
REPORT TO:	FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM:	10
DATE OF MEETING:	17 TH JUNE 2004	CATEGORY:	DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE	OPEN PARAGRAPH NO:	
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	BARRY NICHOLLS (EXT 5789)	DOC:	
SUBJECT:	HOMEWORKING POLICY	REF:	
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	NONE	TERMS OF REFERENCE:	FM05

1.0 Recommendations

1.0 That the Committee approves the procedure and guidance in Appendix A concerning Homeworking for adoption by the Council.

2.0 Purpose of Report

2.1 To recommend best practice guidance and a procedure to help both managers and employees to operate homeworking. Annexe A promotes a framework to help ensure that requests to work from home are considered fairly and that due regard is given to individual and service needs measured against potential benefits.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Employers have a statutory duty to seriously consider (subject to eligibility criteria) applications from employees for the following:

- A change to the hours they work.
- A change to the times when they are requested to work.
- To work from home.

3.2 This duty was introduced by the Government as part of its work life initiative.

3.3 Applications can be refused. To do this, an employer must provide a clear business reason as to why the application cannot be accepted and the reason(s) that apply in the circumstances. The legislation provides eight business grounds that an employer can cite for refusing an application.

Applying for a change in working arrangements

3.4 At the meeting on 4th September 2003, this Committee approved a procedure for dealing applications to change working arrangements (i.e. to change working hours and/or patterns). It was agreed to develop a separate procedure and guidance for Homeworking because it is a more complex issue.

Consultation

- 3.5 The proposed document at Annexe A has been the subject of lengthy consultation within the Joint Negotiating Group. Rather than delay its introduction by waiting for the next meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee (yet to be arranged), the Group recommended that it be presented to Committee for approval.

Content

- 3.6 The proposed document includes practical advice to both managers employees on how to make homeworking work efficiently and effectively. It stresses that there must be a benefit to both the employee and the Council. The procedure should ensure that the Council meets its statutory duty and that applications are considered on an individual basis and in a fair and transparent manner.
- 3.7 The procedure will be supported by other documentation (e.g. checklists, sample letters for employees/managers, guidance notes) to facilitate its application.
- 3.8 Whilst the advice and procedure predominantly deal with formal requests for homeworking, guidance is also provided on managing informal arrangements.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The cost to the Council will depend on each individual case. Managers are advised within the guidance that cost is a factor to be assessed and balanced against any benefits from the proposed homeworking arrangements.

5.0 Corporate Implications

- 5.1 The consultation document will help to ensure that requests from employee's to homework will be dealt with fairly, objectively and consistently. The guidance provided is also intended to help employees assess whether homeworking is appropriate to their circumstances.
- 5.2 The consultation document forms another part of the Authority's Flexible Working package. Helping employees to maintain a work life balance should also assist with recruitment and retention.

6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 To meet legislative requirements there already is an agreed policy to deal with employee requests to change their hours of work/working pattern. Annexe A should also help the Authority to meet its statutory duty to objectively consider individual requests from employees to work at or from home.