Folkestone & Hythe District Council

Agile Working Framework

'work is something we do, not somewhere we go'

1	Introduction
1.1	The council continues to recognise the need to develop and encourage modern working practices to enable employees to maximise their performance and productivity and deliver the greatest value to the business, whilst maintaining high levels of customer service and a good work life balance.
1.2	The Covid-19 pandemic saw an unplanned overnight change for office based staff from being office-based with regular periods of working from home to becoming home-based agile workers. The last 12 months have clearly demonstrated the benefits of agile working in balancing work and home life whilst continuing to deliver high quality services to our residents. The continued expectations set out in this document for agile working support the principles contained in the Corporate Plan 2021-2030 to continually adapt and improve whilst providing high quality service. In addition, linking with our Carbon Action Plan, over the last 12 months we have also identified a clear reduction in our carbon footprint and emissions, primarily due to the immediate change from many officers travelling to the office most days of the week to there being no daily commute which in turn has also led to a reduction in the costs associated with running a large office.
1.3	During the pandemic whilst the civic offices were closed we have continued to listen and engage with staff and based on a significant volume of feedback there is a considerable evidence base to further support the advantages that come from agile working making it a permanent feature in the way in which we operate.
2	**Scope**
2.1	This framework applies to all office based employees at any level within Folkestone & Hythe District Council. The nature and extent of agile working will vary according to the job role demands and as flexibility is at its core, it is difficult to apply a rigid set of rules around it.
2.2	The framework supports the sharing of office facilities and therefore no employee will have an office or workstation for their exclusive use. The office space available will prioritise the following uses: - Meeting customers and partners with scheduled appointments; - 1-2-1s and team meetings; - Collaboration space; - Training space; and - To support an individual's wellbeing.

	A booking system will be in place to assist managers reserve available space.
2.3	The ability to work in an agile manner is dependent on the following: - The requirements and suitability of the role - The service(s) being delivered - The welfare of the employee
3.	**Definitions**
3.1	Agile Working: Agile working is the term used to describe how the council is empowering its employees to work flexibly from any location, whether it be a council building, within the community and partner / client sites or by varying degrees of home working and hot-desking. Agile working isn't about home working, it's about being where you need to be to do your job most efficiently and effectively. Agile working provides staff with more options with regards to where, when and how they undertake their roles by introducing an element of choice and allows staff to influence how they carry out their role by promoting varying levels of flexibility within the workplace. It is based on the concept that working is something we do rather than somewhere we go to. Agile working is a flexible arrangement and therefore does not require a formal change to terms and conditions. It can be used in a number of ways – as a short term fix for a specific situation, a medium term arrangement for example during school summer holidays, or as a long term work-based methodology where teams always work on an agile basis.
3.2	Flexible Working: Flexible working has been around for a long time and is now most commonly used in the context of working arrangements between employee and employer following a formal request to work flexibly as allowed by employment legislation. This requires a formal, more permanent change to working hours and would lead to a change in contract, for example an employee can formally request to reduce from full time working hours to 30 hours per week to enable caring responsibilities. All employees have the legal right to request flexible working, not just parents and carers, as long as they have worked for the council for at least 26 weeks. A separate procedure applies to any requests for flexible working.
3.3	Hybrid Meetings:

	Hybrid meetings describe meetings whereby some participants may be in one location (for example, a room at the civic centre) and others choose to join using technology from other locations. The council is keen to promote this style of meeting rather than unnecessarily encouraging presence in the office.
4.	**Principles of Agile Working**
4.1	Agile working is about taking a comprehensive and strategic approach to modernising working practices and is based on the following principles: - Work takes place at the most effective location and at the most effective time - Managing performance focuses on customer service and results rather than presence - Flexibility becomes the norm rather than the exception - Employees have more choice about where and when they work, subject to business considerations - Space is allocated to activities, not to individuals and not on the basis of seniority - There is effective and appropriate use of technology - Employees have the opportunity to lead balanced and healthy lives - Business continuity can be maintained during severe weather conditions or travel disruption - Work has less impact on the environment - We trust everyone to do a great job
4.2	Working arrangements should always be agreed between the manager and employee to ensure that the arrangements are beneficial to the customer, the council and the employee. However, managers are encouraged to enable staff to maximise agile working opportunities. To mitigate against unintended legal consequences for the council regarding work locations, the expectation is that our workforce will reside in the UK. Where alternative arrangements are sought, they will be considered by the manager and HR on an individual basis.
4.3	<u>Manager's Responsibilities</u> - Ensuring that they comply with this framework and apply it effectively, fairly and consistently within their areas of responsibility; - Ensuring that all employees are made aware of this framework and their responsibilities in relation to them; - Ensuring that they discharge their duties in relation to health & safety for any employees who they are responsible for, including health & safety assessments, providing required equipment and acting on any areas of concern; - Having joint responsibility with employees to come to an agreement on working in an agile way;

	- Being flexible, open and constructive in relation to discussions and agreements about agile working whilst remaining focussed on the needs of the service; - Agreeing appropriate contact arrangements for employees ensuring that they meet on a monthly 1-2-1 basis and hold team meetings regularly; - Ensuring that defined performance objectives are set, focussing on customer service and results, and reviewed in line with performance management processes; - Fostering a culture of trust in employees to carry out their jobs whilst working in an agile way.
4.4	<u>Employee's Responsibilities</u> - Working within this framework in a reasonable, constructive and appropriate way; - Having joint responsibility with managers to come to an agreement on working in an agile way that remains focussed on the needs of the service; - Having a responsibility to comply with health & safety requirements and participate in / undertake appropriate risk assessments, carry out necessary actions to minimise risk and maintain a safe working environment reporting any hazards to their line manager and including reporting any defects that arise in the equipment provided; - Ensuring that they can be contacted during their working hours by colleagues and customers (where appropriate) and ensuring that electronic diaries are up to date clearly showing their availability; - Ensuring workspaces / offices are left in a clean and tidy condition after use; - Actively engaging in personal development plans, review meetings and 1-2-1s as well as team meetings.
5.	**Expenses and Personal Costs**
5.1	Printing is actively discouraged, but if there is a need to print anything it is expected that employees will generally use council facilities to minimise personal costs. This is particularly relevant for bulk printing or postage as this should be completed using the central print function at the council.
5.2	Employees working from their home will need to use their own broadband facilities and will not be reimbursed for doing so. It works on the same principle as getting to an office base – it's the individuals' expense. The same applies to increased energy costs arising from home working. It is possible to claim tax relief for additional household costs if you are working from home on a regular basis. Please visit www.gov.uk for further information or click on this link: https://www.gov.uk/tax-relief-for-employees/working-at-home
6.	**Office Base**

6.1	Very few posts will ever be designated as 'home based' and it is expected that it will only apply where the employee never needs to visit an office base or go into the community to work. The vast majority of employees will be given an office base to meet with colleagues and this base should be used for any travel claims.
6.2	It is important that all employees manage their travel and limit it in order to achieve the environmental benefits of agile working and hybrid meetings. Video conferencing is to be used in preference to travelling to meetings where feasible and appropriate considering the needs of the business.
7.	**Workspace and Equipment**
7.1	Employees will be provided with the relevant equipment to enable them to carry out their job effectively.
7.2	Employees who have been provided with specialist equipment in the office as a result of workplace assessments, e.g. footrests, specialist chairs, keyboards etc. will not be provided with further such equipment to enable them to work from home. The equipment should be located where the employee will be spending the majority of their working time.
7.3	It is important that we respect the agile workspace and have regard for colleagues who could be sitting at the same space either later the same day or the next day. A 'clear desk' should be maintained and all employees should ensure that the workspace or office is left in a clean condition and that items moved or adjusted are returned to their original position.
8.	**Communication and Contact**
8.1	All employees are provided with laptops with access to Skype so there is no reason why working remotely should be any different to working in the office. Agile working still means employees must be contactable in exactly the same way as if they were in the office.
8.2	Arrangements should be made for effective communication to be maintained between employees, line managers and colleagues. Regular formal and informal contact needs to be considered, however these do not need to be face to face. It is essential for regular team meetings to be held in order to develop and maintain relationships however the whole team does not necessarily have to be in the same location.
8.3	Electronic diaries are to be used fully at all times and they should be open for colleagues to view. Employees should ensure that all their contact details are up to date, including the publication of mobile phone numbers. This will help to ensure that employees are contactable during their working hours and also helps the council to ensure the health and safety of its workforce.

Document Control			
Date effective from	01 July 2021	**Owner**	Chief HR Officer
Approval Date	May 2021	**Approval By**	Continuous Improvement Board
Review Date	First review to take place in October 2021 (subject to the government roadmap) in line with the test and learn approach over a 3 month period		

Version Control			
Version	**Type of Change**	**Date**	**Revisions from previous issues**
1.0	New Framework	April 2021	First version of a new framework
1.1	Amended sections	May 2021	Second version of the draft framework