

<b>Report to</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date of meeting</b>	Tuesday 23 <sup>rd</sup> May 2023
<b>Lead Member / Officer</b>	Cyng/Cllr Julie Matthews
<b>Head of Service</b>	Louise Dougal, Interim Head of Human Resources
<b>Report author</b>	Andrea Malam, Lead HR Business Partner
<b>Title</b>	Draft Agile Working Policy

## 1. What is the report about?

1.1. The existing Flexible working policy has been reviewed following the new ways of working which the Council has developed during and after the COVID pandemic. The Policy has been split into 3 separate documents:

- New proposed Agile Working Policy
- Right to request Flexible Working
- Visiontime (Flexi) procedures

1.2. This report provides information on the draft Agile Working Policy in which the Council is being asked to consider and approve. The Policy and Guidance can be found within Appendix Figures 1 – 5 of this report.

1.3. The formal right to request flexible working and Vision Time (Flexi) procedures which were in the original document have been removed and placed in another guidance document of their own to avoid any confusion. There have been no changes to any of these agreed processes.

1.4. The draft policy and report does not include reference to the buildings/asset project which is separate to this policy and its contents.

## **2. What is the reason for making this report?**

2.1. To approve the Agile Working Policy and associated guidance documents.

## **3. What are the Recommendations?**

3.1. That Cabinet approve the Agile Working Policy and associated guidance documents.

3.2. That the Committee confirms that it has read, understood and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessment (Appendix Figure 6) as part of its consideration.

## **4. Report details**

### **Agile Working Policy**

4.1. Prior to the COVID 19 Pandemic, the council had a Flexible working policy in place which contained details on flexi-time processes, occasional home working and the use of the legal right to request flexible working. The overarching theme of this policy was around having a fixed base at which the majority of work would be completed. This new draft Agile Working Policy has been amended, with the legal right to request flexible working and the flexi- time guidance moved to different policy documents to avoid any confusion.

4.2. The aim of the draft Agile Working Policy (for those employees where the job role allows agile working) is to enable employees to have a greater choice about how, where and when they work. All decisions regarding agile working will start from what provides the best possible outcomes for residents, service users, customers, the Council and stakeholders both now and in the future. Once business needs are considered, the employee is then encouraged to work in an agile manner in which meets with their own personal needs to enable an acceptable work life balance and wellbeing needs for employees. It is important to note that not all job roles can accommodate agile working due to the nature of that post and therefore this policy only applies to those members of staff that can work in an agile way.

4.3. The draft Agile Working Policy now has an additional four guidance documents attached to it;

- Guidance for Employees – How to work in an agile way
- Guidance for Managers – How to engage an agile team
- Guidance for Managers – How to induct agile employees
- Guidance for Employees – Meeting Etiquette

- 4.4. The draft Agile Working Policy provides a formal and consistent approach to managing employees in an agile way, detailing clear guidance on communication, ICT equipment, health and safety arrangements, allowances and expenses. The policy is clear in that employees will not be able to claim homeworking allowances or expenses, i.e. heating, lighting, broadband.
- 4.5. The policy outlines the benefits from working in an agile way, for both the council and its employees, but also details the expectations for both managers and employees and provides risk assessments to ensure employees health and safety in work is considered and discussed.
- 4.6. There have been 3 types of Workstyles documented in the policy; Agile Worker, Fixed Location Worker and a Mobile Worker. Examples of job titles for each workstyle have been provided within the policy to ensure clarity. Each employee will be categorised into one workstyle, depending on their role. For those employees that do not fit into those categories, their circumstances will be considered on an individual basis.

## **5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: The Denbighshire We Want?**

- 5.1. The new agile working policy will have an impact on all nine themes contained within the corporate plan in some capacity. Ultimately, the Agile Working Policy will contribute towards Denbighshire County Council being a well-run, high performing council by ensuring that those employees who are eligible to work in an agile manner, due to job role, are being treated in a fair and consistent way through the application of this policy.

## **6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

- 6.1. There are no costs associated with this report.

## **7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?**

- 7.1. Overall the wellbeing impact assessment concluded that the policy has a positive impact on the majority of wellbeing goals with a one neutral goal. Positive impacts include more of a work life balance for employees, the ability to be flexible with their working day and from the comforts from their own home for a large proportion of staff. This equates to less travel and reduced carbon emissions from vehicles. Flexible working arrangements are also an attractive benefit with regards to recruitment and retention and will help to attract candidates from further afield, widening our pool of candidates.
- 7.2. Unintended negative impacts include isolation of employees who are working at home or in the office alone which could impact mental health. An increased use of energy within employee's homes with regards to heating, lighting, broadband will have an impact on the environment and a result in a reduction in the use of local shops and businesses where the main offices are located. However, the reduction in travel and fuel usage might offset these costs for the majority of staff. Council buildings may also be underutilised but still remain heated with the lights being left on in unoccupied places for example.
- 7.3. Another unintended consequence is that agile working is not applicable to all job roles within the council, therefore it could be viewed as being unfair.

## **8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?**

- 8.1. The draft policy has been approved at the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and has been through a consultation and feedback process with the Trade Unions.
- 8.2. The draft Policy has also been approved by the Health and Safety and Employee Relations Joint Consultative Committee to progress to Cabinet.

## **9. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

- 9.1. Not required.

## **10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

10.1. If the draft Agile Working Policy is not approved by Cabinet, there may be an inconsistent approach within the council with regards to agile working. The policy contains clear guidance on how agile working should be applied and managed within the council, therefore a consistent approach to its application is required as soon as possible.

## **11. Power to make the decision**

11.1. Power to make the decision is s112 Local Government Act 1972.