf of the council, carries overall responsibility for ensuring that we have the appropriate processes in place which adequately and appropriately support our employees, regardless of what working pattern or arrangement they have.
- The Human Resources team is responsible for providing advice, guidance and training on this procedure.
- The Service Manager of Human Resources is responsible for reviewing, updating and amending this guidance to reflect changes in legislation or employment practice, in conjunction with the trade unions.

- Directors are responsible for establishing their own arrangements to ensure:
  - effective implementation of the policy
  - continued service delivery
  - consultation with their employees on these arrangements
  - authority is delegated to assistant directors or managers to take action under this policy, as appropriate
  - the principles of remote working, as set out in the remote working charter, are embedded throughout teams (see Appendix D).

## 10.2 **Management responsibilities**

Management responsibilities are:

- ensuring flexibility, openness and constructiveness in relation to discussions and agreements about agile working with employees within their area of responsibility, whilst remaining focused on the needs of the service
- supporting a positive work life balance by ensuring that employees do not work excessively long hours on a regular basis and aim to work their contractual hours, balancing hours with outcomes
- keeping in regular contact with all employees, irrespective of how and where they are working, in order to support health and wellbeing
- making arrangements for both regular individual and team meetings, ensuring regular communication is maintained between themselves and team members, providing support for employees and implementing ways of measuring and monitoring work output that have been mutually agreed
- setting and monitoring defined performance measures in line with performance appraisals and regular one-to-one meetings
- allowing employees who are using their homes to work from, to have a right to privacy out of working hours and the ability to separate their working and home lives
- meeting their duties in relation to health and safety by undertaking appropriate risk assessments and acting on any areas of concern for employees who they are responsible for, as outlined in section 9 of the procedure
- jointly agreeing with employees their agile working style and how this will be achieved
- ensuring good communication with employees and agreeing clear communication lines and methods; this includes arrangements for employees to report sickness absence
- undertaking a regular review of the agile working arrangements – if it is not working, every effort will be made to resolve any issues.

## 10.3 **Employee responsibilities**

An employee's responsibilities are:

- complying with this procedure in a reasonable, constructive and appropriate manner

- jointly agreeing an agile working style with their manager
- being flexible, open and constructive in discussing and agreeing agile working arrangements, whilst remaining focused on the needs of the service
- maintaining regular contact with their manager
- working within the agreed 'housekeeping rules' (appropriate work area for working at home and so on) and abiding by all our policies (available on the intranet) while working in this way
- optimising meetings to minimise the amount of travel time when working off site
- complying with health and safety policies and procedures by participating in and undertaking risk assessments, carrying out any necessary actions to minimise risk, maintaining a safe working environment and taking reasonable care of their own safety, as outlined in section 9 of the procedure
- complying with confidentiality, data protection and Internet security policies
- ensuring that all reasonable care is taken of all council supplied ICT equipment
- reporting immediately once known any loss, theft or damage to council ICT equipment or the loss of confidential information
- consulting with any necessary parties, such as insurance companies, regarding home working
- ensuring that any personally adapted equipment (for example, left-hand orientation or widescreen laptops) required in order to undertake their duties is available for their use wherever they are working under this arrangement.

## **11. Health and safety**

- 11.1 Employees have a responsibility for their own health and safety, and that of others, while they are carrying out work activities, regardless of the work location, in accordance with our Health and Safety Policy. This includes visually inspecting council supplied ICT equipment before using it to ensure that there are no obvious faults with the equipment. Any faults found must be immediately reported to their line manager and the ICT team and the equipment must not be used.
- 11.2 Where employees use council locations to work in, they should familiarise themselves with the local arrangements for signing in and out and the management of health and safety. They must ensure they are aware of fire safety arrangements for the particular location that they are in and be fully conversant with the actions to be taken in the event of discovering a fire or on hearing the fire alarm.
- 11.3 Due consideration to lone working arrangements should be explored fully between the line manager and employee to ensure safe working arrangements are in place. This includes the issuing of and the use of lone worker devices such as Peoplesafe and council procedures such as the Guardian Angels.

- 11.4 An Agile (Home) Working Plan must be discussed between manager and employee (Appendix A) and the Health and Safety Home Risk Assessment (Appendix B) must be fully completed and signed if any part of an employee's working style requires them to work from home. This will need to be carried out again if any substantial changes are made to their working environment or arrangements. Employees must fully participate in completing the necessary risk assessment paperwork and review this with their manager.
- 11.5 When working from home, even if it is only on an ad hoc basis, the employee has a responsibility to ensure they have an appropriate workspace with adequate security, storage and screening from activities and noise from the rest of their home. There must also be adequate ventilation and lighting. Employees must not carry out work meetings in their home with staff, customers, elected members or officers from other agencies.
- 11.6 If homeworkers need to attend site meetings direct from home, they must notify their line manager of their itinerary.
- 11.7 It is good practice for employees to agree with their manager when visits that they undertake may expose them to higher risks of violence or difficult situations. If this is so, this requires the employee to make a telephone call to the office at the end of the working period to confirm safe completion of the visits.
- 11.8 Managers should seek advice from the Health and Safety Team regarding any specific concerns around health and safety issues, as sign off for agile working will not take place until all the health and safety requirements have been appropriately addressed.

## **12. Data protection, security and confidentiality**

- 12.1 We provide employees with access to the personal and confidential information they need to do their job. This information must not be disclosed to others who are not authorised to see it. Our information security policies apply at all times regardless of working site. When working in a mobile manner, the employee is responsible for the security of equipment, files and any other information in their possession, including the transportation of such items whenever outside of the council office environment.
- 12.2 It is particularly important to ensure that non-authorised personnel (in the home environment or while working off site) cannot gain access to confidential or personal information.
- 12.3 All efforts must be made to secure council equipment when being used at home. As a minimum, all equipment should be stored out of sight of windows and doors to deter equipment being stolen. Any paper-based documentation that contains personal or confidential information must be disposed of securely. No work-related emails or sensitive data should be sent to the employee's home email addresses. No work-related files should be stored on an employee's personal computer. Any loss of equipment or information must be reported immediately to the employee's line manager.

12.4 Managers must ensure that their staff:

- know their responsibilities under the Data Protection Act and the council's security policies
- never leave a computer with personal confidential information on screen
- never leave a computer logged on when unattended
- observe the same level of security at home as in an office environment.

### **13. Allocation of equipment and other financial support**

13.1 The manager, in consultation with the employee, will determine their work style or activity. ICT will be responsible for determining and providing the equipment and technical requirements for the employee undertaking an agile working arrangement.

13.2 Personally adapted equipment will be provided to an individual should a workstation assessment deem this necessary following an occupational health assessment and an access to work recommendation (where appropriate). However, this equipment will be provided at the place where they predominantly work and not across multiple sites. Therefore, the individual will be responsible for ensuring that this equipment is available for their use wherever they work. In some circumstances, it may be deemed necessary that this equipment is made available at a fixed place of work, such as the council's premises.

### **14. Insurance**

14.1 Computers and other items of equipment that we provide as part of the agile working arrangement will be covered by our insurance policy. In instances of loss, our Replacement Equipment Issued to Staff Policy will apply.

14.2 Home workers are required to contact their own insurance company to inform it that they will be working at home. This does not usually result in an increase in premium and it is unlikely that working from home will affect cover. An example letter for use can be found at Appendix C (Home Based Workers' Letter to Insurers).

14.3 Liability insurance arranged by us will operate once the risk assessments are completed satisfactorily. Risk control measures identified as a result of a risk assessment must be addressed prior to the agile working arrangement commencing.

14.4 Employees working at or from home are covered by our Employer's Liability Policy. Any accidents must be reported immediately in accordance with our health and safety guidelines. It is the employee's responsibility to advise their mortgage lender or landlord if they intend to work from home.

## **15. Principles when working in the office**

- 15.1 Employees must remember they can work from any council location and managers must ensure that employees feel comfortable when 'touching down' at temporary desks and zones.
- 15.2 Booking desks – information to follow.
- 15.3 As all marked desks may be used by any council employee, adopting clear desk principles will assist with the changes in working practice, in that employees will feel more comfortable working from a desk that has not been personalised. There is an expectation that, when an individual vacates a desk to enable use by another member of staff, it will be wiped down with antibacterial wipes and left clear, with no materials left either on or beneath the desk.
- 15.4 Confidential discussions should not be carried out in communal areas.
- 15.5 All employees will continue to have a designated base for travel claim purposes, although they may choose to work from an alternative location to allow for improved efficiency and a more effective service.

## **16. Review and revision arrangements**

- 16.1 This guidance will be reviewed in line with HR processes and regularly reviewed and adapted as the organisation develops its response to new ways of working.

## Appendix A: Agile or Hybrid Working Plan

Managers and their staff should use this as a guide to agree an agile or hybrid working plan which fits with operational and individual needs, allowing staff to be able to do their best work in the best place. Flexibility to this plan is essential and will need to be reassessed periodically in order to continue to meet service needs and demands.

- I wish to work in an agile way, which may include working at home and/or a different location.
- In order to work from home, I agree to complete the Home Working Assessment of Risk checklist and return it to the Health and Safety Team. (It is between you and your manager to ensure that all actions raised on the assessment have been addressed prior to you working from home.)
- I agree to provide an appropriate workspace in my home for the furnishings and equipment to enable me to work effectively at home.
- I will promptly inform my manager of any changes to my home or personal circumstances, which could affect my health and safety while home working.
- I agree to provide reasonable access to my home by an employee of the council or their representative in order for them to undertake any health and safety assessments, provide maintenance or repair to council equipment, or undertake any relevant audit activities. All access requirements will be discussed prior to the visit, and appropriate notice given.
- I am aware of the security measures required and the sensitive nature of the data I am working with.
- I agree at all times to protect access, maintain and store the data securely and confidentially in line with the Data Protection Acts and council requirements. The council's computer will not be used by anyone other than myself.
- I am aware and understand my requirements to notify my manager when I am unable to work or absent from work due to sickness or any other reason. In the event of home working ceasing, I will cooperate with the council in arranging a time for any equipment to be collected or I will return the equipment to the council within five working days of home working ceasing.
- I am aware and understand the requirement to report any work-related accidents while working at home or other locations and of the actions I am required to take in an emergency.

The arrangements that have been agreed will be reviewed and a decision taken on whether the arrangements will continue.

- I agree to attend the office (location to be confirmed as appropriate) for regular communications and meetings or for operational reasons in order to undertake the requirements of my role and my employment, as defined by my manager.

- I agree that, if I am unable to work at home due to an unforeseen circumstance, such as loss of power, broadband or unsuitable working arrangements, I will attend the office to fulfil my role.
- I am aware that I must continue to comply with all council policies, practices and procedures.
- I am aware that regular performance reviews will be conducted.
- I agree to provide the council with a contact phone number that can be used for work purposes during work hours or arrange for my calls to be directly forwarded.

Please send a copy of the completed Agile (Home) Working Assessment of Risks checklist to confirm that a risk assessment has been undertaken.

## Appendix B: Agile (Home) Working Assessment of Risks

Please answer yes or no to the questions below.

<b>Workstation risk assessment</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Have you been supplied with a laptop upstand, mouse and keyboard? If not, please contact the ICT team or your line manager to obtain one.		
Have you completed the Display Screen Equipment (DSE) training module located on the intranet <a href="https://westsuffolk.britsafelearning.com">https://westsuffolk.britsafelearning.com</a> in the past 12 months?		
Have you completed the DSE self risk assessment located on the intranet <a href="https://westsuffolk.britsafelearning.com">https://westsuffolk.britsafelearning.com</a> in the past 12 months?		
<b>General health and safety</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Electrical</b> – Are all electrical outlets (sockets) in a sound condition? Has all council-supplied electrical equipment been tested and is it in date?  Note: All equipment is to be PA tested annually; re-tests must be arranged prior to expiry date.		
<b>Fire</b> – If working from home, is your means of exiting the building free from obstructions?		
Do you have a smoke alarm or a fire extinguisher that is not more than five years old?		
Have you completed the fire awareness training module located on the intranet <a href="https://westsuffolk.britsafelearning.com">https://westsuffolk.britsafelearning.com</a> in the past 12 months?		
<b>Stress</b> – Have you completed the manual handling training module located on the intranet <a href="https://westsuffolk.britsafelearning.com">https://westsuffolk.britsafelearning.com</a> in the past 12 months?		
<b>Communications</b> – Have adequate communication processes been agreed to prevent isolation and stress with your team and colleagues?		
<b>Manual handling</b> – Will the task include lifting or carrying and, if so, have you completed the manual handling training module located on the intranet <a href="https://westsuffolk.britsafelearning.com">https://westsuffolk.britsafelearning.com</a> in the past three years?		

<b>Health</b> – Do you have any existing health problems which may affect your ability to work from home?		
Slips, trips and falls – Is your work area at home free from the risk of slips, trips and falls?		
<b>Emergencies</b> – Do you have access to a phone in the case of emergencies?		

Any other comments:

Actions required (if none, please state none):

Completed by and date:

Signature of employee: ..... Date: .....

Signature of manager: ..... Date: .....

## Appendix C: Agile (Home) Worker's Letter to Insurer template

Address line 1  
Address line 2  
Address line 3  
Address line 4

Date

Dear

Insurance policy number (where appropriate)

I have agreed with my employer, West Suffolk Council, that I will be working at home under the council's Agile Working Policy on an ad hoc/partial/full-time basis (delete as appropriate).

West Suffolk Council will provide me with the following items of equipment to enable me to work at home. (List all equipment)

- Laptop or tablet
- 22 inch monitor
- Second screen (where required for role)
- Laptop stand
- Mouse
- Keyboard
- Carry bag
- Headset and cable
- Mitel phone

I require written confirmation of receipt of this letter and acceptance of these terms. I would be grateful for an early response. I would appreciate your confirmation that this will not affect, in any way, the validity or cost of my household insurance cover which is placed with you (policy number as above) and that my policy includes public liability cover for at least £1 million (include in letter to home contents insurer only).

Yours sincerely (if addressed to a person) or faithfully (if addressed to Sir or Madam)

Sign off

# Appendix D: Organisational Remote Working Charter

## Eight principles of how we work remotely

#We'reAllInThisTogether  
#TeamWestSuffolk

### 1. Create clear separation between work and personal time

Just because we can be connected 24 hours a day, seven days a week, doesn't mean that we should be. We respect each other's personal time, the need to disconnect and the importance of self-care.

### 2. Virtual meeting etiquette

We will all actively engage in virtual meetings, which means limiting multi-tasking and being visible by turning on our cameras as required during the meeting.

We will make sure our backgrounds during meetings are appropriate and use background blurring if necessary.

### 3. Connecting with others

We support each other's wellbeing and show empathy, care and consideration for others.

We encourage virtual breaks to check in, catch up and stay connected with each other.

Even when we are apart, we are all in this together.

We encourage people to share their ideas and regularly discuss how they are feeling.

We encourage people to make use of the range of ways we can communicate with others, reducing the over-reliance on emails and the necessity to send emails to multiple recipients for information purposes only.

### 4. Flexibility

We understand that one size does not fit all, and we support all our staff to work in ways that work for them.

We respect the fact that people are working at different times and we will show consideration for their choice of when and how to work. We do not expect people to reply to emails outside of their working hours.

Staff are empowered to work flexibly, although their work patterns should be known by line management to ensure we manage our customers' expectations.

We want to focus on people working in smarter ways and in ways that work for them and our customers.

We encourage and expect managers to carry out regular wellbeing conversations and distinguish between supervision of work and personal support.

## **5. Transparency and trust**

Everyone is committed to and accountable for their performance, but we encourage people to find ways of working that work for them so that we can balance work and life and remain healthy and productive.

## **6. Meetings with purpose**

We respect each other's time and busy schedules and understand that not everything has to be a meeting.

We respect break and lunch times when scheduling meetings.

Meeting duration and time management should allow for productive positive meetings that don't overrun. We respect the needs of others for breaks away from screens.

Formal meeting objectives should be clear in advance, allowing for focused discussions.

## **7. Team alignment**

We encourage all teams to review their expectations and ways of working and communicate with each other in ways that work for them and their teams.

We encourage all teams to focus on their achievements and generate a positive working environment.

## **8. Upholding our values and behaviours**

We continue to focus on delivering exceptional service for our communities and we remain committed to providing a high quality, people-oriented service across the organisation.

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