



Home Working Policy

Introduction

Policy Statement

Horsforth Town Council recognises that the provision of home working can help provide a better work life balance for individuals and enable the Council to recruit and retain the best possible staff.

The aim of this policy is to provide a uniform and fair approach to requests for home working from employees.

Scope of Policy

Horsforth Town Council offers the opportunity to be considered for two types of home working:

- Ad hoc
- Regular

These types of home working are defined in the policy.

Permanent home working where the employee spends 100% of their contracted hours working from home, except when attending meetings at the office, is not considered appropriate for posts available within Horsforth Town Council.

The policy applies to all staff who are employed at Horsforth Town Council whose role has been identified as suitable for home working.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Horsforth Town Council promotes flexible working to all employees and home working is one of the flexible working options available to staff.
- 1.2 For the purposes of this policy, a distinction is made between members of staff who have (or wish to apply for) a formalised agreement with their line manager to work from home as a regular home worker and those who work from home on an occasional basis without a formalised agreement (referred to as **ad hoc working from home**).
- 1.3 Definitions

Ad hoc working from home	Employees who request permission to work from home on an ad hoc basis. To be agreed with the employee's line manager where appropriate.
Regular home worker	An employee is classed as a regular home worker where they spend one or more days a week working from home on a regular basis as agreed with the employee's line manager.

- 1.4 Horsforth Town Council is committed to improving the working lives of all staff (full time, part time or job share, regardless of gender, race, disability, age or personal circumstances) to help them achieve a work/life balance which balances the demands of the job with their home life.
- 1.5 Individual requests for home working will be reviewed on their own merit.
- 1.6 There is no automatic right for staff to be a regular home worker as there may be circumstances where Horsforth Town Council cannot accommodate the request. However Horsforth Town Council will not refuse a request for home working without giving in writing a sound business reason why the request was refused.
- 1.7 All home working arrangements will be subject to a trial 3 month period to ascertain if this is the appropriate working arrangement for the employer and the employee. The home working arrangement will be reviewed between the employee and their line manager after 3 months and written confirmation of the outcome of the review will be sent to the employee within 5 working days. If a working from home arrangement is withdrawn after the trial period an explanation will be given by the employer and the employee will have the right to appeal the decision. The appeal will be heard by the Staffing and Employment Committee and the employee has the right to be accompanied by a representative of their choice to the appeal meeting.

2 Ad hoc work from home requests

- 2.1 Applications for **ad hoc working from home** will be considered and will be approved at the line manager's discretion, taking into account the individual's circumstances and the needs of the business. Approval must be sought before an employee works from home.

3 Regular home working

- 3.1 Employees who are already defined as regular home workers can apply for other forms of flexible working.
- 3.2 New staff members should be made aware of this policy and the process of applying for home working is covered in their induction. If a post is considered as suitable to be a regular home

working post, prospective staff should be made aware of this option through any recruitment policies.

3.3 Employees who wish to apply for regular home working should be aware that any arrangement agreed will constitute a contractual change to their terms and conditions.

3.4 If an employee feels that their application for regular home working or to cease to be a home worker or to vary their home working arrangements has been unreasonably refused they have the right to appeal the decision to the Staffing and Employment Committee.

3.5 Horsforth Town Council will not exercise any pressure on an employee to change his or her working arrangements, or to alter any existing home working arrangements.

4 Criteria for regular home working

The following criteria will be used when considering a request for regular home working:

- The needs of the employee for home working arrangements
- The needs of Horsforth Town Council to retain skilled staff
- Furtherance of Horsforth Town Council's commitment to equal opportunities
- The degree to which elements of the job can be performed from home
- The attributes and skills of the employee including decision making, time management, self-discipline and communication skills
- The suitability of the home environment

5 Home office arrangements for regular home workers

Equipment, software and furniture

Where appropriate, Horsforth Town Council will provide a regular home worker with sufficient equipment, software and furniture needed to perform the job such as a computer or laptop, desk, chair, filing cabinet, printer and fax machine.

Use of the home worker's personal equipment, software or furniture is permissible provided that the line manager is satisfied that it meets the safety and technical requirements required for the work to be performed.

Horsforth Town Council will not provide or contribute to the cost of a broadband line to enable home working.

Horsforth Town Council is not responsible for the maintenance, replacement or repair of any personal equipment that is used for home working, including broadband lines.

Where a home worker uses a personal telephone or mobile telephone for official work purposes, a record of official calls should be kept and will be reimbursed by Horsforth Town Council when approved by the line manager.

Where equipment has been provided by Horsforth Town Council, this will remain the property of Horsforth Town Council. Where equipment is provided, the home worker must:

- Take reasonable care of it and keep it secure
- Use it only for official purposes during working time
- Use it only in accordance with any operating instructions
- Return it to Horsforth Town Council when requested
- Use it in accordance with any existing Council policies

Where a home worker is unable to work at home due to failure of equipment they should discuss at the earliest opportunity alternative working options with their line manager. These may include:

- Coming to the office to work
- Working in another suitable location
- Use of leave/flexi-time
- Alternative work that does not need access to systems or use of IT

Insurance

Horsforth Town Council's employer and public liability insurance will cover the home worker when working from home.

Heating and lighting costs

Horsforth Town Council will not pay for additional heating, lighting, utility, insurance or other costs incurred by the home worker as a result of working from home.

6 Reviews of regular home working arrangements

- 6.1 Horsforth Town Council has the right to review any existing regular home working arrangements and through a process of negotiation and written agreement, to vary an existing agreement. The employee is entitled to be accompanied by a representative of their choice in any meetings to negotiate a variation to home working arrangements.
- 6.2 Agreed regular home working arrangements are reviewed regularly and can be withdrawn if it is demonstrated that:
- the performance of an employee suffers as a result of home working;
 - the effectiveness of the team in which the employee works is compromised;
 - the business needs are not being met.
- 6.3 If regular home working arrangements are reviewed due to an employee's performance, these will be dealt with under Horsforth Town Council's capability procedure. The employee is entitled to be accompanied by a representative of their choice for any meetings to discuss any changes to home working arrangements or performance management.
- 6.4 If regular home working arrangements are withdrawn, the employee will be given a minimum of 4 weeks' notice of the change in writing.
- 6.5 Staff applying for regular home working must apply formally in writing to their line manager stating the working pattern they are requesting and the reasons for the request.
- 6.6 If an employee is appointed to a new role then the home working arrangement will be reviewed to see whether the new post is suitable for home working.

7 Health and Safety and Security of home workers

- 7.1 All staff that work from home should ensure they have a suitable environment where they can focus on work.
- 7.2 The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 states that an employer shall ensure, so far as it is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees – this also extends to home workers. As the control that can be exercised over a member of staff working from home is limited, the main responsibility will be with the home worker under Section 3(2) of the Act, which places the obligations on home workers themselves to ensure that they and other persons, including members of the household (as well as the public) are not endangered by work activities undertaken at home.

7.3 Employees working from home are responsible for complying with data protection law and for keeping all documents and information associated with Horsforth Town Council secure at all times.

7.4 Meetings with members of the public and employees and representatives of other organisations must not be held at home. Meetings with other employees and councillors at home should be avoided.

8 Sickness Absence

8.1 Home workers must comply with Horsforth Town Council's sickness absence policy and ensure they report their sickness to their line manager when they are sick and unable to work.

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