

Report to:	Executive Cabinet Member – Leader’s Portfolio		
Date of meeting:	10 January 2023		
Report of:	Sue Johnson - Chief Executive	Report Number:	
Reporting Officer:	Lee Fallows – Director of Corporate Resources	Telephone Number:	x2050
Contact Officer:	Jayne King - Head of HR/OD Transformation	Telephone Number:	x2634
Report title:	Hybrid and Remote Working Policy		
Not confidential			
This report does not contain information which warrants its consideration in the absence of the press or members of the public.			
Purpose:	This policy sets out the permanent arrangements for hybrid and remote working in the post-pandemic context, to ensure service delivery and provide managers and staff with support for safe working practices and workforce wellbeing.		
Recommendations:	The Executive Cabinet Member is recommended to approve the attached policy which has been developed in consultation with the joint trades unions. The policy will incorporate the relevant information for a very small number of permanent home-working arrangements from the 2008 Home Working Policy.		
Decision:			
Appendices:	Appendix 1 Equality Impact Assessment Appendix 2 Proposed Policy		
Background documents:	N/A		
Date:			
Consultation with other officers			
Finance	No	N/A	N/A
Legal	No	N/A	N/A
HR	Yes	2/11/22	Jayne King
Equality Impact Assessment	Yes	2/11/22	Lisa Corbett
Vision outcomes Please identify the appropriate Vision outcome(s) that this report relates or contributes to by putting a cross in the relevant box.		1. Start Well	
		2. Live Well	X
		3. Age Well	
		4. Prosperous	X
		5. Clean and Green	X
		6. Strong and Distinctive	

1. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

- 1.1. Following the necessary shift to home working within the pandemic, which was key to maintaining service delivery, there is now a variety of hybrid working practices across the organisation, in roles which allow this. Following the return to workplace guidance issued by the Chief Executive last year it is now timely that the arrangements are confirmed within an up-to-date policy document.
- 1.2. There are many benefits to operating a blend of both workplace and remote working including supporting employees' work-life balance but there are also some notable challenges. The policy aims to set out the arrangements for hybrid working, reiterate the need for attendance in the workplace and support managers who manage hybrid teams.
- 1.3. If agreed, this policy will outline the permanent arrangements for hybrid and remote working moving forward, the responsibilities and considerations for both staff and managers to ensure effective service delivery and responsibilities to residents are fulfilled. It also aims to provide access to a range of support options to enhance workforce wellbeing.

2. ISSUES

2.1. Challenges

Staff recognised the benefits and identified the challenges they had found with remote working during the pandemic in a recent staff survey. This policy aims to highlight both the benefits and challenges, providing sources of support and advice for both managers and staff.

- 2.2. It is recognised that a considerable proportion of roles across the organisation are front-line and/or cannot be completed in a remote or hybrid manner and therefore managers are also encouraged to think creatively as to ways in which these roles could be made more flexible to enhance the work-life balance of those staff too.

- 2.3. It is advised the details of hybrid working arrangements are discussed in regular supervision/1 to 1 sessions, to ensure the arrangements continue to work well for staff, managers and meet the needs of the service. The effectiveness of all hybrid working arrangements should be reviewed, as a minimum annually.

2.4. Process to Date

A staff engagement piece took place in Summer 2022 and staff provided feedback as to their perceived benefits and challenges associated with hybrid working.

- 2.5. In consultation with the joint trades unions, the HR team have drafted the policy and supporting information, to expand on the principles cascaded to staff from the Chief Executive (in late 2021 and early 2022) and further enhance the package of management and wellbeing support.
- 2.6. The draft policy has received input and expertise from various professional perspectives of stakeholder teams including ICT, Insurance, Payroll, Health and Safety and Information Governance.
- 2.7. The 2008 Home Working policy, which applies to a very small number of permanent home workers, has been reviewed and the content incorporated into a section within the proposed policy.

3. SUPPORT FOR MANAGERS AND STAFF

- 3.1. A dedicated intranet page to pull together key links to information sources for ICT, digital skills, training and wellbeing has been set up and will be launched with the new policy. This has been devised together with some “top tips” documents designed to help managers with remote team management, staff working remotely and those using online meetings.
- 3.2. A range of wellbeing support, training and resources have been developed to support those working in a hybrid manner including posture advice. Risk Assessments should be completed for staff working in a hybrid way with advice and guidance on this process being posted on the intranet.
- 3.3. Managers will need to ensure all staff working in a hybrid way complete the online course on using Display Screen Equipment (DSE). Staff already working in a hybrid way should ensure this is completed by the end of March 2023.
- 3.4. The HR Team have been working to design an advice and support session for managers to help them with the new policy and hybrid working arrangements.
- 3.5. There is a menu of other support sources for staff featured on the intranet page including mental and physical health support and various courses on ME Learning, the Council’s e-learning platform, including digital skills.

4. IMPACTS AND IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 **General:** It is recognised that one approach will not suit all services and job roles across the council and that managers will need to establish the working practices that are effective in their areas to ensure service delivery and staff wellbeing.
- 4.2 **Financial:** No significant financial implications are anticipated. Any costs associated with purchasing IT equipment will be met by service’s own budgets.
- 4.3 **Legal:** No legal impact or implications are anticipated.
- 4.4 **HR:** The policy aims to provide an effective toolkit to embrace hybrid working, contributing to the Council’s recruitment, retention and wellbeing approaches.
- 4.5 **Climate Change:** The hybrid working approach could reduce emissions due to reduced commuting from staff.

5. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)

- 5.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the council has a general duty to have due regard to the need to:
 - 1. **eliminate unlawful discrimination**, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
 - 2. **advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and

3. **foster good relations** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

- 5.2 It is important to consider how the proposals contained within this report may impact positively or negatively on protected characteristics. It is not anticipated that the proposals within this report will have a negative differential impact on any of Bolton's diversity groups, including staff, however there may be some positive impacts which are detailed in the EIA.
- 5.3 An Equality Impact Assessment is at Appendix 1.

6. **TIMESCALES**

- 6.1. If approved, the policy would be implemented and communications to staff and support sessions would be arranged. Key implementation activity includes:

Date	Details
February 2023	Team briefing communication to managers of new policy details. Launch of manager and staff support sessions Launch of hybrid working intranet site Top tips guides communicated to all staff New ME Learning modules available to increase digital skills Assistant Directors to discuss in JOG meetings with trades unions how arrangements will operate in their services
February 2023	Wellbeing support sessions
March 2023	DSE Online Learning to be completed by all staff working in a hybrid way
April 2023	Review launch with trades unions & with staff via Stribe engagement system to see if further wellbeing support is needed.

7. **VISION 2030**

- 7.1. It is anticipated that the flexible working options the policy sets out will contribute to the vision aims of:

Live Well	The health and wellbeing of staff is improved through working arrangements which support a work life balance and are conducive to managing caring commitments.
Prosperous	Hybrid working is a current recruitment and retention tool in many roles and occupational areas.
Clean and Green	Increased hybrid working contributes to reduced commuter levels.

8. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Executive Cabinet Member is recommended to approve the attached policy which has been developed in consultation with the joint trades unions and will incorporate the relevant information

for a very small number of permanent home-working arrangements from the 2008 Home Working Policy.

Appendix 1: Equality Impact Assessment

Title of report or proposal:
Hybrid and Remote Working Policy

Directorate:	Corporate Resources
Section:	HR/OD
Date:	January 2023

Public sector bodies need to be able to evidence that they have given due regard to the impact and potential impact on all people with 'protected characteristics' in shaping policy, in delivering services, and in relation to their own employees.

Under the Equality Act 2010, the council has a general duty to have due regard to the need to:

1. **eliminate unlawful discrimination**, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
2. **advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
3. **foster good relations** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

By completing the following questions, the three parts of the equality duty will be consciously considered as part of the decision-making process.

Details of the outcome of the Equality Impact Assessment must also be included in the main body of the report.

1. Describe in summary the aims, objectives and purpose of the proposal, including desired outcomes.

During the pandemic there was a necessary shift to home-working in order to maintain service delivery, resulting in a variety of hybrid working practices across the organisation.

If agreed, this policy would outline the permanent arrangements for hybrid and remote working moving forward, the responsibilities and considerations for both staff and managers to ensure effective service delivery and a range of support options to enhance workforce wellbeing.

2. Is this a new policy / function / service or review of existing one?

It is a new policy.

3. Who are the main stakeholders in relation to the proposal?

Staff & Managers
Trades Unions
Elected Members

4. In summary, what are the anticipated (positive or negative) impacts of the proposal?

The anticipated positive impacts are that, if agreed, the final proposal will:

- Increase employee wellbeing and work / life balance.
- Increase productivity and job satisfaction.
- Improve staff recruitment and retention and enhance digital skills.
- Provide potential savings from reduced office space requirements.

There are no anticipated negative impacts. Hybrid working arrangements would be reviewed regularly to ensure they continue to work well for staff, managers and meet the needs of the service.

5. What, if any, cumulative impact could the proposal have?

This is an impact that appears when you consider services or activities together. A change or activity in one area may create an impact somewhere else.

None identified. The services delivered to customers will not be affected.

6. Regarding the stakeholders identified above and the diversity groups set out below:

	Is there any potential for (positive or negative) differential impact? Could this lead to adverse impact and if so, what?	Can this adverse impact be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group, or for any other reason? Please state why	Please detail what actions you will take to remedy any identified adverse impact i.e., actions to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations
Race (this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality, and caste, and includes refugees and migrants; and gypsies and travellers)	No differential impact is anticipated at this stage.	It is not anticipated that there would be an impact as a result of these proposals.	N/A
Religion or belief (this includes any religion with a clear structure and belief system. Belief means any religious or philosophical belief. The Act also covers lack of religion or belief)	No differential impact is anticipated at this stage.	It is not anticipated that there would be an impact as a result of these proposals.	N/A
Disability (a person is disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities)	There is potential for a positive impact on this group e.g. as a reasonable adjustment and/or phased return to work.	It is not anticipated that there would be an impact as a result of these proposals.	N/A
Sex / Gender	No differential impact is anticipated at this stage.	It is not anticipated that there would be an impact as a result of these proposals.	N/A

Gender reassignment / Gender identity (a person who's deeply felt and individual experience of gender may not correspond to the sex assigned to them at birth, they may or may not propose to, start, or complete a process to change their gender. A person does not need to be under medical supervision to be protected)	No differential impact is anticipated at this stage.	It is not anticipated that there would be an impact as a result of these proposals.	N/A
Age (people of all ages)	No differential impact is anticipated at this stage.	It is not anticipated that there would be an impact as a result of these proposals.	N/A
Sexual orientation - people who are lesbian, gay and bisexual.	No differential impact is anticipated at this stage.	It is not anticipated that there would be an impact as a result of these proposals.	N/A
Marriage and civil partnership (Only in relation to due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination)	No differential impact is anticipated at this stage.	It is not anticipated that there would be an impact as a result of these proposals.	N/A
Caring status (including pregnancy & maternity)	There is potential for a positive impact on this group e.g. to manage caring commitments more effectively, improve work-life balance and/or as a reasonable adjustment.	It is not anticipated that there would be an impact as a result of these proposals.	N/A

Socio-economic	No differential impact is anticipated at this stage.	It is not anticipated that there would be an impact as a result of these proposals.	N/A
Other comments or issues.			
Please provide a list of the evidence used to inform this EIA, such as the results of consultation or other engagement, service take-up, service monitoring, surveys, stakeholder comments and complaints where appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff surveys • Consultation with unions • Feedback from Directorate Leadership Teams and other professional colleagues i.e. Insurance, Payroll, Health and Safety, Procurement, IT and HR. 		

This EIA form and report has been checked and countersigned by the Directorate Equalities Officer before proceeding to DLT/CLT:

Please confirm the outcome of this EIA:

No major impact identified, therefore no major changes required – proceed	<input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/>
Adjustments to remove barriers / promote equality (mitigate impact) have been identified – proceed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Positive impact for one or more groups justified on the grounds of promoting equality - proceed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Continue despite having identified potential for adverse impact/missed opportunities for promoting equality – this requires a strong justification	<input type="checkbox"/>
The EIA identifies actual or potential unlawful discrimination - stop and rethink	<input type="checkbox"/>

Contact Officer

Name: Jayne King

Date: January 2023

Directorate Equalities Lead Officer

Name: Lee Fallows

Date: January 2023

