

# Dorchester Town Council

## Policy Committee

18 September 2023

**Present:** The Mayor (Councillor A. Chisholm) and Councillors B. Armstrong-Marshall, R. Biggs (Chairman), J. Hewitt, S. Hosford and G. Jones.

**Apologies:** Councillors S. Biles, T. Harries and F. Hogwood.

In Attendance

Councillors S. Jones, F. Kent-Ledger, D. Leaper and M. Rennie.

15. **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 24 July 2023, adopted by Council on 31 July 2023, were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

16. **Declaration of Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

17. **Finance Update**

Members considered a report by the Finance Officer which updated them on the financial position of the Council as at end of August 2023. The report also set out the level of debt over 30 days and gave details of the payments list from 1 July 2023 to 31 August 2023.

**Resolved**

That the payments list, totalling £253,670.06, be approved.

18. **Working from Home Policy**

Members considered a new Working from Home Policy. It was noted that the Policy only related to office staff based at North Square and that this should be made clear on the document. It was reported that there were online videos available to view in respect of Display Screen Equipment assessments.

**Recommended**

That the Office Based Staff Working from Home Policy, as set out in Appendix 1 to these Minutes, be adopted.

19. **ICT Update**

The Committee considered a report by the Town Clerk on the re-use and disposal of redundant ICT equipment.

**Resolved**

That the protocol for re-use / disposal of redundant ICT equipment be agreed.

**20. Review of Community Priorities 2023 - 2028**

Members had before them a report by the Community Development Officer which set out a high-level review of the Council’s progress in helping the community to achieve the previous Community Plan aims and aspirations. The report also set out the new Community Priorities Review which was supported by a more detailed Community Implementations Plan.

The Committee made the following comments:-

- That the Community Implementation Plan be tied in with the Corporate Plan and be monitored by the Committee on a regular basis.
- Violence against women and girls should be included within priority 4.
- The Plan should be available on the new Council website.
- Kingston Maurward College and DTAG should be included in the list of partners.
- Important to promote both South and West railway stations.

Members also requested that a feedback report on the Community Fridge project be presented to a future meeting of the Management Committee.

**Recommended**

That, subject to the comments set out above, the Community Priorities Review and the Community Implementation Plan 2023 – 2028 be agreed.

Chairman.....

## **Dorchester Town Council Office Based Staff - Home Working Policy**

### **1. Purpose**

This policy aims to provide a framework within which the council can manage and assess requests from office based staff to work from home (or somewhere other than a council property). It also provides information and a risk assessment for staff to use to ensure that they can work safely and effectively in a non-office environment.

The council recognises the benefits of occasional homeworking in terms of staff welfare and retention. In particular, this flexible approach to work can offer the following advantages:

- Helping with a better work/life balance – particularly where it reduces time spent commuting and make the council a more attractive employer.
- Providing the opportunity for a quiet workspace in order to concentrate on a particular task.
- Reduce staff commuting and thereby reduce carbon emissions.
- Take advantage of new technology to ensure service delivery.

### **2. Definition**

This policy is applicable where an employee wishes to work from home (or another location outside of the usual workplace) on an ad hoc or regular basis. Working from home is a discretionary benefit offered by the council rather than a contractual obligation. A request by a member of staff to work from home may be refused where it would have an adverse effect on service delivery and colleagues.

As working from home is not a requirement of the council, there is no tax relief on outgoings or expenses incurred.

Working from home or other remote locations will also fall within the council's Lone Working risk assessment and staff should familiarise themselves with this assessment and apply the recommended mitigation measures.

This policy also compliments the council's flexi-time policy.

### **3. Maintaining service standards**

Working from home should not adversely affect the ability of the council to deliver services to the public nor should this type of working place an unfair burden on colleagues. This may particularly be the case where adequate staff cover is required to respond to customers at the council offices reception given that the council employs a small office-based workforce.

In addition, given that many of the council's workforce are unable to work from home (e.g. the Outdoor Services team), maintaining productive working relationships across the whole council is important.

Where staff need to attend face-to-face meetings with colleagues, members or the general public, then this should not be prevented by a desire to work from home.

It is expected the staff working from home will still be available to be contactable via phone or TEAMS.

#### **4. Health & Safety**

Employees must undertake a risk assessment (see **Appendix A**) of the area at home (or other location) where they intend to work frequently and submit to their manager. If a safe working environment cannot be created, then working from home may not be permitted.

Whilst working from home can help with quiet concentration on complex tasks, staff must make sure that they take rest breaks.

Where staff are going out to attend site meetings with members of the public whilst working from home, then the Lone Working Risk Assessment should be used to ensure safe working practices.

#### **5. Employer's role and responsibilities**

- a) The council will respond in a timely manner to any requests to work from home.
- b) The council will provide laptop computers with connectivity to the council's network so as to enable home working.
- c) The council will continue to support the introduction and deployment of new technology to make flexible working easier.
- d) Whilst working from home (or remotely), staff are covered by the council's Employer's Liability insurance.
- e) The council will not cover any expenses incurred by staff as a result of working from home (e.g. heating and lighting).

#### **6. Employee's responsibilities**

- a) The employee must request their line manager's permission to work from home in advance.
- b) Staff will be responsible for the good care of their equipment when working from home as they are in the workplace.
- c) The employee must complete the Risk Assessment (Appendix A) prior to working from home and submit to their manager for approval – accompanied by a photograph of their 'workstation' at home.
- d) The employee should discuss their desire to work from home with immediate colleagues to help ensure that they aren't inconvenienced or burdened with additional duties as a result.
- e) The employee should use the available technology to receive incoming phone calls when working at home to ensure that colleagues in the office aren't inconvenienced or burdened, and service standards are maintained for the benefit of the public.
- f) Meetings with members of the public must not take place at the employee's home.
- g) Working from home should not be used to simultaneously fulfil an employee's caring duties. However, it is recognised that working from home can make it easier for staff to take time off for private appointments and family commitments.
- h) Whilst working from home staff should, where possible, keep to their usual pattern of working hours to make it easier for colleagues and the public to contact them.
- i) The employee must ensure that the confidentiality of any work-related data or information whilst accessing it from home.
- j) Any accidents or 'near misses' must be reported to the line manager as in the case with incidents in the workplace.

END

**Appendix A:** Risk Assessment (to be undertaken by employee at home and submitted to manager for approval) – please use the following as prompts to help the assessment:

Questions	Yes / No	Comments
<b>1. General</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completed a DSE assessment?</li> </ul>		
<b>2. Chair</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the chair height adjustable?</li> <li>Is the back rest adjustable in height &amp; tilt?</li> <li>Does the chair have a five-staff base?</li> <li>Is the chair comfortable?</li> <li>Do you need a footrest?</li> </ul>		
<b>3. Desk / work-surface</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the area large enough for all the equipment and the full range of tasks to be undertaken there?</li> <li>Is there sufficient clearance beneath the area for thighs and knees and to stretch the legs?</li> <li>Have you sufficient space to access your desk as well as more space around it?</li> <li>If you use a document holder is it positioned at same height and distance as your monitor?</li> </ul>		
<b>4. Keyboard</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there sufficient space in front of the keyboard to place a wrist rest?</li> <li>Are all the keys present and in working order?</li> </ul>		
<b>5. Mouse</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there sufficient space adjacent to the keyboard for the mouse to be used comfortably?</li> <li>Is it positioned close to the keyboard to prevent over-extending or cramping of the wrist?</li> <li>Do you need a mousemat?</li> </ul>		
<b>6. Screen</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the monitor positioned firstly in front of you?</li> <li>Is the monitor positioned at the correct height? <i>(when looking horizontally eyes should be resting just below the top of the screen)</i></li> <li>Does the screen tilt and swivel easily?</li> <li>Is the image on the screen clear and stable?</li> </ul>		
<b>6. Environment</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there any manual handling issues relating to you working from home?</li> <li>Is the work area free from trip hazards – including the tidying of cables and leads?</li> <li>Does the route to your workplace involve using a loft ladder?</li> </ul>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there access problems if you carry large or heavy items?</li> <li>• Is the general lighting adequate?</li> <li>• Can you eliminate strong light sources / reflections?</li> <li>• Is the temperature and ventilations adequate and free from draughts?</li> <li>• Is the work area free from distracting noise?</li> <li>• Will your home working activities involve significant use of the telephone?</li> <li>• Are you intending to use a mobile phone for this purpose or will you have access to a land line?</li> <li>• In relation to your electrical equipment is there any evidence of damage to plugs or leads?</li> <li>• Is there any evidence of overheating?</li> <li>• Are combustible materials kept away from sources of heat?</li> <li>• Do you have a smoke alarm fitted?</li> <li>• Do you know what action to take in the event of a fire?</li> </ul>		
<b>7. I.T. Equipment</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you have a suitable and secure broadband internet connection.</li> </ul>		