

**BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE
FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

8 JANUARY 2009

Title: New Ways of Working Policy - Implementation Update

Ward: City Wide

Report of: Head of Human Resources

Officer presenting report: Mark Williams, HR Manager

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1. Report Summary

When the New Ways of Working Policy was adopted by this committee in May 2008, an interim report was requested on the operation of the policy. This report sets out the key issues that have arisen since the implementation of the new policy.

2. Recommendation

That the committee notes the content of the report and that a further report will be brought back to this committee in April 2009.

3. Policy

The Council has in place a Work Life Balance Policy which deals with 'when' employees work, and covers options such as job share, part time working and annualised hours. The New Ways of Working Policy covers 'where' employees work and covers diary management, desk sharing, remote working, mobile working and home working

4. Consultation

(a) Internal

A working group including trade union representatives, Service managers and HR meets every quarter to discuss issues arising from the implementation of the New Ways of Working Policy

Self organised groups have been invited to make comments about the policy in relation to equalities issues in particular, but none have been received to date

Affected employees at St Anne's House and HR staff at Romney House were asked to complete a questionnaire about the accommodation moves and New Ways of Working. Responses have been noted and will inform the New Ways of Working policy review in April 2009

All staff referring to the New Ways of Working Policy via The Source are being invited to comment on it via a message reading: *"The New Ways of Working Transforming Workspace policy will be reviewed in April 2009. If you would like to comment on how the policy works for you or give us your views then please contact: Saskia Holtkott, HR Adviser (Recruitment Audit)".* Articles and brief news items about the policy have also been placed in the 'Making a Difference' staff magazine and the electronic news section on The Source

The equalities impact assessment which was produced as part of the policy will be reviewed in light of comments submitted and issues arising in April 2009

(b) External

The HR Adviser (recruitment auditor) attends the Western Improvement partnership Flexible Working Group meetings at which Bristol, North Somerset, B&NES, South Glos and Avon Fire and Rescue are represented

5. Background and Assessment

5.1 The New Ways of Working Policy has been operational for 8 months. It was developed to complement the Council's office

Accommodation Strategy to reduce the amount of office space and office buildings that are used. Since its adoption a range of issues have emerged.

5.2 HR: more clarity is needed around certain areas of the policy, such as:

- a) Guidance on how to build a business case for / against new ways of working.
- b) Training on managing performance of remote workers and setting output / outcome based objectives. Note: NHS training officers are running a series of pilot training sessions for managers on issues relating to New Ways of Working. HR and H&S are providing relevant input. If successful the sessions may be made mandatory and rolled out corporately.
- c) Some sections are requesting that full home working be allowed, where employees work all of their working hours from home or remotely. This could have related implications on H&S, tax, travel expenses claims etc. Other sections want to create a 'regular' home worker category which allows people to work from home regularly but less than two days per week with implications for the provision of equipment, entitlement to reimbursement, H&S requirements etc
- d) More support is needed for managers and employees around creating an appropriate 'culture' of trust, performance management, communication and use of technology to facilitate new ways of working. Currently, the policy is very much a process document with less emphasis on establishing strategic principles for new ways of working.

5.3 H&S: Health and Safety issues are covered in the mandatory training for partial home workers which is delivered by the Corporate Development Team.

- a) Greater clarity is needed around H&S considerations for partial and ad hoc home workers and staff need to be given further guidance on how to 'self assess' their home working environment. Managers also need to be clear at what point a home visit becomes necessary or the involvement from H&S is required.
- b) The policy needs to be clearer around H&S issues for remote and mobile workers

5.4 Finance Issues:

- a) Increase staff awareness about the pro-rata reimbursements of entitlements - the rate of take up is extremely low.
- b) Greater clarity around tax and Council tax implications of home working.
- c) Requests for clarification around travel claims.

5.5 ICT Issues:

- a) Some staff and managers are not maximising the use of existing IT systems to maximise efficiency. For example, electronic diary management, setting up email groups etc. Training solutions need to be explored and developed.
- b) For some areas of work which require band intensive IT use, such as GIS, home working can be inefficient.
- c) One accommodation change project reported that more help was needed on the first day in new office accommodation to deal with phones, mobiles and computers and ensure that everything is running smoothly.
- d) Touch down areas need to be promoted to ensure that they are used efficiently and that reasonable access arrangements exist

5.6 FAQs

It is proposed to develop a 'frequently asked questions' to any future policy. A detailed list of issues arising is being maintained by the recruitment auditor and is used in discussions with the new ways of working policy working group to inform the policy review

6. Other Emerging issues

- As part of the council-wide transformation programme, a “New Ways of Working Programme” has been put in place. There are three work streams/projects that form part of the programme. These are Organisational Development and HR, Office Accommodation and ICT.
- The key outcomes of the OD and HR project are:-
 1. to have modern flexible workspaces which are of high quality and will improve customer service;

2. working practices which are effective, flexible and economical;
 3. managers who are confident in the performance management of a flexible workforce; and
 4. employees understand the new ways of working practices and actively participate in maximising productivity
- One of the proposed project outcomes is a comprehensive tool kit which provides a framework for managers to effectively manage a flexible workforce and maximise productivity. It is envisaged that this will replace the New Ways of Working Policy. This will be brought to this committee for consideration in the Spring.
 - The the OD and HR project will be managed and overseen by the New Ways of Working Programme Board.

7. Risk Assessment

Not applicable as this report is for information purposes only.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment

To be reviewed in April 2009

9. Legal and Resource Implications

Legal: This report is for information only

Financial:

(a) Revenue This report is for information only

(b) Capital N/A

Land: N/A

Personnel: As set out in paras 5.1 to 5.6 above.

Appendices: None

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers: None