**Alternative Ways of Working Policy**





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# Policy Statement

* + 1. Argyll and Bute Council recognises the need to move to more modern ways of working. This includes both the hours that are worked and the location that work takes place in. The Council has had a flexible working policy in place for some employees since 1996 allowing flexible working hours to be considered. The council is now extending the options for work patterns and hours to encourage greater flexibility.
		2. The Workforce Deployment Project takes advantage of technological developments to introduce more flexibility to how work is organised and where work takes place which therefore provides more responsive service delivery and greater efficiency. This is highly important in Argyll and Bute where distances are large and travel time can be long.
		3. By providing staff with appropriate equipment and technology to enable them to access all relevant documents electronically whether they are working from home, on the move or in a Council office the Council can provide a complete service to customers, first time. A more efficient workforce also increases the time spent on direct service delivery by reducing the need for field staff to return to base to receive instructions.
		4. This Policy will help facilitate improved service delivery by providing a framework for more imaginative and innovative approaches to working arrangements. Increased flexibility in working arrangements also has the potential to provide greater opportunities to support those employees seeking to integrate their home and work life more successfully.
		5. Potential benefits/advantages for both employees and the Council, and examples of how they may be achieved include:

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| **Benefits/Advantages** | **Examples** |
| * Increased service efficiencies
* Improved productivity levels
* Reduced travel
 | * Systems, knowledge and data could be available from any location making it easier and quicker to respond to requests for information from colleagues or customers.
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| * Increasing flexibility to meet customer demand
* Reduced need to work overtime and the risk of employees working excessive hours
 | * The ability to work from home or from any location would enable the Council to adapt to unusual situations and respond to peaks in demand more effectively, building upon the arrangements the Council currently has in place to cope with adverse situations
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| * Improved recruitment and retention of employees
* Increased employee motivation by allowing employees to better balance their work and home lives
* Reduced sickness absence/special leave requests
	+ - Minimised risk of stress in the workplace in support of the Stress Management Policy
 | * + - Flexibility in working arrangements appeals to employees, particularly to those with caring responsibilities. Employees may experience improved well being and reduced absenteeism. Any reduction in absenteeism will also have the effect of less stress on colleagues who cover for absence, less money to pay for replacement employees and increased efficiency in providing services.
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## Purpose

* + 1. The purpose of the Alternative Ways of Working Policy is to provide clear guidance to managers and employees on:
* The options available
* Eligibility criteria
* The procedure(s) to be followed in applying for and considering an alternative working arrangement.
* Conditions affecting each arrangement

## Scope

* + 1. This policy applies to all employees of Argyll and Bute Council except those employed under Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers conditions of service for whom there are separate arrangements.
		2. The Policy applies to:
* Requests from employees to change their working arrangements. (Requests may be considered at the recruitment stage at the discretion of the appropriate Head of Service).
* The application of alternative ways of working initiated by the Council.
	+ 1. Where employees make a request for an alternative way of working, the onus will be on the employee to make a ‘considered request’ outlining how they see their role and duties being fulfilled under the proposed alternative working arrangement.
		2. Employees do not have a contractual entitlement to have their request approved.
		3. All requests will be considered on their own merit. It is for the Council to decide whether the needs of the service allow the particular option to be granted. In judging individual applications, the Council might wish to consider a range of operational issues including the likely impact on service delivery and other employees both now and in the future, the anticipated cost of the option, and, where applicable, the prospects of recruiting a suitably qualified replacement. In reaching a decision, the Council may also consider the employee’s attendance record, conduct at work (including any ongoing disciplinary action) and any other relevant circumstances.
		4. Clear operational service requirements and business reasons will define the scope for employees to be considered for specific alternative working arrangements. However, it will be the nature of particular operational service areas that some options are already in operation or would be difficult to apply. The over-riding principle of the Alternative Ways of Working Policy is the working pattern must maintain or improve service delivery and be cost effective. No changes to existing working patterns will be authorised if expected, or proven, to be detrimental to service delivery.
		5. The Council also offers a range of separate retirement options to allow employees to reduce their working hours and receive pension benefits. Employees in the Local Government Pension Scheme can apply for flexible retirement, as set out in the Flexible Retirement Procedure. Employees in the Scottish Teachers Superannuation Scheme can apply for phased retirement or winding down, as set out in the Teachers Superannuation Scheme.
		6. Unsuccessful applications for alternative ways of working should not affect an employee’s ability to apply for a flexible/phased retirement or winding down, and equally an unsuccessful application for flexible/phased retirement or winding down should not influence or affect an alternative way of working application.
		7. The Alternative Ways of Working arrangements are separate and distinct from the Council’s Special Leave arrangements.

# Alternative Ways of Working Options

* 1. The Council provides a range of options under the umbrella of the Alternative Ways of Working Policy.
	2. Options (i) to (vii) are concerned with when work is carried out, whilst options (viii) to (xi) relate to where work is carried out.
	3. A summary of each option together with the main contractual implications are set out in the “Alternative Ways of Working Procedure for dealing with requests made by employees”.
	4. Employees may apply for one, or a combination of these options.
		1. Flexible Working Hours (Flexi-time): Choosing when to work within the boundaries of a core period.
		2. Part Time Working: Working less than the normal full time hours, perhaps by working fewer days per week.
		3. Job Sharing – Sharing a job with someone else.
		4. Temporary Change of Hours - Changing an employee’s work pattern for a short period of time.
		5. Term Time Working - Working during the school year.
		6. Flexible Working Year – the employee’s hours are worked out over a year.
		7. Compressed Hours – the employee works their contracted number of hours over fewer days.
		8. Home workers. This work style is used for roles that can be performed permanently from a home location. Whilst the job can be done at home it is typical for home workers to occasionally work in Council offices.
		9. Mobile Workers. This work style is for ‘field’ based work. Typically work is done ‘on the move’ such as in a car, at an external location or from client’s premises. Mobile Workers would typically work from multiple Council offices, external locations and occasionally from home.
		10. Flexible Workers. This work style can be carried out in a variety of locations including multiple Council offices and at home. Typically a flexible worker would work occasionally from home and from one or two Council offices.
		11. Fixed Workers. Attending a fixed work location and working a fixed work pattern.

# Operation of the Policy

* 1. The scope to provide alternative working arrangements will depend on the type of service delivery provided and the operational constraints of particular arrangements.
	2. Requests will be approached with a focus on how services can be maintained or improved through the specific alternative way of working requested, rather than focussing on the reason for the request.
	3. Agreeing to one employee's request will not set a precedent or create a right for another employee to be granted a similar change to his/her working pattern.
	4. The decision to support a request will be based on clear business reasons, for example, impact on service delivery, improved quality of service, cost implications and impact on other employees’ etc.
	5. The manager and the employee will work jointly to reach an acceptable solution that will be based on mutuality, co-operation and practicable compromise. This may include the provision of a trial period where one or both parties are unsure if the proposed working arrangement would be practicable.
	6. Trial periods must be agreed by both parties before the arrangement begins. They must be for a reasonable and specified period (maximum of 3 months), at the end of which, or sooner if required, the working arrangement will be subject to review.
	7. If a trial period is unsuccessful, the employee will revert back to their substantive working practices. Alternatively, the Council may agree to explore other working arrangements with the employee.
	8. Where a trial period has proved the alternative way of working to be a success in the opinion of both the employee and the manager, this will be confirmed in writing as a permanent change.
	9. Some alternative working arrangements will result in the terms and conditions of the contract of employment being adjusted accordingly. Such adjustments will be referenced to the norm of an equivalent full-time employee working the standard working week (e.g. pro-rata pay/annual leave).
	10. The Council will encourage requests that will provide a financial saving through a reduction in working hours.
	11. Any change to an employee's working pattern as a result of a request for an alternative way of working is regarded as a permanent variation to the employee's contract, unless agreed otherwise. With the exception of trial periods, once a change to an employee's hours or place of work has been implemented, the employee has no right to revert to his or her previous pattern of working at a future date. Trial periods should be agreed by both parties before working arrangements are changed and will normally last for a maximum of 3 months.
	12. Where the Council initiates an alternative way of working, employees will be advised of the procedure to be followed.
	13. All individual contract variations will be subject to review in light of changing operational service needs when the continuation of the working arrangement is detrimental to service delivery. At such time, the Council will reserve the right, following employee consultation and reasonable notice, to end the existing arrangement and may explore other alternative working arrangements.
	14. All parties must be aware of their duties and obligations prior to the commencement of the new working arrangements and employees are entitled to the same access to training, career opportunities and other work-related initiatives as those working standard hours.
	15. Managers should consult with HR representatives prior to applying the policy framework in any particular circumstance. Matters of interpretation and further advice, if required, can also be obtained from HR representatives.

# Manager’s Responsibilities

* 1. Managers are expected to:
* Consider current and foreseeable operational needs of the service and how different working arrangements could affect these
* Consider the potential impact on other employees, internal and external customers and clients
* Continue to measure the performance and output of all employees to maintain service standards.
* Decide whether alternative working arrangements can be supported, taking into account such factors as the employee’s role and the operational needs of the service.
* Determine whether the alternative working arrangement can be agreed on a temporary or permanent basis. If a permanent change cannot be supported, the manager may consider if the request can be supported on a temporary basis.

# Employee’s Responsibilities

* 1. When making requests, employees are expected to:
* Outline, in their request, how they see their role and duties being fulfilled under the proposed alternative working arrangement
* Recognise and consider the likely impact on existing terms and conditions
* Collaborate with their line manager during the request process
* Ensure the timing of the request allows sufficient opportunity for the line manager to fully consider the request

# Evaluation of the Policy

* 1. In order to evaluate the effectiveness and the use of the Alternative Ways of Working Policy, monitoring is required. This can be achieved by collating:
* Statistical information – HR will monitor and record applications, decisions and appeals under the Policy
* Costing information – The administration, set up costs and reductions in other costs being monitored by departments
* Qualitative information – A regular review of the Policy taking into consideration the views and comments of Council employees.
	1. The Policy will be monitored on an ongoing basis and reviewed in light of operational experience.
	2. The following policies and documents are to be read in conjunction with this Policy:
* Alternative Ways of Working Procedure for Dealing with Requests Made by Employees
* Guidelines - Conduct of Employees
* ICT Acceptable Use Policy
* Health and Safety Policy
* Conditions of Service
* Code of Disciplinary Procedures
* Grievance and Disputes Procedure
* Policy on Working Alone
* Workforce Deployment – Use of Space Policy
* Working Time Regulations 1998 as amended



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