

Public Document Pack



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Our ref: General Purposes Committee/Agenda
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GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

28 JANUARY 2025

A meeting of the General Purposes Committee will be held at **2.00 pm on Tuesday, 28 January 2025** in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

Membership:

Councillor Scobie (Chair); Councillors: Albon, Austin, Davis, Dawson, Donaldson, Everitt, Ovenden, Whitehead and Wright

A G E N D A

Item
No

Subject

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** (Pages 3 - 4)

To receive any declarations of interest. Members are advised to consider the advice contained within the Declaration of Interest advice attached to this Agenda. If a Member declares an interest, they should complete the [Declaration of Interest Form](#)

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING** (Pages 5 - 8)

To approve the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 30 January 2024, copy attached.

4. **MINUTES OF EXTRAORDINARY MEETING** (Pages 9 - 10)

To approve the Minutes of the extraordinary meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 14 March 2024, copy attached.

5. **MINUTES OF EXTRAORDINARY MEETING** (Pages 11 - 12)

To approve the Minutes of the extraordinary meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 30 July 2024, copy attached.

6. **HUMAN RESOURCES - PHASE 3 POLICY REVIEW** (Pages 13 - 70)

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Do I have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and if so what action should I take?

Your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI) are those interests that are, or should be, listed on your Register of Interest Form.

If you are at a meeting and the subject relating to one of your DPIs is to be discussed, in so far as you are aware of the DPI, you **must** declare the existence **and** explain the nature of the DPI during the declarations of interest agenda item, at the commencement of the item under discussion, or when the interest has become apparent

Once you have declared that you have a DPI (unless you have been granted a dispensation by the Standards Committee or the Monitoring Officer, for which you will have applied to the Monitoring Officer prior to the meeting) you **must**:-

1. Not speak or vote on the matter;
2. Withdraw from the meeting room during the consideration of the matter;
3. Not seek to improperly influence the decision on the matter.

Do I have a significant interest and if so what action should I take?

A significant interest is an interest (other than a DPI or an interest in an Authority Function) which:

1. Affects the financial position of yourself and/or an associated person; or
Relates to the determination of your application for any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration made by, or on your behalf of, you and/or an associated person;
2. And which, in either case, a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as being so significant that it is likely to prejudice your judgment of the public interest.

An associated person is defined as:

- A family member or any other person with whom you have a close association, including your spouse, civil partner, or somebody with whom you are living as a husband or wife, or as if you are civil partners; or
- Any person or body who employs or has appointed such persons, any firm in which they are a partner, or any company of which they are directors; or
- Any person or body in whom such persons have a beneficial interest in a class of securities exceeding the nominal value of £25,000;
- Any body of which you are in a position of general control or management and to which you are appointed or nominated by the Authority; or
- any body in respect of which you are in a position of general control or management and which:
 - exercises functions of a public nature; or
 - is directed to charitable purposes; or
 - has as its principal purpose or one of its principal purposes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union)

An Authority Function is defined as: -

- Housing - where you are a tenant of the Council provided that those functions do not relate particularly to your tenancy or lease; or
- Any allowance, payment or indemnity given to members of the Council;
- Any ceremonial honour given to members of the Council
- Setting the Council Tax or a precept under the Local Government Finance Act 1992



If you are at a meeting and you think that you have a significant interest then you **must** declare the existence **and** nature of the significant interest at the commencement of the matter, or when the interest has become apparent, or the declarations of interest agenda item.

Once you have declared that you have a significant interest (unless you have been granted a dispensation by the Standards Committee or the Monitoring Officer, for which you will have applied to the Monitoring Officer prior to the meeting) you **must:-**

1. Not speak or vote (unless the public have speaking rights, or you are present to make representations, answer questions or to give evidence relating to the business being discussed in which case you can speak only)
2. Withdraw from the meeting during consideration of the matter or immediately after speaking.
3. Not seek to improperly influence the decision.

Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality

Councillors must declare at meetings any gift, benefit or hospitality with an estimated value (or cumulative value if a series of gifts etc.) of £25 or more. You **must**, at the commencement of the meeting or when the interest becomes apparent, disclose the existence and nature of the gift, benefit or hospitality, the identity of the donor and how the business under consideration relates to that person or body. However you can stay in the meeting unless it constitutes a significant interest, in which case it should be declared as outlined above.

What if I am unsure?

If you are in any doubt, Members are strongly advised to seek advice from the Monitoring Officer or the Committee Services Manager well in advance of the meeting.

If you need to declare an interest then please complete the declaration of [interest form](#).

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2024 at 3.30 pm in Council Chamber, Council Offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

Present: Councillor Harry Scobie (Chair); Councillors Albon, Austin, Davis, Dawson, Donaldson, Duckworth, Everitt, Garner, Huxley, Ovenden, Whitehead and Worrow

42. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies made at the meeting.

Post Meeting Note: Councillor Wright had advised Democratic Services before the start of the meeting about her apologies. Unfortunately the message was not sent through to the meeting clerk in time to advise the Chair about the apology.

43. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

44. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor Albon proposed, Councillor Davis seconded and Members agreed the minutes as a correct record of the General Purposes Committee meeting that was held on 24 October 2023.

45. MINUTES OF EXTRAORDINARY MEETING

Councillor Huxley proposed, Councillor Austin seconded and Members agreed the minutes as a correct record of the extraordinary General Purposes Committee meeting that was held on 12 December 2023.

46. PHASE 2 HR POLICY REVIEW

Sonia Godfrey, Head of Human Resources introduced the report and made the following comments:

- Phase 2 HR Policy Review - as General Purposes Committee you are being asked to review the proposed report and are asked to consider and adopt a new other types of leave policy and 2 revised policies of restructure and redundancy and recruitment policy and procedure with effect from 1 February 2024;
- Review of HR policies continues with a number of phases outlined and ensuring robust policies are in place is essential for providing clarity and consistency, thus ensuring legal compliance and best practice, establishing fair practices and promoting a positive work culture within our council;
- With regards to corporate implications from a financial and value for money perspective there are no financial implications arising directly from the refresh of the Restructure and Redundancy Policy or the Recruitment Policy and Procedure, however there is the potential for the new Other Types of Leave Policy to generate a small amount of additional costs. It is anticipated that any costs associated with the approval and implementation of this policy will be very low and therefore containable within existing resources.

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- From a Legal perspective as indicated within the report, these policies have been developed to improve practices across the Council and they address issues of concern highlighted in the Independent Monitoring Officer Report;
- Risk management perspective HR policies serve to define behavioural expectations, promote fairness, compliance and efficiency within an organisation;
- The risks associated with failing to implement new or revised HR policies may potentially expose the council through out of date policies with changing laws, industry standards and organisational needs;
- From a corporate perspective it is important that the council's HR policies are updated and reviewed and in supporting this review extensive research has been carried out to look at best practice, organisational needs as well as considering the policies and procedures in place at other comparable local authorities;
- The revised policies have been developed in line with ACAS and any relevant legislation and consideration also from a HR perspective around the practical issues that have emerged whilst operating within existing policies and procedures;
- A review of policies continues and the final versions of policies identified within Phase 2 are included within this report;
- The main change to the restructure and redundancy policy applies in the case where a position is being deleted and the employee affected is put at risk of redundancy and there is no suitable role identified. In the updated policy, the employee will receive the same status as if they were on notice of redundancy. This means that they will have priority for any suitable alternative roles and be given priority with any internal job applications;
- There are a few proposed changes to the recruitment policy and procedure:
 - One of the more significant changes is that managers will be able to advertise some job vacancies internally for a period of only one week;
 - The current policy requires all vacancies to be advertised internally and externally for at least two weeks.
- The other types of leave policy: This is a new policy and covers types of leave that were not covered in any other policies. It allows for one additional day of paid leave each year for voluntary work, which have been requested by several members of staff in recent months and staff must meet the requirements set out in the policy to qualify.
- The draft policies were agreed by CMT before commencing a 30 day consultation period with the trade unions; Unison and GMB and staff;
- During the consultation period, feedback was received from staff and Unison. Feedback did not result in any significant changes to the draft policies and only some minor changes in wording were applied to the proposed policies;
- And positive feedback had been received from both staff and Unison with regards to the one day paid leave each year for voluntary work as covered within the new 'Other Types of Leave Policy';
- The policies presented within the committee report if agreed by the General Purposes Committee would go live on the 1 February 2024.

Members asked questions and made comments as follows:

- One Member said that the report was concise and easy to understand;
- They further asked why the policy on recruitment allowed for a week period to advertise vacancies internally before going out for external recruitment;
- Another Member asked what discretion Heads of Service had in conducting their own departmental restructures before a wider corporate restructure was considered;
- They also asked if there would be simpler versions of the policies;

- When a vacancy becomes available, would temporary and agency staff be considered ahead of external candidates?
- Learning days for staff would be beneficial for employees. Could staff be offered learning days?
- Another Member said that the coming in-house of the HR function was a good approach. There were now good relations between the Unions and HR;
- Were the rights of those on apprenticeships recognised in the policies?
- Were staff allowed leave of absence to undertake duties like military duty.

Sonia Godfrey and Sarah Flack, Employee Relations Lead responded as follows:

- Giving a week's period for advertising vacancies internally would give managers more flexibility;
- Departmental restructures depended on the nature of the changes being sought;
- HR were working closely with Heads of Service on small tweaks or minor job changes for their respective departments and was being done outside corporate restructures;
- Policy guidance had been developed to assist staff with understanding the policy content and how these policies would be applied;
- When a vacancy becomes available agency staff would have the same rights as external candidates;
- TDC could access the national apprenticeship scheme. Departments could approach HR to get assistance on how to access this scheme;
- Apprentices would get a contract that was specific to their work.
- The Council could also access the apprenticeship levy to upskill current staff;
- Leave of absence was available to staff.

Councillor Scobie proposed, Councillor Davis seconded and Members agreed to adopt the HR policies with effect from 1 February 2024.

47. CHANGES TO CEX WORKING HOURS IN NOVEMBER 2022 - A VERBAL UPDATE

Ingrid Brown, Head of Legal and Democracy & Monitoring Officer gave a verbal update and advised the committee that the decision made for changing the CEx working hours in November 2022 was due a misunderstanding of the process for making such changes. This had since been remedied.

Members thanked the Monitoring Officer for the update and were satisfied that the issue had been addressed.

Councillor Scobie proposed, Councillor Davis seconded and Members agreed to note the update.

Meeting concluded: 3.48 pm

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GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2024 at 2.00 pm in Council Chamber, Council Offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

Present: Councillor Harry Scobie (Chair); Councillors Davis, Dawson, Donaldson, Duckworth, Everitt, Garner, Huxley, Whitehead and Wright

48. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor Albon,
Councillor Austin,
Councillor Ovenden.

49. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

50. PROPOSED CHANGE TO INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Sonia Godfrey, Head of Human Resources, introduced the report and made the following comments:

- The report was regarding the change in duration of contract for the council's Interim Chief Executive, Colin Carmichael.
- It was recommended that the council extended the appointment of Colin Carmichael as Interim Chief Executive, Head of Paid Service and Returning Officer for a further year, until 31 July 2025.
- The Chief Executive position was included in the approved council staffing establishment and existing approved budgets.
- The council had traditionally appointed the Chief Executive as returning officer which is an independent statutory role.

Members commented that they supported the extension of the Interim Chief Executive's contract.

Councillor Wright proposed, Councillor Everitt seconded and Councillors agreed that:
"The General Purposes Committee is being asked to review and make the following recommendations to Full Council:

1. For Full Council to extend the appointment of Colin Carmichael as Interim Chief Executive, Head of Paid Service and Returning Officer for a further year, until 31 July 2025;
2. To note that the Appointment Panel has the responsibility of determining the timing and process of the appointment of a permanent Chief Executive."

Meeting concluded : 14:34

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GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 30 July 2024 at 3.30 pm in Council Chamber, Council Offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

Present: Councillor Harry Scobie (Chair); Councillors Albon, Austin, Davis, Donaldson, Everitt, Ovenden, Whitehead and Wright

51. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Dawson.

52. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

53. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

Councillor Albon proposed, Councillor Davis seconded and the General Purposes Committee agreed that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for agenda item 4 as it contains exempt information as defined in Paragraph 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

54. ICT AND DIGITAL POLICIES

Hannah Thorpe, Head of Strategy and Transformation introduced the report and made the following points:

- The General Purposes Committee was being asked to consider proposals for four new ICT policies that included:
 - Acceptable Use Policy;
 - Cyber Security /Cyber Attacks Policy;
 - Digital Security Policy;
 - Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards Policy.
- A staff consultation that would include consulting trade unions would be conducted for thirty days as the adoption of these policies had implications for the staff conditions of employment;
- The four policies would go to Cabinet for final approval;
- The Committee was being asked to agree that after the staff consultation, the Chief Executive be authorised to make any changes to the final draft;
- Following the decision to bring back in-house the ICT service from a shared services arrangement, the majority of the service moved back to the council in April 2023 and in April 2024, the ICT became a fully in-house service when cyber security also moved back;
- In January 2024, a security incident occurred;
- TDC was audited by the East Kent Internal Audit Partnership and some comments were made and the Council was now actioning those recommendations;
- The Council appointed Richard Knight as the new Policy Manager. Mr Knight worked with the ICT team in drafting the new policies;
- These policies covered both councillors and staff;
- The draft policies were reviewed by an officer working group who checked for robustness;
- National best practices were referenced during the drafting stage;
- Officers also considered the requirement of the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSSC);

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- The Policy Manager advised that the policies should be reviewed every six months to ensure that they were compliant to industry standards.

Members asked questions and made comments as follows:

- Would these four policies be considered by Cabinet in a confidential session?
- Would any future updates to these policies be considered by Cabinet?
- What actions would be taken against a councillor who broke the policies?
- There should some wording in the policies that mentions what consequences there would be for breaches by councillors;
- The glossary section should be updated regularly;
- Was there any provision for out of hours support?
- The current email out of office wording should have some wording on where to redirect any queries.

Hannah Thorpe, Ingrid Brown, Head of Legal and Democracy & Monitoring Officer and Dan Evans, Head of ICT responded as follows:

- These policies would still be considered in a private session when they are presented to Cabinet. This was in order to protect the methods used by the Council against cyber security attacks;
- Any updates to the policies would be signed off by the Chief Executive, without the need to go to Cabinet;
- In order for these policies on be enforceable on councillor breaches would require reviewing the code of conduct for councillors to link to these policies;
- Officers would ensure that the out of office auto response email would contain a similar message that advises who else could be contacted in the absence of the intended officer.

Councillor Albon proposed, Councillor Donaldson seconded and the General purposes Committee agreed the following:

- a. To note the proposed ICT policies presented within this report;
- b. To note the proposed 30 day consultation with staff and the council's recognised trade unions;
- c. To note that the proposed policies will be considered by the Cabinet Advisory Group and will also be presented to Cabinet for final approval;
- d. Subject to any amendments following consultation with the union, agree the following provision in each of the attached policies: 'any user found to have breached any element of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal;'
- e. Agree that any amendment to the statement referred to at 'd' above, may be approved by the Chief Executive.

Meeting concluded: 3.56 pm

Human Resources - Phase 3 Policy Review

General Purposes Committee	28 January 2025
By	Sonia Godfrey, Head of Human Resources
Cabinet Portfolio	Cllr Rob Yates
Key Decision	For Decision
Decision classification	Unrestricted
Ward:	Thanet Wide

Purpose of the Report

To consider and adopt proposed changes to four of the council's existing HR policies and a new Probation Policy to replace the New Postholder Policy.

Recommendation(s):

To adopt the HR policies with effect from 1 February 2025.

1. Summary of Reasons

- 1.1 Human Resources (HR) policies are essential for providing clarity and structure and also to provide clear communication between the council and its employees regarding their conditions of employment.

The review of HR policies is a continuation of the HR policy review work and further supports recommendations made by the external auditor and Independent Monitoring Officer (IMO) with the aim of making HR processes more straightforward and reducing the potential for any risk to the council.

2. Background

- 2.1 The transfer of HR services back in house and the outcome of the IMO recommendations has provided an opportunity for HR to review HR policies and procedures, existing and new.

- 2.2 Extensive research has been carried out to look at best practice generally, organisational needs as well as considering the policies and procedures in place at other comparable local authorities. This has informed the content and structure of the new draft policies, all of which now follow a standard format and incorporate their own procedures within them.
- 2.5 The revised policies have been developed with due consideration for the ACAS guidelines and any relevant legislation. Consideration also from a HR perspective around the practical issues that have emerged whilst operating within existing policies and procedures.

3. Relevant Issues

- 3.1 A policy review highlighted that approximately 30 policies would benefit from being reviewed and/or developed and due to the volume and lead in times for making changes HR categorised policy development across a number of phases.
- 3.2 As part of the review, discussions were held with the Corporate Management Team (CMT) to support the agreed phases of policy review. Feedback was based upon the external auditors report and the outcomes of case reviews where it had been identified that policy constraints had caused operational difficulties and made processes overly complicated, placing the council at risk of challenge.
- 3.3 The main changes to the proposed policies are as follows:

Flexible Working Arrangements, Flexible Working Requests and Flexitime

These three policies will sit under the heading “The way we work” on TOM, the council’s intranet page.

There is very little change to the Flexitime and Flexible Working Requests Policies.

The key changes to the Flexible Working Policy are the title and new key principles that have been added. These key principles were discussed at an employee focus group and have been based on feedback from both managers and other employees.

Probation Policy

This policy will replace the current New Post Holder Policy and the key proposed changes are:

- It will no longer be linked to the Disciplinary procedure
- An initial discussion should be held within the first four weeks
- No set review periods but a recommendation of a minimum of two documented meetings during this period

- Probation review hearing to determine ongoing employment

Travel and Expenses Policy

This policy will replace the existing Mileage Policy and the proposed key changes are:

- Addition of defined allowances that can be claimed for subsistence and overnight stays
- Claiming mileage for electric vehicles
- Uploading receipts to EKP when making a claim

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 HR policies provide written guidance on how a wide range of employment issues should be handled. They play a key role in supporting trust, fairness, inclusion and consistency by outlining the responsibilities of both employer and employee.
- 4.2 New and revised HR policies are introduced to reflect and comply with existing or new legislation and case law, including latest developments in effective people management and support with internal change.
- 4.3 Alternative options is not a consideration due to the risk associated with out of date and/or inadequate HR policies which could potentially expose the council due to changing laws, industry standards and organisational needs.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 The draft policies were agreed by CMT before commencing a 30 day consultation period with staff and the trade unions; Unison and GMB.
- 5.2 During the consultation period, limited feedback was received from staff and nothing raised by either unions. Feedback did not result in any significant changes to the draft policies and only some minor changes in wording were applied to the proposed policies.
- 5.3 In addition to the policy consultation, the council also consulted for a 30 day period to remove the working from home payment with effect from 1 February 2025. This payment is non-contractual and was introduced during Covid as a temporary payment to support employees in addition to the payment that could be claimed through HMRC. As the tax rules have now changed, this has become a payment that is subject to both tax and national insurance. No feedback was received from staff or unions around the removal of this payment.
- 5.4 The final versions of the policies are attached to this report for consideration and, if agreed and adopted by the General Purposes Committee these policies will go live on the 1 February 2025.

6. Corporate Implications

6.1 Finance and Resources

6.1.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

6.2 Legal and Constitutional

6.2.1 The Council's HR functions are not the responsibility of the executive and are a matter upon which the General Purposes Committee may decide. The Council's constitution provides that General Purposes Committee shall '*exercise any function of the Council, which by statute or regulation is a function not to be the responsibility of an authority's executive, and which is not delegated to another committee or reserved to the Council by statute, regulations or the Council's Constitution.*'

6.2.2 The changes proposed to the policies referred to in this report are consistent with employment legislation. Staff and unions have been given the opportunity to comment on the changes proposed through the period of consultation. The results of consultation are referred to in section 5 above.

6.3 Council Policies and Priorities

6.3.1 It is important that the council's HR policies are updated and reviewed as they provide clarity and consistency in managing employees, thus ensuring legal compliance and best practice, establishing fair practices and promoting a positive work culture within an organisation.

These revised policies aim to make some of the council's key employee relations processes easier to follow and understand, making Thanet District Council a good place to work and helping with the organisation's corporate aim of increasing openness and transparency.

New and revised HR policies support the recommendations made by the external auditor and the IMO, with the aim of making HR processes more straightforward and reducing the potential for any risk to the council.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities: -

- To create a thriving place
- To work efficiently for you

6.4 Risk

6.4.1 HR policies serve to define behavioural expectations, promote fairness, compliance and efficiency within an organisation.

The risks associated with failing to implement new or revised HR policies may potentially expose the council through out of date policies with changing laws, industry standards and organisational needs.

There are some policies in place at present that are overly complicated and open to interpretation thus leaving the council open to challenge when trying to implement processes to deal with employee relation issues. In addition, some of these policies have been identified by the IMO as requiring review and form part of the recommended actions.

6.5 Climate Change and Biodiversity

6.5.1 There are no climate change and biodiversity implications arising directly from this report.

7. Equality, Equity and Diversity Implications

7.1 An equality impact assessment has been completed as part of this policy review process and this report relates to the following aim of the equality duty: -

To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.

8. Crime and Disorder Implications and Community impact

8.1 None

Annexes

Annex 1: Flexible Working Arrangements Policy

Annex 2: Flexible Working Requests Policy

Annex 3: Flexitime Policy

Annex 4: Probation Policy

Annex 5: Travel and Expenses Policy

Background Papers

None

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Report Sign Off / Signed off by / Date sent / Date signed off / Initials

Legal Ingrid Brown- Head of Legal and Democracy and Monitoring Officer

Finance Matt Sanham - Head of Finance and Procurement 14 January 2025

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Thanet District Council Flexible Working Arrangements Policy

November 2024/Draft/HR

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Annex 1

Policy	Flexible Working Arrangements Policy
Department	Corporate Services
Service	HR
TDC Lead Officer	Name: Sarah Flack Job title: Employee Relations Lead Email: sarah.flack@thanet.gov.uk Tel: 01843 577803
Approval body	CMT/GPC
Approval date	XXXXXX
Review date	XXXXXX
Version Code	2024.FWA
Version Control	V1 (this version).

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Policy Statement

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This Flexible Working Arrangements Policy demonstrates how Thanet District Council (“the council”) embraces different employee working scenarios in order to balance organisational value with employee workplace satisfaction.

It sets out expectations and requirements of employees, managers and the council, as well as the council’s underlying flexible working principles.

It is one of the HR flexible working policies alongside the:

- Flexible Working Request Policy
- Flexitime Policy.

1. Introduction

Thanet District Council (“the council”) recognises the need to develop modern ways of working to enable employees to maximise their performance and productivity and deliver the greatest value to the organisation, whilst maintaining a good work-life balance. In addition, new technologies are making it easier to access information remotely, work from a variety of locations, whilst promoting a more joined-up service. Remote working is the term used to describe how employees can work from any location, whether it is from a Council building, in the community, from home or any combination of these.

Although not all of the roles within the Council can be classed as totally flexible, there is considerable scope in many cases for some form of flexible and/or remote working arrangements. The different ways in which this can be undertaken is dependent on the demands and needs of the role, the individual’s preferences and circumstances and the service an employee is engaged in. It is possible, with careful planning and a degree of best practice evaluation, for staff to carry out their duties from a variety of different locations and/or in a variety of working patterns all of which support their individual work/life balance alongside the needs of the service.

It is recognised that a safe and healthy working environment is required in any work location, and this not only relies on effective IT infrastructure and the provision of suitable IT equipment, but also on staff engagement and a manager’s interaction with each member of their team.

2. Scope and Audience

This policy sets out the Council’s approach to the way that employees work, which allows employees to split their time between attending their normal workplace and working remotely (hybrid working) but is also subject to the needs of the service.

This policy must be considered alongside the Council’s other corporate strategies and policies, in particular those relating to human resources, ICT, health and safety and Data Protection.

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Its audience is all council employees, while recognising that not all roles are suitable to some or all of the measures within this policy.

3. Key Principles

We will base our flexible working arrangements on the following principles:

- All decisions regarding flexible working arrangements will be based on what provides the best possible outcomes and services for our residents, service users, customers and partners. It won't be suitable for every employee and will depend on the role they do; the level of supervision needed; the minimal levels of physical cover required in the role; and the technology and environment available to each individual.
- Flexible working arrangements will not impact the level or quality of service to our customers, colleagues and partners.
- Leadership and engagement of our teams is critical to the planning and delivery of successful working arrangements.
- Work will take place at the most effective locations and at the most effective times.
- Working remotely reduces the impact on the environment in line with the Council's climate change strategy.
- Employees have the opportunity to lead balanced and healthy lives.
- Employees are required to structure their day/week in a way that balances their work with the needs of the Council. Employees are responsible for managing their own time and working their contracted hours. Employees must recognise that the ability to work from home is not a substitute for arranging child care or similar carer responsibilities, and it is their responsibility to ensure that adequate provisions are in place to avoid conflict with work performance when they are working from home. Any abuse of trust or misconduct may be dealt with under the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- Employees will be expected to apply the same response times to Councillor calls and emails wherever they are located. Should this standard not be met employees will be required to work from the office.
- The immediate line manager will decide when employees are required to work in the office and what arrangements are suitable and effective for service delivery, taking into account an awareness of employee wellbeing and the wider service needs that have to be met.
- Managers will endeavour to give reasonable notice when employees are expected to attend the office for a specific day/time that would not usually be required, however it is ultimately the managers decision and it is expected that employees will be available to attend such requests to meet the needs of the Council.
- There will be occasions when working in the office is critical for a variety of reasons, such times may include but are not limited to training, 1-2-1 meetings, team meetings, investigations, formal hearings/meetings, employees who are not achieving the best results due to the environment they are working in, appraisals, managers forum, staff briefings and customer appointments where it has been determined that they are best conducted in person.

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- There may be circumstances when employees are asked to work from home, such as in the event of a lockdown, unforeseen event or where government guidance is given that employees should work from home if they can.
- The Council will ensure that employees have the right technology and equipment in place to carry out their role and support their working arrangements.
- The Council's Code of Conduct will apply to all staff regardless of their working location.
- The Council recognises that it has the same health and safety responsibilities for employees working at home and in other remote locations, as for any other worker.
- By implementing this policy the Council is better supporting employees who may find some aspects of fully office based work challenging for various reasons, such as travel, distractions that an office environment may present, disability or health related issues. Careful consideration has been taken on the health and safety aspects of flexible working arrangements and the council's commitment to providing suitable environments for all, including the provision of specialist equipment and reasonable adjustments where needed.
- The Council recognises that for some colleagues the option for flexible working arrangements is greatly reduced or is not available at all due to the nature of their role, as they are required to deliver a service from a specific location or at a specific time. In these cases local options can be discussed and agreed where appropriate to allow as much flexibility as possible for all colleagues.

4. Policy Purpose

This policy is designed to assist both managers and employees in implementing safe working arrangements regardless where employees are working from, by highlighting areas for consideration and providing practical advice and Information.

This policy is about making the best use of the way we work through flexible and remote working practices and focuses on achieving the following:

- Meeting the aspirations of both Managers and employees by getting the right work life balance that best fits the needs of the Council and its employees;
- Increased productivity and effectiveness of our activities;
- Reducing the costs of running the Council by making the best use of our assets;
- Creating office environments that allow collaboration and innovation;
- Reducing the environmental footprint of our working practices.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Corporate Responsibility

- The Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service) on behalf of the Council carries overall responsibility for ensuring that the Council has the appropriate processes in place which adequately and appropriately support its employees, regardless of what working pattern or arrangement they have in place.

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- HR is responsible for providing advice and guidance on this Policy.
- HR is responsible for reviewing, updating and amending this policy to reflect changes in legislation or employment practice in conjunction with the Chief Executive and Trade Unions where appropriate.

Directors will:

- Lead and maintain an overview of flexible working arrangements in their area of responsibility.
- Ensure effective implementation of this policy and ensure that it is applied fairly and reasonably across service areas.
- Ensure continued service delivery.

Managers will:

- Ensure they and any member of their team interested in flexible working arrangements are familiar with this policy and the Lone Worker policy.
- Ensure flexibility, openness and constructiveness in discussions and agreements with team members about flexible working arrangements, whilst focussing on the needs of their service. Any issues around disability and reasonable adjustments must form part of these discussions.
- Determine whether a role is suitable for flexible working arrangements.
- Assess whether the post holder and their home environment are suitable for remote working (including Health & Safety considerations).
- Make arrangements for regular and effective communication between themselves and team members by way of Council updates, individual one-to-ones and team meetings to ensure effective management at all times.
- Provide support and discuss any issues that arise with the arrangement with the employee as soon as possible;
- Ensure flexible working arrangements are managed consistently with other team members and give the same opportunities for training and development;
- Determine the requirement for flexible/remote workers to attend the office;
- Ensure that team members complete any compulsory training including e-learning modules and display screen equipment
- Ensure suitable and sufficient risk assessments are in place covering other risks associated with flexible working arrangements, such as stress and mental health, and lone working;
- Support new starters, specifically ensuring they have all the equipment they need to work effectively from day one and helping them select the most appropriate working styles taking into account their role and personal circumstances;
- Only visit the home of remote workers where this has been agreed by both parties and an appointment has been booked in advance as it would be for any other meeting in the office; If a visit is required due to welfare concerns and this is therefore not possible, this should be discussed with HR to make appropriate arrangements.
- Regularly review the flexible working arrangements.

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Employees will:

- Jointly agree their flexible working arrangements with their manager;
- Ensure their remote/home environment is appropriate and conducive to remote/home working, this includes making childcare/caring arrangements during working hours;
- Alert their manager if their remote/home environment changes temporarily or permanently which renders it inappropriate for remote/home working;
- Maintain regular contact with their line manager and colleagues as agreed;
- Comply with all relevant risk assessments as necessary;
- Undertake regular risk assessments of their home workstations and complete all required training courses, including the compulsory e-learning modules;
- Attend the office as required by their line manager;
- Allow the Council access to their home, with reasonable notice;
- Ensure they have adequate internet and telephone connections and are contactable during working hours;
- Ensure that they have informed their home insurers that they are conducting their work from home, as required;
- Take reasonable care of any Council equipment;
- Follow the same Council policies and procedures as office-based employees;
- Familiarise themselves with the Council's Lone Worker Policy.

6. What are Flexible Working Arrangements?

Flexible working arrangements give more choice over deciding how, when and where employees work best in a way that balances the needs of the Council and their team. It opens up opportunities to many roles of working remotely, at home and/or working in an office environment. Flexible working arrangements will therefore be decided by individual departments/managers in order to provide the best possible outcomes in relation to the Council's objectives.

7. The Benefits of Flexible Working Arrangements

Our working arrangements provide benefits for our residents, employees, services users and the Council in a number of ways:

- It enables employees to manage their working day in the most efficient way and focus more effectively on a piece of work, particularly where concentration is important, resulting in increased productivity.
- Travel time and costs can be greatly reduced.
- It lowers our environmental impact through reduced emissions from reduced travel to the workplace.
- It provides for a better work life balance for employees whilst also supporting their wellbeing.
- It can reduce stress levels and provide greater job satisfaction, motivation and engagement resulting in less absenteeism and the related costs.

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- It may result in improved recruitment and retention of skilled and experienced employees by offering a wider range of work styles to match individual preferences.

8. Types of Flexible Working Arrangements

Office/depot based employees who:

- Spend most of their time working at a fixed desk in an office/depot;
- Have specific, individual equipment/furniture needs to be able to perform their role and work effectively;
- Spend little time away from their desk except for meetings with colleagues in the office;
- Do not have an option/or preference to work from home.

Hybrid employees who;

- Split their time between office and home working;
- May also spend time attending meetings or working at other partner or client sites.

Mainly home based employees who;

- Spend the vast majority of their time working from home;
- Come into the office only for specific meetings or for other reasons as required.

9. Further information and Contacts

For any issue relating to display screen equipment, risk assessments, stress and mental health or any other health and safety at work concern, please contact the Corporate Health & Safety team at healthsafety@thanet.gov.uk

For any issue relating to working hours, sickness absence, travel/mileage and flexible working arrangements, please contact HR at hr@thanet.gov.uk

10. Equality Statement

The Council is committed to promoting equality, valuing diversity and inclusion and combating unfair treatment. The Council will endeavour to ensure equal access to its policies and procedures and will combat discrimination or less favourable treatment on the grounds of any irrelevant consideration, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

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Thanet District Council Flexible Working Request Policy and Procedure

November 2024/Draft/HR

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Policy	Flexible Working Request Policy and Procedure
Department	Corporate Services
Service	HR
TDC Lead Officer	Name: Sarah Flack Job title: Employee Relations Lead Email: sarah.flack@thanet.gov.uk Tel: 01843 577803
Approval body	CMT/GPC
Approval date	
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Policy Statement

This Flexible Working Request Policy and Procedure explains how employees can make a formal request to change their working pattern in order to manage life situations and circumstances. It also demonstrates how Thanet District Council (“the council”) embraces different employee working scenarios in order to balance organisational value with employee workplace satisfaction.

It sets out expectations and requirements of employees, managers and the council, as well as the council’s underlying flexible working principles.

It is one of the HR flexible working policies alongside the:

- Flexible Working Arrangements Policy
- Flexitime Policy.

1. Introduction

Thanet District Council (the Council) is committed to providing equality of opportunity in employment and to developing working practices and policies that support work-life balance. The Council recognises that a better work-life balance can improve employee motivation, performance, productivity and reduce stress.

It is the Council’s policy to encourage open discussion with employees and, therefore, any employees who think they may benefit from flexible working are encouraged to contact their line manager for an informal discussion.

To avoid unnecessary delays, the Council will use, as appropriate, different means of both written and verbal communication.

Employees who make a request for flexible working will not be subjected to any detriment or lose any career development opportunities as a result.

2. Scope and Audience

The scope of this policy is all formal employee requests for changes to working patterns in order to accommodate their priorities.

Its audience is all council employees.

3. Policy Purpose

The purpose of this Flexible Working Policy is to give employees an opportunity to formally request a change to their working pattern in accordance with the statutory procedure for such requests. This may be to help manage personal priorities such as caring responsibilities, leisure activities, further learning and other interests. Managers are encouraged to facilitate requests unless they cannot be accommodated for business or operational reasons.

4. Eligibility for the Formal Right to Request Procedure

All employees from day one of continuous service with the Council have a statutory right to request flexible working.

The Council recognises that some roles require employees to work set hours or in a set location, due to the needs of the service, the requirements of the job or practical issues. If the employee's personal circumstances change, and greater flexibility is required, the Council will endeavour to work with the employee to identify potential solutions.

5. Types of Flexible Working

Flexible working is any type of working arrangement that gives some degree of flexibility on how long, where and when an employee works. Typical working arrangements include, but are not limited to:

- Annualised Hours – where an employee's contractual working hours are calculated as the total number of hours to be worked over the year, allowing flexible working patterns to be worked throughout the year.
- Compressed Hours – where an employee works their usual full time hours in fewer days by working longer blocks meaning that there is no reduction in their pay.
- Homeworking – where an employee regularly carries out all or part of their duties from home.
- Job-sharing – where a full-time post is usually divided into two part-time roles. The two job holders then share the overall duties and responsibilities and a proportionate share of pay and benefits. The skills and the hours that each employee wishes to work must be compatible and meet the needs of the Council.
- Part-time working – this covers any arrangement where an employee is contracted to work anything less than usual full-time hours for the type of work in question.

The suitability of roles for flexible working arrangements such as part-time working or job-sharing will normally be stated in any internal or external advertisements, and flexible working requirements for new employees will be discussed and agreed upon during the final stages of the recruitment process.

The flexible working application process is intended to facilitate the implementation of long-term changes to working practices. If short-term, temporary flexibility is required, employees should discuss this with their manager.

Employees do not have a contractual right to any particular flexible working arrangement. Each application for a change in working arrangements will be decided on a discretionary basis.

6. Making a Formal Flexible Working Request

All employees are entitled to submit two flexible working requests in any twelve month period. An employee is entitled to make additional requests if they relate to a statutory entitlement, for example, the Equality Act 2010 right to request reasonable adjustments.

Prior to submitting a written request, the Council recommends that employees have an informal discussion with their manager to discuss the required working arrangements.

All requests must be made to the employee's manager, by filling out the Flexible Working

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Application Form (Appendix 1), and include the following information:

- The date of the Application;
- The changes that the employee is seeking to their terms and conditions;
- Explain the reasons for the request;
- The date from when the employee would like the proposed change to come into effect
- Whether the employee has a statutory right to make the request, or not;
- Whether the employee is making a request in relation to the Equality Act 2010, for example, if your request concerns childcare or other family commitments, religious or cultural requirements, or adjustments because of a disability;
- Whether a previous application for flexible working has been made;
- The dates of any previous applications.

If the application does not contain the required information, the Council may request that the employee re-submits the request.

7. Responding to a Formal Flexible Working Request

Flexible Working Applications must be considered and decided upon, including any appeal, within two months of the date on which the application was received by the Council, unless the employee and the Council both agree to extend this period.

Upon receiving a Flexible Working Application Form, the employee's manager will normally seek to arrange a meeting with the employee to enter into a formal period of consultation, whereby they will discuss the request, find out more about the proposed working arrangements and discuss the benefits for both the employee and the Council. However, a consultation period may not always be necessary, provided both parties agree to the request.

If a meeting is arranged it will be held within a reasonable timeframe of the Council receiving the request. With 5.1 in mind, it is recommended that this meeting takes place within 10 working days of receipt of the application.

The employee will be given advance notice of the time, date and place of the meeting. If the initial date is problematic then one further date will be proposed. If a face to face meeting is difficult to arrange, the meeting may be held by telephone or remotely, provided both the employee and the manager agree. If the employee fails to attend the meeting, it may be rearranged. If the employee fails to attend the second meeting without good reason, their application will be deemed to have been withdrawn.

Employees are entitled to be accompanied at meetings by a colleague or a Trade Union representative during the consultation period.

Where a request can, without further discussion or consultation, be approved as stated in the employee's written application, a meeting to discuss the request may not be necessary. In this case, the employee will be informed of the Council's agreement to the request by a confirmation letter and a change of terms and conditions form will be completed.

When considering a request for flexible working, the Council will take into consideration a range of factors including, but not limited to, those set out in Appendix 1. At the meeting, the manager may suggest alternative working arrangements if this might lead to a compromise or to a different arrangement that both parties find acceptable.

The employee's request will be considered by their manager, taking into account the potential benefits and adverse effects to the employee and to the Council in implementing the proposed changes.

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Each request will be considered on a case by case basis, based on business need and taking a fair and consistent approach. Agreeing to one request will not set a precedent or create the right for another employee to be granted a similar change to their work pattern.

The employee will be informed in writing of the Council's decision at the end of the consultation period.

The request may be granted in full, in part or refused. The Council may propose a modified version of the request, the request may be granted on a temporary basis or the employee may be asked to try the flexible working arrangement for a trial period. If a trial period is agreed this should be for a minimum of three months and not usually continue for longer than six months.

A flexible working application may only be refused on the following grounds:

- The burden of additional costs
- An inability to reorganise work amongst existing staff
- An inability to recruit additional staff
- A detrimental impact on quality
- A detrimental impact on performance
- Detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand
- Insufficient work for the periods the employee proposes to work
- A planned structural change to the business.

If a trial period is agreed, the Council will allow sufficient time for an employee and their manager to implement and become used to the new working practices before taking any decisions on the viability of the new arrangement. The purpose of the trial period is to establish whether the flexible working arrangement is practicable for both the employee and the Council. The Council may reduce or lengthen the trial period where necessary with the agreement of the employee. At the end of the trial period, the Council reserves the right to require the employee to revert to their previous working arrangement.

For all changes to the employee's working pattern, whether temporary or permanent, the employee will be sent a change to Terms and Conditions form. A confirmation letter will also be sent, including details of the new arrangements. The employee should contact their manager if they wish to discuss the new arrangements further, or have any concerns.

8. Right To Appeal

The employee has the right to appeal the decision if their request is refused or is only agreed in part.

The employee may lodge an appeal within 5 working days of being notified of a decision on their application. This should be done in writing and clearly state the grounds on which they are appealing. The appeal will be heard and the employee will be informed of the outcome of their appeal within a reasonable timeframe of the appeal meeting. These time limits may be extended with the agreement of both the employee and the manager.

The outcome of the appeal will be final and the employee has no further right to appeal thereafter.

9. Varying an Employee's Contract

Where flexible working practices are agreed as a permanent change of contractual terms, a variation will be made to the employee's contract of employment. The employee will be notified in writing no later than 28 days after approval of the flexible working arrangement.

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The employee does not have the right to revert to their original terms and conditions of employment where a request has been agreed as a permanent change. However, they may make a further statutory request for a different flexible working arrangement, provided they are eligible to make a further request.

It is recognised that an employee's personal circumstances may change and they may wish to vary the flexible working arrangement. Although there is no automatic right to do this, the Council will endeavour to be flexible. Employees should speak to their line manager in the first instance.

If the employee has questions or concerns about their new contract of employment, they should speak to their line manager.

Where a trial period has been arranged, the Council will provide the employee with a change to Terms and Conditions form. The employee will be informed in writing of the start and end dates of the trial period and, as a result, the start and end dates of the variation to the employee's terms and conditions. If the trial period results in the Council's decision to decline the employee's flexible working application, the employee's terms and conditions will revert back to those in place prior to the trial period.

10. Complaints

The Council is strongly opposed to any form of victimisation of individuals who work, or request to work under flexible working arrangements. In the application of this policy, the Council will not discriminate on the grounds of age, religion, sex, race, disability, status, fixed-term or part-time work.

If an employee feels they have been unfairly treated or are dissatisfied with any stage of the flexible working application process, they should raise their concerns with their line manager or with another manager in their department.

If informal discussions do not resolve the matter to an employee's satisfaction, they should raise a grievance under the Council's grievance procedure.

11. Appendices

Appendix 1: Flexible Working Application Form

Note to the employee

You can use this form to make an application to work flexibly under the right provided in law to eligible employees.

You should note that under the right it may take up to two months for your employer to consider a request and possibly longer where you have agreed to a longer decision period with your employer. You should therefore ensure that you submit your application to the appropriate person well in advance of the date you wish the request to take effect.

It will help your employer to consider your request if you provide as much information as you can about your desired working pattern. It is important that you complete all the questions as otherwise your application may not be valid.

Once you have completed the form, you should immediately forward it to your employer (you might want to keep a copy for your own records). If the request is granted, this will be a permanent change to your terms and conditions unless otherwise agreed.

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1. Personal Details

Name:	
Manager:	

To the employer

I would like to apply to work a flexible working pattern that is different to my current working pattern under my right provided under section 80F of the Employment Rights Act 1996. I confirm I meet each of the eligibility criteria as follows:

I am employed by Thanet District Council	
I have not made two formal requests to work flexibly under this right during the past 12 months.	
I am making this request under the Equality Act 2010	

Date of any previous formal requests to work flexibly under this right	
--	--

If you do not meet the eligibility criteria then you do not qualify to make a request to work flexibly under the statutory procedure. However, the Council may consider your request, depending on the particular circumstances. Please speak to your line manager in the first instance.

2a. Describe your current working pattern/arrangement (days/hours/times/location worked):

2b. Describe the working pattern/arrangement you would like to work in future (location/days/hours/times worked):

2c. I would like this working pattern to commence from:

Date:

Name:

NOW PASS THIS APPLICATION TO YOUR MANAGER

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Note to the manager

This is a formal application made under the legal right to apply for flexible working and the duty on employers to consider applications in a reasonable manner. You have two months after the day you received this application in which to consult with the employee and decide whether to grant the request. This period can be extended if you agree to a longer deadline with the employee; any such agreement must be made either within the period in which the decision is to be made or in the two months immediately following the end of that deadline.

You must confirm receipt of the request to your employee in writing. The following example template may be used.

Confirmation of Receipt

Dear

I confirm that I received your formal request to change your work pattern on:

Date:

I shall write to you shortly inviting you to a meeting to start the consultation period. You will be notified of my decision on this application at the end of the consultation period and within two months of this date, unless we agree to a longer deadline for this decision.

Manager's signature

Manager's name

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Appendix 2: Flexible working applications – factors for manager to consider

- Impact of the arrangement on the role, department and colleagues: Whether the working hours proposed will meet business requirements, and whether there is sufficient operational work to justify any extended hours
- The degree and nature of contact with customers, both internal and external, and what arrangements can be made to cover customer queries when the employee is not in the office.
- Any possible adverse effect on the quality of service. Adequate cover by appropriately skilled staff must be available to ensure service delivery is not impaired.
- The need to avoid any unacceptable fluctuations in colleagues' workloads and any inconvenience to the rest of the team.
- The employee's working style and preferences.
- The requirements of the rest of the team members and, if necessary, what arrangements can be made which fit within the current working arrangements of the team (for example, which non-working days, hours at work, home-days, etc.).

Practical considerations:

- The cost of the proposed arrangements.
- Access to buildings, security and personal safety.
- The potential effect on the employee of working long periods, such as excessive fatigue, accidents, sickness and reduced productivity.
- The objectives and targets that will need to be set for any work performed without supervision, and arrangements for monitoring output.
- How working hours are to be recorded.
- The need to comply with the Working Time Regulations.
- The availability of relevant ICT systems and support outside the normal working hours.
- How often the arrangements will be reviewed.

Thanet District Council Flexitime Policy & Procedure

November 2024/Draft/HR

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Policy	Flexitime Policy and Procedure
Department	Corporate Services
Service	HR
TDC Lead Officer	Name: Sarah Flack Job title Employee Relations Lead Email: sarah.flack@thanet.gov.uk Tel: 01843 577803
Approval body	GPC
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Policy Statement

This Flexitime Policy and Procedure outlines how Thanet District Council (“the council”) encourages flexible working for employees within the bounds of service need.

It sets out expectations and requirements of employees, managers and the council, as well as the council’s underlying flexitime operating principles.

It is one of the HR flexible working policies alongside the:

- Flexible Working Request Policy
- Flexitime Working Arrangements Policy.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Council constantly looks to develop new ways of working that benefit the organisation, employees and customers. The Council is committed to assisting employees to achieve a balance between their work and personal lives.

1.2 It is the Council’s policy to encourage managers to give serious consideration to the option of flexible working time where it is appropriate and supports the needs of the service, which must take priority.

1.3 Managers are encouraged to implement this policy consistently and fairly with due regard to the Council’s commitment to developing flexible working arrangements and becoming an Employer of Choice.

2. Scope and Audience

2.1 This policy applies to all employees. However, it is recognised that some posts, because of the nature of the duties, will not be able to benefit in full from the provisions of this policy. Examples of such posts would be those where there is a requirement to work fixed shifts, or fixed attendance patterns.

2.2 It is the responsibility of the line manager to decide if a post is not suitable to be included in this scheme.

2.3 All references to ‘line manager’ may also be taken to include their nominated representative, where appropriate.

3. Policy Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Act as a resource for employees on the use of flexi time
- Demonstrate our commitment to promoting employee work-life balance as far as possible within the council’s requirements.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Employees will:

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- Abide by the principles of the Council's flexi time scheme;
- Maintain accurate records of hours accrued. Attempts to falsify records may result in disciplinary action being taken;
- Be mindful of the needs of the business before requesting to take credit hours as leave and ensuring line manager approval is given prior to taking such Hours.

Managers will:

- Abide by the principles of the Council's flexi time scheme;
- Actively monitor and manage flexible working hours within their work area;
- Ensure they comply with the Council's commitment to developing flexible working arrangements and becoming an Employer of Choice;
- Make sure their employees are fully aware of the scheme and their responsibilities under it.
- Line managers are ultimately responsible for ensuring that offices/workplaces are adequately staffed at all times; therefore all aspects of 'flexitime' will be under their direction.

Heads of Service / Directors will:

- Make suitable arrangements to ensure the full implementation of the policy and procedure;
- Ensure all managers are actively aware of the Council's commitment to equality of opportunity in line with our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and the development of flexible working practices.

5. Operating Hours

5.1 This scheme allows flexibility of working hours, within a seven day week, within the criteria set out at the discretion of the Director, or their nominated Representative.

5.2 There is no requirement to set standard core times, although there is a requirement to ensure that the Council is staffed during business opening times. If local agreement requires core time to satisfy service requirements this will be determined by the relevant Director and made clear to staff. This may include evening weekend working as appropriate to the needs of the Business.

5.3 Staff working outside of normal office hours will have the framework for their working pattern agreed by their line manager. Copies of the agreed framework should be held formally by the line manager, the employee and HR.

5.4 A standard full-time week is 37 hours and a standard day is 7 hours and 24 minutes (7.4 hours).

5.5 The accounting period is 4 weekly.

6. Recording and Taking Flexi Hours

6.1 Where flexitime is available to employees and is being utilised, the times worked should be recorded in 15 minute blocks on the Flexitime Sheet Accessed through the Council's intranet.

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6.2 Managers must ensure that there is adequate time recording in place and hours in credit or debit must be agreed at the end of the accounting period by both the employee and their line manager.

6.3 If during any given accounting period a member of staff accrues credit hours, this may be taken off as flexible leave, which must be pre-arranged and agreed with the line manager. Flexi leave taken should be noted and agreed with the line manager and must be recorded on the Flexitime Sheet.

Time off for hours in credit will only be allowed if properly recorded and agreed by the line manager.

6.4 Requests for flexi leave must be requested with good notice, where possible, and at all times the needs of the service must be considered and take priority.

6.5 It is anticipated that most flexi leave will normally be taken in hours in agreement with the line manager. Any leave should be recorded on the Flexitime Sheet as hours taken.

6.6 The maximum credit hours allowed to be carried over into the next accounting year is 15 hours, except in exceptional circumstances with the prior agreement of the line manager.

6.7 Staff must endeavour not to go into debt with their hours. If they do however, a maximum of 15 debit hours will be allowed to be carried over into the next accounting year. If more than 15 hours are carried over or an employee is continuously in debit by 15 hours or more then this may lead to disciplinary action. Where a debit of hours is carried over an employee will be expected to work sufficient hours during the next accounting period to bring the balance back to nil. If this is not achieved, without good reason, the normal disciplinary procedures may apply.

7. Overtime/Credit Hours

7.1 Staff will not be permitted to claim overtime, if they are in debit with their flexitime at the end of the accounting period.

7.2 Overtime will be kept separate from the flexible working hours system and credit hours will not be counted as overtime.

8. Time off In Lieu

8.1 Some roles require staff to work outside of the operating hours in section 4 and include evening or weekend work. These staff may have in place arrangements to take time off in lieu for any hours they have to work and these arrangements, where they exist, continue to be in place and are not covered by this policy.

8.2 All time off in lieu may only be taken with the agreement of the line manager and with consideration to the principles in 4.5 above.

9. Variations to Employment

9.1 A member of staff due to commence any long term period of absence, such as maternity or paternity leave or known long term sickness is encouraged to take any outstanding hours in credit before commencement of such Leave. Any hours in debit must, wherever possible, be cleared.

9.2 If an employee requests to reduce their hours, then accrued hours in credit must be taken prior to the employee reducing their hours.

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9.3 A member of staff leaving the employment of the Council who has a credit balance, must endeavour, where this does not negatively impact on service delivery, to take the credit hours prior to their departure, otherwise credit hours may not be paid.

9.4 A member of staff leaving the employment of the Council, who is in debit of hours, must make every effort to make up the hours before their departure, otherwise, they may have an amount proportionate to the hours remaining in debit calculated and reclaimed from their final salary.

9.5 Where an employee leaves for reasons over which they have no direct control (i.e. redundancy, ill health) consideration will be given to paying credit hours at flat rate or making no deduction for debit hours, as appropriate and at the Councils' discretion.

10. Operating Principles

10.1 It is not intended that flexitime should be utilised to supplement annual leave as a regular feature i.e. it is not acceptable for employees to accrue additional time on a regular basis for working additional hours that the service does not require. If this is found to occur the flexitime system may be withdrawn, replacing this with set hours.

10.2 If there is proven abuse of the scheme, or failure to come to an agreement between the manager and individual, a review of hours will be undertaken which may require the employee to work fixed hours.

10.3 Any member of staff found to be falsifying flexible working hours records or in any way undermining the integrity of the system may be subject to the normal disciplinary procedures.

10.4 Any member of staff that feels they have been subject to unfair treatment under this policy should put their concerns in writing to their line manager, or if the matter relates to a decision made by their line manager to that person's line manager, the Grievance Procedure should be followed.

11. Equality Statement

11.1 The Council is committed to promoting EDI and combating unfair treatment. We will endeavour to ensure equal access to its policies and procedures and will combat discrimination or less favourable treatment on grounds of any irrelevant consideration, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

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Thanet District Council Probation Policy & Procedure

November 2024/Draft1/HR

Policy	Probation Policy and Procedure
Department	HR
Service	Corporate Services
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Approval body	GPC
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Policy Statement

This Probation Policy and Procedure sets out Thanet District Council's ("the council's") expectations and requirements of employees, managers and the council itself, as well as the council's underlying probation principles.

This is important for ensuring that all parties are confident that a new employee is able to thrive in their new role at the council.

1. Introduction

Thanet District Council ("the Council") is committed to ensure that all employees are offered the equal opportunity of support and training to ensure that they are provided with every opportunity to gain the most out of their employment with the Council.

This policy sets out the expectations of newly appointed employees within the council and also the manager of the employee. It is good practice to provide all new employees that are employed into new posts within the council, with a period of planned induction and training, incorporating regular one-to-one meetings, setting targets and gathering feedback.

2. Scope and Audience

- 2.1. This policy and procedure applies to all new employees employed directly by Thanet District Council.
- 2.2. Within this policy the following definition applies:
 - The term 'manager' refers to the line manager
- 2.3. All employees recruited from outside Local Authorities have to serve a probationary period of 6 months.
- 2.4. A probation period is a trial period for a new employee, allowing the manager to assess objectively whether the new recruit is suitable for the role, taking into account their capability, skills, performance, attendance and general conduct in relation to the role.
- 2.5. A probation period also enables the new recruit to assess the suitability of the role in line with their aspirations and requirements.
- 2.6. The company believes that the use of probationary periods increases the likelihood that new employees will perform effectively in their employment.
- 2.7. Employees within their probation period should be given appropriate and adequate support to enable them to complete their probation satisfactorily.
- 2.8. The process of probation complies fully with the company's stated policies of non-discrimination and equality of opportunity.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Employees will:

- Follow the council's policies and procedures which sets out their expectations of them and behave in accordance with those behaviours and values of the council.
- Make themselves aware of the Council's Code of Conduct and what behaviour might

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constitute misconduct or gross misconduct as set out in the Gross Misconduct & Summary Dismissal Policy, in the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure and the Bullying and Harassment Policy.

- All employees within their probation period are expected to engage with meetings and training that is provided to them and complete all relevant training for their role.
- Raise any concerns that they have about their own performance to assist the manager in identifying any further support or training that they may require.
- Follow and complete tasks required of them inline with their job description as set out by their line manager.

Managers will:

- Ensure that a new member of staff has suitable, clear, work related and developmental objectives during their probation period, against which performance and conduct can be measured.
- Ensure that new employees are provided with a team/department induction, training and development and support appropriate to their needs.
- Set out objectives that relate to the job description and record these on the "Probation Period Review Form".
- Follow and apply this policy fairly and consistently throughout their team/department.
- Monitor the performance and conduct of their new employee.
- Meet with the employee to provide feedback and guidance to ensure the needs of the council and employee are being met.
- Ensure that the employee is made aware of any concerns during the probation period and provide written confirmation when an employee has successfully completed their probation, and save this to their personnel file.
- Raise any concerns and issues with HR in the first instance. Liaise and work with HR to ensure the best outcome for both the employee and the Council.

HR will:

- Monitor employment legislation and support the Council to review and amend this policy as appropriate.
- Provide support, guidance and training to the Council and its employees in the interpretation and application of this policy.
- Ensure a consistent and fair approach to the application of this policy throughout the Council.

4. Policy & Procedure Principles

- 4.1. Throughout the probationary period, regular supervision and support is important and must be on-going. In addition, it is recommended that review meetings are held at regular intervals during the probation period. As a minimum, at least 2 meetings must be held and documented during the probationary period.
- 4.2. An initial discussion should be held within the first 4 weeks of the new employees start date, this will be the meeting where expectations and support is outlined to the employee.
- 4.3. It is important that time is set aside to carry out the discussions and that there is a detailed recording of the actions agreed at each stage. Individuals should have advance notice of at least 2 working days of such discussions.

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- 4.4. Where applicable, both positive feedback and areas of improvement should be given on all elements of the job. If there are on-going concerns about performance and conduct these may need to be addressed immediately. However, records of any discussions and agreed targets must be documented.
- 4.5. Please discuss any concerns about performance with HR at the earliest opportunity after the employees start date. The Probation Review Form should be completed at each discussion and retained, with a copy saved to the Personnel file.
- 4.6. If performance and/or conduct is unsatisfactory, then a discussion must be had as soon as possible to highlight concerns to the employee, to ensure a fair opportunity to improve their performance or conduct. This can be an informal discussion or a first formal review meeting, this is at the discretion of the line manager and can be reflective of the severity of the unsatisfactory conduct and/or performance.
- 4.7. If after the first documented discussion there is no improvement, then the line manager can decide to move straight to a probation review hearing. In this instance advice should be taken from HR.
- 4.8. If at any point during the probation period the new employee is significantly under performing, subject to misconduct and/or gross misconduct, fails a DBS/BPSS check following guidance from Safeguarding, is absent without leave, or has unacceptable levels of attendance, the manager in consultation with HR may decide to move straight to a Probation Review Hearing.
- 4.9. In order for a probationary period to be ended, informal and/or formal meetings must have been carried out before moving to a probation review hearing, however the Council can invite an employee in their probation period to a Probation Review Hearing at any stage if it considers performance and/or conduct to be at an unacceptable standard. See Appendix 3.
- 4.10. This policy does not apply to those employees transferred or recruited from within Local Authorities (or other organisations listed within the Modification Order) who meet the requirement for continuous service. If there are concerns about these employees' performance and/or conduct, then managers should refer to the relevant policy.
- 4.11. Should you become employed following a period of time as an agency temp/worker or contractor this period of time will not count towards a probationary period or continuous service unless agreed by the head of service with a business case.
- 4.12. Existing employees who have moved internally and have successfully completed a probation period will not be subject to a further period. Any concerns of performance and/or conduct issues will be managed under the relevant policy.
- 4.13. The policy applies to all employees in their probation period, irrespective of working hours. It includes temporary and fixed-term contracts of any length. If a contract is shorter than the length of the probation period, the probation period will be for the length of time they are employed.

5. Induction

- 5.1. It is the manager's responsibility to devise an appropriate induction programme for all newly-appointed employees which will enable the employee in their period of probation to meet key contacts, understand their role and the standards expected of them, and understand how they contribute to the overall function and corporate aims of the business.
- 5.2. The manager must also ensure that the employee attends any mandatory corporate induction. This must be arranged with HR and the employee in their period of probation must attend the next available induction following their start date.

- 5.3. The manager should also discuss and agree an initial training and development plan based on the individual's personal needs, to ensure that they will be able to perform their new role effectively. This should be covered in the 4 weeks review.
- 5.4. An Induction Check-list can be found on TOM, the Council's intranet page, and within appendix 1 of this policy. This must all be completed and signed by each new employee and their induction manager - ensuring that all relevant issues, including those of critical 'Health and Safety (H&S)' are covered. Completed copies of the checklist should be retained on the employees personnel file, alongside any other relevant operational training, development and H&S compliance documents, for ongoing/ future reference.
- 5.5. The manager should ensure that sufficient time is given to the new employee to complete any mandatory training required.

6. Monitoring Performance

- 6.1. Review meetings should address any concerns with the new employee including but not limited to conduct and performance. Positive elements should be fed back and any training needs should be identified at this stage. Arrangements must be made by the manager to ensure these training needs are met.
- 6.2. During the probation period the manager will monitor the employee's:
 - Performance;
 - Conduct;
 - Timekeeping - arriving late and/or leaving early;
 - Attendance - including following the correct absence reporting procedure.
- 6.3. If any training needs are identified as part of a review meeting, appropriate training should be arranged to take place during the probation period or as soon as reasonably practicable.
- 6.4. A written record must be maintained of the probation review meetings. In order to move to a Probation Review hearing, there should be a record of at least 2 probation review meetings having been held.
- 6.5. All new employees employed by the council, even those with continuous service, should have a minimum of 2 informal review meetings within the first 6 months to set out expectations of the role and any concerns highlighted.
- 6.6. Following successful completion of a probation period, if a pattern of poor performance continues, e.g. a repeated inability to sustain improved performance for an extended period of time, the manager may proceed to the formal performance management procedure within the Performance Procedure and Policy. The manager should seek advice from HR if they feel this is required.

7. Confirmation of Appointment

- 7.1. If the manager is satisfied with the employee's performance and their fit for the role, this must be confirmed to the employee. The employee must be invited to a Probation Review Meeting, in the first instance to confirm this, this should then be followed up in writing. There is a template held by HR for the manager to complete and then save to the employees personnel file.
- 7.2. If there has been no probation review hearing held to confirm that they have been unsuccessful to meet the required standards of the role by the end of the 6 month probation period, it will be deemed that the employee has passed their probation period. Any conduct or performance concerns will then need to be managed through the relevant policy.

8. Probation Review Hearing

- 8.1. Employees who have not reached a satisfactory standard should be invited to attend a Probation Review Hearing, so that their ongoing employment can be decided. This discussion should take place to allow sufficient time for notice to be served in accordance with the employee's contract of employment (Statement of Particulars), in the event that a decision is made not to confirm the employee in post.
- 8.2. The employee will be entitled to notice in accordance with their Statement of Particulars, normally 1 week. The employee may be given pay in lieu of notice, any accrued but untaken annual leave, overtime, mileage claims or any other expenses that may be owed.
- 8.3. This Probation Review Hearing will be chaired by a manager with authority to dismiss, who has not previously been involved in the case. This is usually a Head of Service but delegated authority may be given by the Head of Service to another manager if appropriate.
- 8.4. The chair of the hearing will be accompanied by another manager not previously involved in the case and a member of the HR team may also be present, along with a note taker.
- 8.5. The employee will be invited to the hearing in writing and provided with reasonable notice of not usually less than three working days.
- 8.6. The employee's manager will prepare a report that will be shared with the employee and the panel in advance of the hearing outlining the steps that have been taken to date, both informally and formally, to address all issues including details of the support and training provided, where appropriate. They will present this report at the hearing.
- 8.7. The employee will have the opportunity at the hearing to respond to the evidence in the report and to set out any concerns about the assessment of their performance and/or the support they have received. The employee may be questioned by the manager and the hearing panel.
- 8.8. If appropriate, the chair of the panel may explore the option of redeploying the employee to another role within the Council.
- 8.9. The hearing may be adjourned if the chair decides that they need to gather any further information or give consideration to matters discussed at the hearing.
- 8.10. The outcome of the hearing will be confirmed in writing to the employee as soon as reasonably practicable. The outcome could be one of the following:
 - That there is insufficient progress but redeployment to another role or demotion is possible;
 - That there has been insufficient progress, but it is reasonable to extend the probation period (no more than 3 months), due to some improvement being made. In this situation, the Probation review hearing will be adjourned and reconvened at the end of this review period.
 - That there is insufficient progress and the employee should be given notice of dismissal.
- 8.11. In cases of dismissal, it will usually be on contractual notice, unless performance has been so negligent it may amount to gross negligence. Cases of gross negligence/gross neglect of duty will usually be dealt with under the Council's disciplinary policy.
- 8.12. Where there is a need for a second Probation Review hearing due to an extension of the probation period a final decision will be taken at this hearing to either confirm appointment or terminate their employment.
- 8.13. Employees will not normally be dismissed for performance reasons without a previous review meeting being held, except in cases of gross misconduct/gross negligence.

9. Appeal

- 9.1. An employee has the right to appeal the decision of any formal warning or dismissal made as a result of this procedure.
- 9.2. The submission of an appeal will not halt any arrangements or agreement's currently in place unless there are exceptional circumstances to warrant this.
- 9.3. Appeals must be made in writing to HR within five working days of receipt of the written confirmation of the warning or dismissal.

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- 9.4. An appeal is not a re-hearing of the original case but instead should be based upon one or more of the following principles:
 - 9.4.1. The decision to dismiss or extend is disproportionate based on the evidence presented or is inconsistent with sanctions imposed on other new starters in similar circumstances;
 - 9.4.2. New evidence has come to light since the original hearing which needs to be considered;
 - 9.4.3. The Council has failed to follow its Probation Policy and Procedure
- 9.5. The appeal hearing will be chaired by a manager of the same level or above the chair of the original hearing, depending on the circumstances of the case. Another officer or manager not previously involved in the case will make up the panel. A HR representative will provide advice and guidance on policy and process, including on the appropriateness of the panel members.
- 9.6. The appeal hearing will be arranged in a timely and reasonable manner.
- 9.7. The employee will be given reasonable notice in writing of no less than three working days of the appeal hearing detailing who will be conducting the hearing, arrangements in relation to any documents to be forwarded prior to the hearing (if not already enclosed) and the employee's right to be accompanied by either a trade union representative or workplace colleague.
- 9.8. At the hearing, the employee will be asked to give their reasons for appealing, referring to any relevant evidence and the chair of the previous hearing may be asked to attend the hearing to explain the rationale for their decision.
- 9.9. Once all evidence has been considered, the hearing should be adjourned to allow the panel to consider the information put before them. If the panel requires further information or clarification prior to making a decision, this should be sought as a matter of urgency and the employee advised that there will be a delay in reaching an outcome.
- 9.10. Once a decision has been reached, the hearing should be reconvened or a letter written to the employee to inform them of the outcome.
- 9.11. The outcome of the appeal could be that the appeal is upheld or it is not upheld. This will be confirmed in writing within five working days of the hearing unless there has been a delay due to additional evidence or clarification being sought.
- 9.12. The decision of the appeal hearing is final and there is no further right of appeal.
- 9.13. If the employee is appealing against a decision to dismiss them, their dismissal date will be effective from the date in their dismissal letter, unless their appeal is upheld. The employee's employment will not continue whilst a decision regarding their appeal is reached. If the appeal is upheld, the employee will be reinstated with no break in their continuous service and their pay will be backdated to the date of dismissal.

10. Extending The Probationary Period

- 10.1. Extending the probationary period should normally only be considered where there are exceptional circumstances outside the control of the employee, (e.g. absence through illness by the employee, or their manager), or where the employee's performance has improved, but not sufficiently to be confident of confirming their appointment.
- 10.2. The reasons for the proposed extension should be clearly outlined to the employee, including arrangements made to ensure careful supervision and the employee understands what is required and the timeframe for review.
- 10.3. Extensions of the probationary period should only occur where the manager is satisfied that such an extension (of no more than three months) will, with further training and support, lead

to successful completion of the probationary period, or as a suggestion at the Probation Review Hearing.

- 10.4. A new end date, clear action plan, including any necessary training and standards required to be achieved by the new expiry date, should be drawn up and confirmed in writing. Dates and times of further review meetings should be scheduled. Please speak to HR prior to this decision being made if extending the probation period.

11. Employees with disabilities

- 11.1. The Council is committed to attracting, supporting and retaining employees with disabilities. Employees are encouraged to disclose any disability they have to their manager/HR before the start of their employment or as the condition/disability arises in order to access support.
- 11.2. Employees with a disability may be referred to Occupational Health for advice on what adjustments the Council can make to their responsibilities, equipment or workplace, to enable them to carry out the functions of their post, such adjustments to be made in consultation with the employee, and the effectiveness monitored over a period of time.
- 11.3. Employees with a recognised disability are able to request adjustments, and all requests must be taken seriously and be deemed reasonable to implement said adjustments.
- 11.4. Disability Leave is a form of reasonable adjustment in line with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and enables employees to take paid time away from work for pre-planned appointments or treatments, related to an employee's disability, that help maintain health and wellbeing. Please refer to the Absence Management Policy & Procedure for further information.
- 11.5. Please speak to a member of HR if you have concerns about performance and/or conduct which could be relating to a disability.

12. Redeployment

- 12.1. Whilst an employee might be considered incapable of reaching the standards of their current role it may be possible that they are capable of undertaking another role within the organisation.
- 12.2. Consideration of redeployment to such alternative employment where appropriate, should be given at the earliest opportunity.
- 12.3. Consideration of redeployment is dependent upon the types of vacancies available at that time and the employee's individual skills and experience so cannot be guaranteed.
- 12.4. Where redeployment is offered it may be at the same or a lower grade of the employee's current position and there will be no salary protection.
- 12.5. At any stage during an employee's employment, they can apply for another role within the Council if they chose to. If they are successful in gaining another role within the Council, their contractual notice still applies.

13. Right to be accompanied

- 13.1. An employee has the right to be accompanied by a fellow worker or trade union representative at any formal meeting or subsequent appeal, including the Probation Review Hearing.

- 13.2. The automatic right to be accompanied does not apply at any informal meetings of this procedure but if requested then it may be allowed, provided that it does not cause any delay to the process.
- 13.3. The Council reserves the right to refuse accompaniment by a person who is deemed to be unsuitable by the HR team. Examples of unsuitability would include someone who has a vested interest in the outcome of the process and anyone who has previously behaved inappropriately during a hearing.
- 13.4. If your trade union representative or workplace colleague is not available at the time arranged for the hearing, you may request an alternative hearing date provided that it is within a reasonable timeframe, which will be determined by the chair of the panel. A postponement will normally also be granted where, to do otherwise would seriously prejudice the ability of either party to present their case. A hearing will normally only be rearranged once and the chair of the hearing may determine an outcome on the evidence available without the employee being present if they are unable to attend a hearing that has already been rearranged.

14. Employee Records

- 14.1. A full confidential record of all notes, evidence and letters relating to informal meetings and the formal review hearing should be kept on the employees personnel file.
- 14.2. If an employee is dismissed at the Probation Review Hearing, their personal information will be held by the Council for the statutory period of 6 years.
- 14.3. Any discussions regarding performance and/or conduct may be taken into consideration in any subsequent performance or disciplinary case, within 6 months of the employee having passed their probation
- 14.4. Records of discussions and training, either formal or informal, can be used in order to;
 - Refute claims by the employee that they did not know that such performance was below what was expected of them.

15. Equality Statement

The Council is committed to promoting equality, valuing diversity and combating unfair treatment. The Council will endeavour to ensure equal access to its policies and procedures and will combat discrimination or less favourable treatment on the grounds of any irrelevant consideration, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

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Thanet District Council Travel and Expenses Policy

November 2024/Draft/HR

Policy	Travel and Expenses Policy
Department	Corporate Services
Service	HR
TDC Lead Officer	Name: Sarah Flack Job title: Employee Relations Lead Email: sarah.flack@thanet.gov.uk Tel: 01843 577803
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Policy Statement

This Travel and Expenses Policy is the framework that employees follow when claiming travel and expenses incurred in their duties working for Thanet District Council (“the Council”).

The policy sets out the expectations of staff to complete claims honestly, accurately and promptly and the responsibility of the council to honour these in accordance with due process.

1. Introduction

Thanet District Council (“the Council”) will reimburse expenses that have been wholly, necessarily and exclusively incurred whilst carrying out duties as an employee. It recognises that there will be times when its employees incur business expenses, need to work or attend training courses away from their home or normal place of work, which will result in them incurring additional expenses for food, accommodation or both.

The Council respects the integrity of each employee and expects expense claims to be made honestly, accurately and promptly. All items claimed must be covered by the policy and guidance and all expenses should be kept to a minimum. The Council must maximise VAT recovery and so all claims should be backed-up with a VAT receipt. Even where VAT may not be recovered, claims should be supported by a receipt where possible to ensure compliance. We will comply with our own policy, Audit requirements and any current legislation relating to employee expenses set out by HMRC.

This Policy and the related guidance explains what business related expenses may be incurred and how to claim reimbursement.

2. Scope and Audience

2.1 This policy and procedure applies to all employees, employed directly by Thanet District Council.

2.2 Within this policy the following definition applies:

- The term ‘manager’ refers to the line manager.

3. Policy Purpose

This policy’s purpose is to provide clear and concise direction to employees and managers, including the setting out of specific responsibilities, in order to make claiming and reconciling expenses as effective as possible.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Employees will:

- Always aim to select the cheapest option available to meet their legitimate requirements, keeping costs to the Council to a minimum
- Accurately record and submit mileage claims in a timely fashion
- Upload receipts for mileage claims via EKP in order to validate claims
- Ensure mileage claimed was calculated via the most direct/efficient route
- Agree expenses with their manager in advance where possible
- Ensure that expense claims are submitted through self service in advance of payroll cut off for the month following date when the expenses were incurred, or no later than three months from that date.

Managers will:

- Check that only legitimate and compliant claims are authorised
- Sense check mileage claims for efficiency and feasibility
- Ensure that their drivers provide a valid insurance certificate
- Follow and apply this policy fairly and consistently throughout their team/department
- Discuss potential expenses with their employees in advance where possible
- Approve legitimate claims via the self services system in advance of payroll cut off for the month.

HR will:

- Monitor employment legislation and support the Council to review and amend this policy as appropriate.
- Provide support, guidance and training to the Council and its employees in the interpretation and application of this policy.
- Ensure a consistent and fair approach to the application of this policy throughout the Council.

5. Mileage

5.1 This is for payments for costs incurred by employees who use their own vehicles for business use and is applicable to all employees of the Council. Mileage rates for the use of motor vehicles, motorbikes, electric and hybrid vehicles can be found in Appendix 1.

5.2 Mileage should be claimed based on the shortest direct route according to Google maps or similar. However it is expected that judgement will be exercised to account for journey efficiency when it comes to the impact of traffic on your business journey.

5.3 Excessively large mileage claims will not be approved without sufficient explanation.

5.4 Office/depot based and hybrid employees' base for mileage purposes will be as stated in your contract of employment. This will usually either be the Council's main offices or one of the operational depots.

5.5 Mileage can be claimed for journeys undertaken for business purposes but will not be paid for your commute to and from your office from your home.

5.6 Where journeys start and/or finish at home, you should either subtract your normal home to office and/or return journey distance from the total mileage before a claim is made.

5.7 If you carry out site visits or attend meetings as part of your role, you cannot claim mileage expenses for travel to/from the Council's main offices unless the journey is greater than the distance between your home and and to/from the Council's main offices or operational depots. When this happens, you should take the total distance of business mileage accumulated during the day and deduct your usual home to office/depot mileage from the total to calculate the claimable figure. The office/depot used for the calculation is the one stated in your contract of employment..

5.8 Claims cannot be made for journeys which are considered to be substantially ordinary commuting in accordance with HMRC guidelines. This covers journeys to a temporary place of work which for practical purposes are substantially the same as your journey to your normal work base.

5.9 Substantial similarity applies where the temporary workplace is close to the normal workplace and the journey to/from the temporary workplace involves a similar route. Managerial clarity can be sought in these circumstances.

5.10 To drive for the Council, a valid insurance certificate providing cover for business use must be provided to the employee's manager by the employee annually in conjunction with the Council's Driving at Work policy. Mileage expenses may not be claimed until the appropriate cover is verified.

5.11 The Council's Driving at work policy must be complied with at all times when driving on behalf of the Council in either a Council owned vehicle or private vehicle.

5.12 Employees who choose to cycle for business journeys are responsible for ensuring their bicycle is roadworthy and that they wear appropriate high visibility clothing and a safety helmet.

5.13 Business journeys undertaken by bicycle should be reasonable in terms of both time and cost.

5.14 Mileage claims are submitted through East Kent People (EKP) self service portal for approval by an employee's manager. Claims should be made within 3 months of the journey being claimed.

5.15 Claims submitted after 3 months will not be approved unless there are exceptional mitigating circumstances. Authorisation in these cases will be required by the relevant Head of Service.

5.16 Employees must provide a valid fuel receipt or electricity bill (if claiming for an electric vehicle charged at a home address) covering the period of travel for mileage claims on EKP. The employee must attach a copy of the original/s when making the claim. Claims that are made without an attached receipt will not be approved.

6. Expenses

6.1 Expenses claimed should equate to the cost incurred, except where an agreed allowance or maximum claim amount is in place.

6.2 Employees must submit expense claims to their manager for approval and claims must be made within 3 months of the purchase being claimed.

6.3 Rail fares for attending Council meetings or training will be reimbursed at a standard second class rate. Tickets should be booked as far in advance as possible to ensure best value for money. Rail fares to/from your team's home base are not submittable.

6.4 No claim can be made where an existing concession or season ticket covers the cost of travel.

6.5 Employees are encouraged to share transport and make journeys in the most efficient way possible.

6.6 Employees undertaking a post entry training qualification supported by the Council may make reasonable claims through EKP for any books needed during the course of their studies subject to approval by their line manager.

7. Allowances

7.1 There may be occasions where employees are required to attend events or training which require overnight stays and inability to access their usual means of subsistence. In these instances a maximum allowance is provided to allow employees to claim expenses they would not ordinarily have incurred whilst working for the Council.

7.2 The criteria for an overnight stay is as follows: where employees are required to attend an event for more than one day or where meetings or events start or finish at times that preclude them from travelling to or from the location within reasonable times.

7.3 Where overnight accommodation is required, employees should seek the most appropriate accommodation taking cancellation fees into account and book this in advance wherever possible with managerial approval. Arrangements should be made for an invoice to be sent directly to the Council. If this is not possible, however, a detailed VAT receipt must be obtained to substantiate a claim.

7.4 Upon satisfactory submission and approval, the following rates will be paid:

7.4.1 Breakfast £10.00

7.4.2 Lunch £12

7.4.3 Dinner £20

7.4.4 Overnight (excluding Central London) £100

7.4.5 Overnight (Central London) £136

7.5 Subsistence costs up to the approved rate will be paid where:

7.5.1 The cost of breakfast is not included in overnight accommodation, or where it is necessary to travel before 7:00am

7.5.2 Lunch is not provided as part of the event

7.5.3 The employee is away from home after 7:00pm and dinner is not part of the event

7.5.4 Alcohol cannot be claimed as part of a subsistence claim

7.5.5 Where the employee is required to travel overseas on behalf of the Council, additional allowances may be payable but these must be authorised in advance by their Director.

8. Professional Membership Fees

8.1 The Council will reimburse the cost of one professional subscription per year for an employee where it is relevant and essential to their post.

8.2 Should the employee move to a post where the subscription is no longer relevant, the claim will no longer be valid.

9. Equality Statement

The Council is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion and combating unfair treatment. The Council will endeavour to ensure equal access to its policies and procedures and will combat discrimination or less favourable treatment on the grounds of any irrelevant consideration, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

10. Appendices

Appendix 1

Mileage Payment Scheme

User	Payment Rate (per mile)	Payment Rate (per mile for each business mile over 10,000 in the tax year)
Essential	45p + lump sum of £200 per annum	25p
Casual	45p	25p
Cash Alternative	20p	20p
Motorbike	24p	24p
Bicycle	20p	20p

Payment rates per mile are the same regardless of fuel type and include electric and hybrid vehicles.

Payment rates per mile are linked to the HMRC approved mileage rates and will be adjusted to reflect any changes made by HMRC.

Definitions:

Essential User

To be entitled to claim travel expenses on the 'Essential User' rate, it must have been deemed necessary for you to have access to your own transport in order to fulfil the requirements of the post. This will be determined by the appropriate Corporate or Service Director. Typically, this will mean that the duties of the role require appropriate travel across and / or outside of the District. This will not include attendance at training events, external meetings, staff or management seminars or travel to your normal place of work.

Casual User

Occasional travel may be required for business purposes for which you may need access to your own vehicle or to public transport.

Agenda Item 6

Annex 5

Cash Alternative

Those in receipt of a Cash Alternative to lease car payment as part of their Terms and Conditions of Employment.

Appendix Two

Anyone who has leased a car through the salary sacrifice scheme will be subject to the following lease car mileage rates effective 1 September 2024.

Engine Size	Diesel		Engine Size	Petrol	LPG
1,600cc and less	12p		1,400cc and less	13p	11p
1,601cc to 2,000cc	14p		1,401 to 2,000cc	15p	13p
Over 2,000cc	18p		Over 2,000cc	24p	21p

All Electric Vehicles	7p
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Hybrid cars are claimed as either petrol or diesel in line with the rates above

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