

**BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**FROM: HR Panel**

**REPORT NUMBER E245**

**TO: STRATEGY COMMITTEE**

**DATE OF MEETING 12 January 2006**

**WORKING FROM HOME POLICY**

1. **SUMMARY**

1.1 The HR Panel are recommending adoption of a Working From Home Policy for Babergh employees under the Council's Going Forward Together – Flexible Working Policies.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 That the Working from Home Policy (attached as an Appendix to this report) be adopted with immediate effect.

2.2 That a review of the Policy should take place one year after implementation.

The Committee is able to resolve this matter.

3. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 Proposals have been put forward within the current Service & Financial Planning process to expand the CITRIX platform to allow an increase in the number of concurrent users.

4. **KEY INFORMATION**

4.1 In July 2004 the HR Panel approved paper HR75 that introduced three Flexible Working Policies under the banner of Going Forward Together. These were: -

- A Framework for Working Flexibly
- An updated Flexible Working Hours Policy
- A Secondment Policy.

It was recognised that further policies may be developed within this framework in time.

4.2 The objective of the Working Flexibly Initiative is to support and enable the development of a fluid and flexible workforce, willing and able to respond quickly to the varying demands and priorities of the Authority and our customers.

4.3 A Working from Home Policy has been drafted which is attached as an appendix. This has been developed with support from an internal working group including Unison representation, which has been piloting working from home over the past year.

4.4 The introduction of the policy will support the required outcomes for E-Government as defined by the ODPM.

4.5 In terms of ICT, at present we are equipped to enable 60 concurrent users to work from home utilising CITRIX at no further cost. There are proposals, which have been put forward within the current S&FP process to expand the CITRIX platform to allow increases in this number.

5. **APPENDICES**

Working From Home –Draft Policy and Procedure

6. **BACKGROUND PAPERS REFERRED TO:**

HR Panel Paper HR75

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## **BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **WORKING FROM HOME**

### **DRAFT POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

#### **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The Home Working Policy fits within the Councils Going Forward Together –Working Flexibly Programme, which includes a series of other, related policies. The aim of the Programme is to support the development of a flexible workforce within the Authority to most effectively meet the current and future needs of our customers. In turn, these policies create opportunities for staff to accommodate and achieve an improved work: life balance.
- 1.2 Home Working will be managed to ensure that it can support the following outcomes: -
- Improved productivity
  - Increased efficiency
  - Reduced pressure on office and car parking space

#### **2. INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 This Policy is to be followed by Heads of Service and/or Managers who have received requests from staff to work from home \* and have themselves identified a need for work to be undertaken in this way.

*(\*Note throughout this Policy the reference to “Home” will be interpreted as Home or a suitable alternative location)*

- 2.2 As an equal opportunities employer, Babergh District Council is keen to support flexible working. This includes the opportunity for officers to work from home provided that the criteria documented in this policy are met and their Manager has approved their application for home working.
- 2.3 The requirements of the Service and the nature of each individual’s job are crucial factors in determining whether or not employees can work at home, rather than in the office or at another workplace. Within that context, Heads of Service and Managers are encouraged to respond positively to applications for home working arrangements, which can positively impact on productivity and the work/life balance and reduce pressure on office space in the headquarters building.

2.4 This policy documents the following: -

- The levels of home working that may be undertaken.
- The criterion against which officers ability to work from home will be assessed.
- The officers who will decide whether or not an officer may work from home.
- The provisions that must be met to support and enable home working.

### 3. **HOME WORKING – LEVELS**

3.1 There are three levels of home working that can be supported:

- OCCASIONAL – e.g. to complete an important and urgent task away from distractions in the office.
- INTERMITTENT – e.g. working from home one or two days per week on a regular basis which is agreed in advance, ideally but not necessarily always the same days each week. When away from the office, the Officers desk /workstation is to be available for hot-desking.
- COMPLETE – e.g. where the normal workplace is at home with no permanent desk or office space provided within the HQ or other Council site(s).

3.2 The implications and requirements of each are different, as are the levels of support and preparation that need to be made by the Council and employee.

3.3 In the case of INTERMITTENT or COMPLETE home working a formal application must be submitted to the appropriate Head of Service or Manager. For OCCASIONAL home working this can be agreed with Managers on an informal basis as at present.

### 4. **HOME WORKING – CONSIDERATIONS & ASSESSMENT CRITERIA**

4.1 Managers must exercise discretion in approving home working and if there are any concerns regarding their confidence in an individual to homework effectively then this will be declined or may be withdrawn if previously approved. In considering whether home working is appropriate the following criteria, in addition to those detailed in paragraph 1.2 above, will be assessed: -

- The nature of the work to be undertaken i.e. how important is it that there is close access to paper files or equipment that will not be available at home.
- Requirements of the post –i.e. if the post is essentially a customer facing or team support role in whole or in part it will significantly reduce any home working opportunity
- Impact on others –i.e. colleagues in the office
- Office cover
- The ease at which output and performance can be measured when home working

- Supervision arrangement
    - If there is a supervisory responsibility then it is vital that the post holder is able to provide the required support to their team.
    - The degree of day-to-day supervision of the post holder will also be a factor.
- 4.2 Officers must be able to work free from distractions, for example dependants requiring the Officers attention. Appropriate care arrangements must be in place in cases where officers would otherwise be at home with dependants.
- 4.3 Secure storage must be provided for confidential or sensitive papers or other materials, both in the home and in transit between home and the workplace and data protection requirements must be adhered to at all times.
- 4.4 Where on-line working forms part of the application the Officer concerned must:
- Have access to appropriate ICT equipment to support secure connection to the Babergh Local Area Network (LAN) at the level required. The preferred alternative for the provision of on-line facilities is for the officer to utilise home based, privately owned PCs with Internet access. See Appendix 4 for full details on the provision of online access.
  - Be competent in the use of the appropriate ICT equipment for connection to, and the operation of, Babergh systems and services.

## 5. **HOME WORKING – AUTHORITY to APPROVE**

- 5.1 The Authority to approve applications for Home Working will rest with Heads of Service and/or Section Managers.
- 5.2 The authorising Head of Service/Manager must ensure that all relevant criteria described in Section 3 have been met and that applicants have an understanding of their obligations under related legislation before granting approval.

## 6. **HOME WORKING – HEALTH AND SAFETY PROVISION/REQUIREMENTS**

- 6.1 The Council needs to be satisfied that both the officer and their home situation are suitable for working from home. Consideration must be given to the areas listed below under 6.2.1 to 6.2.8.
- 6.2 The Council reaffirms its commitment to the safety and well-being of its' staff however all officers taking advantage of this facility must meet the requirements of the Council Health and Safety Policy in the same way as they would when working in the office. A copy of the Councils Health & Safety Policy can be found at:

<http://intranet.babergh.gov.uk/intranet/refdocs/pol&proc/1701.pdf>

Where officers may be working from home on a Regular or Constant basis the officer concerned and the Council must be satisfied that the officers working conditions at home satisfy Health and Safety requirements as laid out in the Councils Health & Safety policy. Formal workstation assessments can be provided to ensure that the officer is not at risk.

### 6.2.1 Health and Safety - General: -

- Officers working from home must adhere to the Council's Health and Safety Policy
- Where there are to be 'COMPLETE' home-working arrangements there will be a workstation assessment carried out within the home. Where home-working is 'INTERMITTENT' or 'OCCASIONAL', the Officer concerned must identify risks associated with working from home, bring these to the attention of their Manager and seek to address and/or minimise where necessary.
- Officers must notify their line manager if any changes to their home working arrangements occur that may affect the decision to approve home working.
- All reasonable steps to ensure that working conditions continue to comply with Health and Safety requirements must be undertaken.

### 6.2.2 Equipment: -

- Where equipment is provided and installed permanently in an officer's home, the Council will be responsible for installation, maintenance and repair in line with the Health & Safety Policy.
- Equipment provided by the Council should only be used for Council business. Personal use may be undertaken provided it is within the policies described in the ICT Users Handbook. This can be viewed at:

*<< Insert link to ICT Users Handbook >>*

- It is not expected that equipment will be installed in the case of occasional or intermittent home working, although the use of portable equipment e.g. lap top computers may be provided.

### 6.2.3 ICT Support – There will be two levels of ICT Support provided.

- For 'home' workers who have been provided with laptops, or equivalent mobile equipment, the ICT Support team will provide support for all supplied hardware and installed system and application software in the usual way. Support will be available from 08:00 – 17:00, Mon to Fri inclusive and can be accessed via the ICT Helpdesk.
- For 'home' workers who access Council services via the Internet (web) using their own private equipment the Council will provide support for the connection to Council services from 08:00 to 17:00, Mon to Fri inclusive. If, following initial fault diagnosis, the cause is not associated with the provided connection then it will be the responsibility of the 'home' worker to pursue a solution with the appropriate agency, i.e. their Internet Service Provider (ISP), hardware provider e.g. DELL, Tiny etc.
- Advice and guidance on security products required to support connection to Council Services will be provided, as will advice and guidance on all queries relating to the use of 'home' PCs to connect to the Council LAN. Where sufficient security products are not installed on 'home' PCs the ICT Support team will provide alternatives (freeware) that can be installed prior to connecting to the Council LAN.

#### 6.2.4 Telephones – provision

- Business calls will be reimbursed subject to the provision of accurate authorised records.
- Reimbursement may include payment of rental elements in the case of intermittent or complete home working.
- Connections to home-based telephone lines are available through the Council's switchboard enabling calls to the office to be routed to the officer's home.

#### 6.2.5 Council Tax – Implications for Home Workers.

- Change of Use – There will be no implications for home workers where the officer is using a laptop/PC and/or similar equipment within the home and the home has not been upgraded to provide formal office facilities. If the home workers home has been modified to provide formal office facilities then that officer should notify their local Council Tax office as soon as such changes are carried out as a 'Change of Use' may apply and subsequently attract an additional charge.
- If unsure of the implications in respect of Council Tax when working from home officers should seek advice from the Local Tax team within the Revenues Division or read the leaflet which can be found at: -

*<< Insert link to Council Tax leaflet on 'Change of Use' etc >>*

#### 6.2.6 Insurance – Implications for Home workers.

- Employer Liability Insurance - The Council will potentially be liable at all times for loss, damage or injury caused by the proper use of furniture and equipment which it has installed in the home worker's home, irrespective of who suffered the loss. The Council will not be liable for any loss, injury or damage which is not directly connected with the furniture or equipment that it has installed in the home worker's home.
- Furniture and Equipment Insurance – Equipment purchased by the Council in connection with home working facilities is automatically covered against loss and damage on the same basis as in other work locations.
- Home, Contents and Public Liability Insurance – In addition to the normal Buildings and Contents insurance it is the responsibility of the officer working from home to ensure that they have adequate Public Liability insurance to cover any possible incidents that may occur in the home. This is generally included in standard buildings and contents insurance policies. If officers are in any doubt as to their cover they should confirm with their insurance provider.
- The home worker should prevent any unauthorised use of all equipment provided in support of the home working facility.

#### 6.2.7 Inland Revenue / Taxation – Implications for Home workers.

- Based on current legislation, it is not anticipated that there would be any changes to personal taxation or ‘Benefit in Kind’ implications for officers as a result of working from home. There is not expected to be any implications in respect of Capital Gains Tax where the use of rooms becomes dual purpose. However if officers are in any doubt they should contact the Inland Revenue to confirm their individual circumstances.
- Insofar as making claims against the use of the home for office purposes in some cases it may be possible to claim in respect of additional expenses. Indications are that the amount claimed would generally be in the region of £2 per week although additional sums may be allowed in individual or exceptional circumstances. Officers should set out any claim in writing to their local Tax Office.

#### 6.2.8 Data Protection –

- Officers will be required to comply with the Councils policy on the Data Protection Act 1998 when working from home in any capacity.

### 7. **WORKING ARRANGEMENTS**

- 7.1 Communication arrangements and attendance at meetings in the office will need to be agreed between the home worker and their manager, according to the demands of the post. In the main ‘home’ workers will be free to choose their hours of work subject to ensuring that they are available to necessary contacts as required.
- 7.2 Officers are responsible for the safe delivery and collection of work and must never leave work or work-related equipment unsecured.
- 7.3 Officers that work as COMPLETE Home Workers (defined in paragraph 3.1) will claim mileage for all journeys made in the course of their work.
- 7.4 If an officer defined as an OCCASIONAL or INTERMITTENT Home Worker (ref. Para. 3.1) is required to make more than one return journey to the office per day the second and subsequent visits will qualify for reimbursement of travel costs. The guidance notes on claiming mileage detailed on the back of travel claim forms shall apply.
- 7.5 An officer’s line manager (or other representative of the Council) may need to visit the officer at home to discuss work issues or to carry out checks to ensure that working arrangements are satisfactory.
- 7.6 Officers will be required to log their actual working time through the submission of adjustments to the time recording system for each occasion where home working has taken place. Hours recorded in this way will be credited to the employee through the time recording mechanism in place. If Managers require more detailed records of work completed at home a log sheet is included at Appendix 3 for this purpose. It is recommended that these are monitored for approval on a weekly basis.
- 7.7 Normal arrangements for recording sickness, annual and other leave will apply.

- 7.8 Officers should not meet customers, clients or representatives from other agencies at home. Such meetings should take place at the Council Offices or at third party premises. Officers should not divulge private addresses or telephone numbers to external contacts in connection with their employment. If a contact number is required then the office telephone number should be given with re-routing to the home number set up. Likewise, no other staff will be authorised to give an officer's address and telephone number to external contacts. If the Head of Service considers it to be appropriate then a mobile phone will be supplied to the home worker for communication with external clients/customers if use of private telephone(s) (with reimbursement) is deemed to be inappropriate.
- 7.9 Where an officer working from home is required to visit other sites and organisations, arrangements should be put in place and updated to record their whereabouts in accordance with the General Guidance for Employees – Dealing with the Public and Making Outside Visits (paper 17.3 of HR Policies and Procedures)- which is issued to all staff as part of Health and Safety provisions.

## **8. EMPLOYEES' RESPONSIBILITIES AND SECURITY**

- 8.1 Officers must not use personal computer equipment for storing business related data of any kind. In the case where private computer equipment is used to access Council systems and services all data will be stored on HQ based equipment with the private computer simply the means through which the officer accesses the systems/services.
- 8.2 Officers working at home are required to comply with all Council policies governing the use of computer, and other, equipment provided in support of home working. Managers are required to make home workers aware of all related policies and standards. Access to any business related data or equipment by family, or other people in the home is strictly forbidden.

## **9. MANAGEMENT SUPPORT**

- 9.1 Normal performance management processes will apply to all officers working from home.
- 9.2 Regular (at least monthly) meetings will take place between officers working from home on a 'COMPLETE' basis and their line manager to monitor the home working operation, address officer/manager/service needs and to ensure that the officer is properly briefed on all matters affecting them.
- 9.3 For officers working from home on an 'OCCASIONAL' or 'INTERMITTENT' basis line managers will maintain communication in the usual manner – face to face, e-mail etc.

## **10. TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

- 10.1 The employment terms and conditions of officers working from home are as for office-based employees although there will be some conditions specific to home workers which may differ. These are:
- Hours of work – Home workers will be free to work at times of their own choosing provided that their line managers are aware of these on a daily basis and there are no issues surrounding contact between the Home Worker and colleagues/managers/external contacts.

## 11. TERMINATION / REVIEW OF HOME WORKING AGREEMENT

- 11.1 Where approved, home working will be supported initially for a period of one year. Following a successful review the home working facility may continue thereafter.
- 11.2 The Home Working facility may however be terminated for any of the reasons outlined in [Appendix 2](#) with the associated minimum periods of notice.

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## Appendix 1

### Babergh District Council - Home Working

#### Points to Consider when applying for approval to work from home

The following table identifies all factors that should be considered by both the Officer applying for Home Working and their Line Manager. It should be used as a checklist for both parties to ensure that adequate provision has been made to support the Home Working application.

If there are any doubts regarding any aspect of the proposed working environment then an assessment can be requested from the appropriate area of the Council, e.g. ICT Services, Divisional Workstation Assessment Officers, etc.

Consideration	Issues and any Proposed Resolution
<p>Is the Officers post compatible with Home Working, taking into account the following factors?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>The nature of the work to be undertaken</u></li> <li>• <u>The requirements of the post</u></li> <li>• <u>Impact on others</u></li> <li>• <u>Office cover</u></li> <li>• <u>Supervision arrangements</u></li> </ul>	
<p>Do suitable conditions exist within which Computer based work can be undertaken? If there are any doubts as to the suitability of an officer's home for 'home working' then a formal assessment should be carried out.</p> <p>(This may include workspace availability, seating, lighting, heating, ergonomics etc.)</p>	
<p>Has suitable equipment been provided to support working from home?</p> <p>(Computer equipment typically but also telephones, calculators and any other equipment used when office based)</p>	
<p>In respect of Council supplied Computers, Officers must be aware of, understand and comply</p>	

with all policies and guidance relating to Computer Use.	
Officers must be aware of, understand and comply with all relevant aspects of the Data Protection Act.	
Do any training requirements exist in order to support the Home Working application?  (These may relate to operation of Computer (or other) equipment from home, Council policies and/or other legislation such as the Data Protection Act)	
Are you able to work generally free from distraction?	
What hours of work will typically be worked from home and how will these hours be recorded?	
Have effective arrangements been put in place to support contact between the Home Worker and the office.  (This can be via a number of means – telephone, e-mail etc as the Home Worker may well be working outside normal officer hours)	
What arrangements are in place to review workloads, effectiveness of Home Working and any unforeseen problems that may arise?	
Will the Home Worker be required to provide cover in the office during periods of sickness, training or holiday absence?	
Do any issues exist in relation to related legislation that may affect the suitability of the Applicant working from home?	

**Appendix 2**

**BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL - APPLICATION TO WORK FROM HOME**  
(to be submitted in instances of INTERMITTENT or COMPLETE working from home)

<b>APPLICANT</b>	
<b>POST</b>	
<b>DEPARTMENT / SECTION</b>	
<b>LINE MANAGER</b>	

<b>MODE OF HOME WORKING</b>	<b>INTERMITTENT / COMPLETE</b> ( <i>delete as appropriate</i> )		
<b>CONTACT DETAILS</b>			
<b>DETAILS OF WORK TO BE UNDERTAKEN DURING THE HOME WORKING ARRANGEMENT</b>			
<b>APPLICATION APPROVED</b>	<b>YES / NO</b> ( <i>delete as appropriate</i> )		
<b>DATE OF COMMENCEMENT</b>		<b>DATE OF REVIEW</b>	

<b>DATE OF REFUSAL/TERMINATION</b> ( <i>delete as appropriate</i> )		
<b>REASON FOR REFUSAL/TERMINATION</b>		

**COMPLIANCE WITH THE WORKING FROM HOME SCHEME**

I confirm that I have read and understand the Working from Home Policy of Babergh District Council and I agree to comply with its' terms and conditions.

Signed.....(Applicant)

Date.....

Signed.....(Head of Service / Manager) Date.....

## ***Guidance Notes for Home Workers***

### **General.**

- 1. If, at any time after the commencement of home working, you are unable to comply with any of the terms of the Agreement you must notify your Manager immediately.*
- 2. Officers should make reasonable efforts to be available to attend Office based meetings where appropriate.*

### **Hours of Work.**

- 1. Subject to meeting the specific demands of your post, you are free to choose the hours that you work provided this causes no adverse impact to service delivery and that you keep your Manager informed accordingly..*
- 2. You are not required to work longer hours because you are home based. You should be aware of the need for self-discipline and effective time management to ensure successful working from home.*

### **Equipment.**

- 1. Any Council equipment supplied to support the working from home arrangement must be returned when your contract of employment terminates or your home-working arrangement ceases. Your manager will arrange for all relevant equipment to be collected from you/delivered back to the Council by you at a mutually convenient time.*

### **Sickness.**

- 1. Normal sickness rules will apply to Home Workers. Officers should notify their Line Manager/colleague as soon as possible on the first day of sickness. They should notify the office again either when they resume work or when they have a date on which they will resume work.*

### **Termination of Agreement.**

- 1. The period of notice to terminate the home working facility will vary depending on the nature of and reasons for the termination. Guidance on reasons and associated notice periods are: -*

<b><i>Reason</i></b>	<b><i>Notice Period</i></b>
<i>Mutual agreement between the Officer and their Head of Service/Manager</i>	<i>1 Month or less</i>
<i>The Officer leaves the employment of the Council (Normal employment termination notice period will apply).</i>	<i>As per contract of employment</i>
<i>Abuse of the home working facility. (In this event there may be the possibility of disciplinary action depending upon the nature of the abuse)</i>	<i>Will be set by Line Manager/Head of Service.</i>
<i>The Council reserves the right to terminate the home working agreement provided a reasonable period of notice is given to the Officer affected. This may be due to changes in the organisation, methods of Service Delivery etc.</i>	<i>2 months</i>

## Appendix 4

### Connecting to Babergh Systems and Services

It is possible to connect to Babergh systems; applications and services from remote sites including Officers homes provided certain requirements are satisfied. Currently the following systems and services are available: -

- IBS Open Revenues and Open Housing
- Plantech Acolaid
- MVM Pro-Active
- Agresso Financials
- SIA DataMap
- MS Office suite (Word, Excel etc)
- MS Outlook (for e-mail)

By remote sites we mean a location away from the main HQ building where an officer does not have physical access to the Local Area or Wireless Networks. At present these locations are limited to fixed sites such as: -

- Home
- Chilton Waste Depot
- Sheltered Housing Scheme
- Stour House

In the future it is intended to enhance remote access facilities to include the provision of access to Babergh systems whilst officers are 'mobile', i.e. on a 'home visit' to a member of the public's residence, carrying out site inspections such as Building Control or Environmental Health or simply travelling between appointments.

For the purposes of the Home Working Policy, this Appendix will deal solely with the connection to the Councils systems and services from home.

#### Connecting to Babergh Systems from 'Home'

The preferred means of establishing a connection to Babergh systems will be using CITRIX technology via the officer's own 'home' PC.

The following link provides all the information home workers will need in order to equip their 'home' PCs to connect safely to Babergh systems. ICT staff can provide further advice/guidance/support if necessary.

<< Insert link to KJB doc on CITRIX FAQs >>

An officer applying for the home working facility and who needs on-line access to systems and services will require the use of a PC. For OCCASIONAL and possibly INTERMITTENT users this could be a Council laptop that has been configured to access the Council LAN using the Remote Access Server (RAS) facility. The officer would arrange to take the laptop home with them as required.

For COMPLETE and/or INTERMITTENT users the policy is for those officers to use their own PCs to access Council systems and services via the Internet using CITRIX (See link above). The Council will not be providing PCs for installation to officer's homes to support home working applications unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Where the RAS facility is used access to Officer files and folders can still be provided via the use of the 'Offline Folders' utility. This is essentially a copy of selected files and folders held locally on the laptop and synchronised with the server based versions when the laptop is connected to the Council LAN when the officer is next in the HQ building. This provides a useable means of access to working files for officers who work at home occasionally but would not be recommended for officers who will be spending long periods away from the Office.

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