

St Dennis Parish Council

Work from Home Policy

Policy purpose:

St Dennis Parish Council has designed this policy to make sure that working from home is beneficial to our employees and the organisation. The Council recognises that there are occasions where working from home, or flexible working, may be required and are committed to ensuring that when such circumstances arise, reasonable adjustment for staff that can work from will be considered. This policy outlines the circumstances under which the Council will allow employees to work from home. It also details the actions required to facilitate a home working arrangement. The office must be contactable Monday to Friday between 9.30 and 12.30 to maintain accessibility to the public. Whilst home working is a type of flexible working amended hours do not apply as part of the arrangement and would require a separate application.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees of the Council who are able to carry out duties away from the normal place of work.

What is Home Working

Definition - Home working is about using the employee's home as a base for work instead of the employee coming into a workplace.

Benefits of Home Working

There are many benefits to home working.

For the Council these include:

- Contributing towards the reduction of the Council's CO2 emissions by reducing unnecessary employee commuting;
- The retention of valued and skilled employees for whom the ability to work at home is the preferred option;
- Well-motivated staff who feel that they work for an organisation that is prepared to be flexible and which trusts them;
- Accommodation of the requirements of disabled employees or employees with temporary health conditions;
- Promotion of a positive image as a good employer

For the employee these include:

- Increased discretion in the management of their work and personal time;
- Increased motivation;
- A saving of travel time and costs;
- The ability to work without distraction;
- Improvements in work-life balance issues.

While there are many advantages of home working, a detailed assessment needs to be made, by both the employee and the Council, as to whether the individual will be a suitable home worker and whether the role to be performed is appropriate.

Types of Home Working

Occasional Home Working

Taking work home occasionally, on an ad hoc basis, to concentrate on a particular project or **task**, may be suitable in the following circumstances:

- Where a specific task needs dedicated and focussed input and/or could be dealt with more efficiently at home e.g. saved travelling time and lack of interruptions;
- Where it is difficult for staff to get in to work e.g. adverse weather, a **short, but** unavoidable commitment at home, or field work is being undertaken out of the office near to home.

Regular Home Working

Working from home for a percentage of the time on a regular basis, the individual would come into the office for the balance of time. This may be suitable in the following circumstances:

- Where the function of the post requires little face to face contact with colleagues and/or clients;
- To facilitate a more flexible work pattern, perhaps to accommodate other demands.

Employee Characteristics

Home working does not suit everyone. Individuals may also have a distorted view of home working – often “rose coloured” – with little recognition or understanding of the potential drawbacks, and it is important that both the advantages and the disadvantages are considered. A trial period may be appropriate in order to gauge suitability before any longer-term arrangements are put in place.

Helpful personal qualities are likely to include:

- Self-motivated;
- Self-disciplined;
- Enjoy the challenge of working on their own;
- A flexible approach;
- Able to organise working time effectively;
- Able to work without direct supervision;
- Confident to work away from the office environment;
- Able to work on their own without day to day social interaction with colleagues;
- Able to travel to meetings and site visits;
- Able to ‘switch off’ from work and maintain a proper balance between working and non-working hours.

Application Process

Employees wishing to be considered for regular home working should contact the Clerk, who will then put the request to the Staffing Committee. The Staffing Committee will consider the request taking account of Equal Opportunities Legislation.

One of the most important factors to consider is the individual employee's role in providing a service to the people of St Dennis Parish. The following issues should be taken into consideration:

- Service provided and impact upon the individual's workload and the work of the team;
- Can the work readily be undertaken at home?
- How can the work be monitored?
- How should contact be made?
- What equipment would be required?
- What costs would be incurred?
- Is the employee likely to be suited to home working? (see earlier section on Employee Characteristics)

It is the Council's policy to view any requests for home working in a positive light and the Council will, wherever possible and practicable, agree to the employee's request. If the request is accepted in principle, a health and safety assessment of the home working environment must be carried out (see section titled "Assessing the Home Environment") before a Home Working Agreement can be drawn up. If the Staffing Committee is not able to agree at this stage, the Committee will provide the employee with a written response to their request, including details of the reasons for rejecting the request.

Assessing the Home Environment

An employee who works from home is afforded the same protection under health and safety legislation as an employee who is office based. It is therefore vital to ensure the home working environment is suitable before any home working agreement is reached. The employee needs to take personal responsibility for the health and safety aspect of home working. An employee needs an environment at home which offers the following:

- Work space, suitable for concentration;
- Security and confidentiality;
- Ability to meet Health and Safety requirements;
- The combining of home-based working with caring for an individual will be considered on an individual basis. Employees need to be aware that the Council reserves the right to ask them to attend Council premises at short notice.

If home working has been agreed in principle, the employee concerned should complete a Health and Safety Home Worker Self-Assessment Checklist. If this assessment identifies any particular risks it will be the responsibility of the Staffing Committee, Clerk and employee to discuss ways in which the risks may be minimised or eliminated. The home environment must be deemed to be safe to work in before a home working agreement can be drawn up.

Home Working Agreement

If Home working has been agreed, a home working agreement should be issued to the employee. The employee will be asked to sign and return a copy of the home working agreement and this will be retained on their personal file.

Provision of Equipment

Where appropriate, the Council may provide, install and maintain equipment to assist with home working. Factors taken into consideration in determining appropriateness may include the frequency of home working and whether the need for home working has been generated by the Council or the employee.

The following items of equipment may be appropriate:

- Occasional home working - Remote access to the Council documents and IT systems.
- Regular home working - As above plus a PC/laptop and mobile communications.

In relation to maintaining the equipment it may be necessary for the employee to bring the equipment in to the Council's offices or to allow someone to visit them at home in order to carry out the relevant maintenance.

Any Council equipment installed at the home workers home remains the property of the Council and can be recalled at any time.

The Council will take responsibility for the repair/replacement of lost, damaged or stolen equipment, provided the employee has taken appropriate precautions to safeguard the equipment.

Insurance

The Council insurance provides cover for any Council equipment located at the home of the employee.

Whilst working from home is unlikely to have an impact, employees are advised to notify their landlord/mortgage and insurance companies of the fact that they will be working from home.

Health and Safety

Home workers are afforded the same health and safety protection in law as office-based staff. As such all Council health and safety policies and procedures will apply to home workers. This includes the requirement for employees to report any work-related accidents and to undertake regular DSE assessments.

Data Security

Employees who work from home are required to comply with all IT security and confidentiality requirements of the Council. The home worker will have a direct responsibility for all Council information material held at their home and must ensure that it is not accessible to non-authorised people (e.g. other members of the household).

Working Hours

Flexible working hours will apply to home-based staff in the same way that it does to office-based staff. Any changes to the working hours must be agreed with the Clerk.

The hours worked will not exceed those in the contract, except when agreed by the Clerk or incurred due to a meeting and taken as time off in lieu.

Expenses

Car mileage expenses would be payable for work-related journeys beginning and ending at the home base. All other expenses will be paid on provision of a receipt, in line with office-based staff. The current home working allowance (designed to help with utilities costs) will only be paid if the staff member is requested to work from home by the council, due to an emergency, such as a pandemic, fire etc. Utilities costs will not be covered at any other time.

Moving House

Employees who move house will complete a new Health and Safety Home Worker Self-Assessment Checklist and if acceptable, the Home Working Agreement will continue as previously. However, if the new house is not suitable for home working, the agreement will be reviewed and if necessary terminated.

Review of a Home Working Agreement

Any home working arrangement should be reviewed periodically (at least once a year). This will allow both parties to assess whether the arrangement is still appropriate. Reference to performance management will be made and if performance is not satisfactory, the home working agreement may be terminated.

Termination of a Home Working Agreement

A home working agreement can be terminated, by either party, by giving three months' notice. The employee will return to office-based working on termination. In exceptional circumstances, if an employee fails to comply with this policy and/or their homeworking agreement, then the council reserves the right to terminate the agreement with immediate effect; for example, a confidential data breach.

During any home working application that has been approved the employee will be expected to attend the office covering normal opening hours and in accordance with their contract, or when covering holidays and sickness.

All employees who are given approval to work from home will be compensated at their normal rate of pay for the hours allocated, the hours must be properly recorded within the time sheet, any additional hours worked will be approved by the Staffing Committee before payment can be made.

Health & Safety Home Worker Checklist				
Name:				
Job Title:				
Address				
Hazard	Checks to be made	Yes	No	Comment
Fire	Is the work area tidy?			
	Are waste materials regularly disposed of?			
	Are exits routes clear?			
	Does the employee have an escape plan?			Know what to do in an emergency
	Is a smoke alarm fitted?			Alarm must be tested and maintained in accordance with manufacturer's
Electrical Equipment	Any apparent damage?			Cracked/loose casing on plugs and computer equipment, missing screws etc
	Any evidence of overheating?			Look for discolouration
	Are all the cables secure in all plugs?			Has all equipment been PAT tested?
Slips, Trips and Falls	Floor covering sound and without defects?			
	All walkways clear of trip hazards e.g. trailing cables?			
	When seated at a desk can legs and upper body move together without twisting?			
Working Environment	Is the temperature adequate?			
	Is the ventilation adequate?			
	Is there adequate lighting?			
Display Screen Equipment	Does the employee use DSE for more than 2 hours a day or more than 1 hour continuously?			Carry out DSE assessment on an annual basis if yes
Mobile Phones	Will the work involve the use of a mobile phone?			
Lone Working	Is there a requirement for a call-in procedure?			If yes then establish a procedure and monitor use
	Has the employee's mobile phone number been given to their manager?			
	Does the employee require a personal attack alarm?			
	Is the employee aware and fully conversant with the Council's Lone Working Policy?			If not, ensure copy is provided to employee
COSHH	Does the home work involve the use of hazardous substances?			If yes attach risk assessment

Accidents / First Aid	Is the employee familiar with the accident reporting procedure?			Provide employee with accident reporting form
	Does the employee have adequate first aid facilities whilst working at home?			Employer to provide a first aid kit if not
Wellbeing	Has the employee previously suffered from discomfort, stress or ill health which they believe to be as a direct result of work?			If yes, discuss further to assess whether home working is suitable
Security	Are all external doors secured?			
	Is there the ability to lock laptop and confidential files away when not in use?			

Miscellaneous Items/Comments:

Signatures:

Employee _____ **Date:** _____

Manager _____ **Date:** _____