

WORK LIFE BALANCE POLICY
WDA/32/11

Recommendation

That:

1. Members approve the Work Life Balance Policy attached at Appendix 1

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Report of the Chief Executive

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 Members are asked to approve the additional methods of flexible working that have been identified within the attached Work Life Balance Policy.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Updated Flexible Working (Eligibility, Complaints and Remedies) (Amendment) Regulations came into force on 6th April 2011. They amend the main Flexible Working (Eligibility, Complaints and Remedies) Regulations 2002 by widening the conditions under which employees may request flexible working arrangements.
- 2.2 The statutory duty now extends to enable parents of children aged under six or of disabled children aged under eighteen to have the statutory right to apply for flexible working(parental leave) providing:
- They have care of another person
 - Have been employed the required length of time (this can vary depending on the flexible working policy requested)
 - Have not made a request to work flexibly within the last 12 months
- 2.2 However, it is important to note that the new right for employees is a right to ask the employer to be able to work flexibly. There is no obligation on the part of the employer to grant this right, only to consider.
- 2.3 However, the Government believes that flexible working should be available to everyone. The Equality Strategy – Building a Fairer Britain report published in December 2010 acknowledges that the best organisations already understand that offering flexible working makes good business sense and helps to attract and retain the best staff. Flexible

working allows all organisations to adapt working patterns to their needs, rather than fitting in the organisation to a restrictive 9-5 timetable.

- 2.3 The Authority currently has a Family Friendly Policy which covers statutory provisions such as maternity, paternity, parental and adoption leave, in addition to other potential flexible working practices such as, flexi-time, job-share, and part-time working etc.
- 2.4 The current policy has been reviewed and updated in light of the new 2011 statutory obligations and has been renamed 'Work Life Balance Policy' for ease of reference.
- 2.5 The proposed Work Life Balance Policy (attached at Appendix 1) contains a host of flexible working practices which ensures that the Authority not only meets its Statutory Obligations in relation to parental leave, but extends the right to all employees to request a pattern of flexible working which can then be considered against of the Authority's operational requirements, enabling the Authority to maximise the benefits to both parties in the employer employee relationship.

3. Work Life Balance Policy

- 3.1 There can be significant benefits from promoting and embracing a real commitment to work life balance. All employees have responsibilities inside and outside of the work environment and the Authority can benefit where it allows employees to achieve a reasonable balance between these commitments.
- 3.2 The Authority acknowledges that with appropriate use of flexibility in the way we manage its work, it can achieve its objectives, deliver a good service and increase our effectiveness whilst, at the same time, improving the quality of life for our staff.
- 3.3 The Work Life Balance Policy ensures that the statutory provisions in relation to parental leave have been updated to reflect the current legislative changes.
- 3.4 The Work Life Balance Policy now also includes flexible working arrangements for all Authority employees, and has been developed bearing in mind the Authority's commitment to equality of opportunity and with the intention of enhancing the ability of the Authority to deliver it's objectives whilst helping employees to balance their commitments and interests outside work with their contractual duties and responsibilities.

- 3.5 The policy complies with national legislation, including the Part-time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000, the Fixed-term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002, and the Flexible Working Regulations 2002.
- 3.6 The Authority intends that the policy should provide:
- A wider range of opportunity for the Authority to meet its objectives
 - Help to assist employees maintain a balance between work and home commitments
 - Helps in developing a culture where the needs of the employees to balance work and life commitments are recognised
 - Helps in the recruitment and retention of employees
 - Promotes equal opportunities
- 3.7 In addition to the statutory leave provisions, the work life balance policies/practices which may be requested and may be appropriate, depending on the circumstances are:
- part-time
 - job share
 - compressed working hours
 - Voluntary Reduced Working Time (V –Time)
 - Special Carers Leave
 - Additional Leave
 - Employment breaks
 - Bereavement leave
 - Flexi – time
- 3.8 The Work Life Balance Policy extends the existing family friendly policy to included two additional flexible working arrangements which are Compressed Working Hours and Voluntary Reduced Working Time (V-Time).

- 3.9 Compressed hours working patterns include working time being reorganised to allow the weekly hours to be worked in 4 or 4 ½ days a week, without any loss of pay.
- 3.10 Voluntary reduced working time means reduced working hours for a specified period, usually to enable employees to manage other personal or caring commitments. The employees pay would be reduced accordingly under this provision.
- 3.11 Both compressed hours and voluntary reduced working time are additions to the current work life balance policies which enable the Authority to give wider consideration to employee's personal circumstances when requesting to work flexibly.
- 3.12 The Work Life Balance Policy details the procedure to be followed, in each instance, by employees, who wish to request flexible working arrangements.
- 3.13 At all times, the arrangements that are agreed will prioritise the needs of the Authority but will also endeavour to accommodate the needs of the member of staff whilst ensuring the timely delivery of the work needed to be undertaken.

4. Risk Implications

- 4.1 Failure to make provision for employees eligible to apply for flexible working practices may leave the Authority open to legal challenge from particular groups of employees.
- 4.2 Offering flexible working makes good business sense and helps to attract and retain the best staff. Flexible working will allow the Authority to adapt to working patterns that suit both the organisations need and the employees needs.

5. HR Implications

- 5.1 Awareness training of the Work Life Balance Policy will be provided to all employees of the Authority.

5.2 Executive Management Team and Line Managers will receive additional training on the need to prioritise the Authority's objectives whilst giving due consideration to flexible working requests.

5.3 Policy to be included in the Induction Process for all new employees.

6. Environmental Implications

6.1 Flexible working arrangements can aid the reduction of the environmental impacts of congestion such as air quality and aid vehicle efficiency.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

8. Conclusion

8.1 Changes in the Flexible Working (Eligibility, Complaints and Remedies) Regulations 2002 have widened the conditions under which employees may request flexible working arrangements.

8.2 However, the Equality Strategy 2002 indicates that best practice would be to offer flexible working to all employees which not only helps retain the best staff but, allow organisations to adapt and change working patterns to suit the needs of the organisation.

8.3 In addition to the main rights to parental leave and time off for dependants, the Authority currently provides some additional flexible working practices. The existing document has been reviewed, updated and renamed Work Life Balance Policy.

8.4 The policy has been expanded to include two additional flexible working practices but, this will enable the Authority and the employees, to consider a wider scope of flexible working practice options, which would meet in their current circumstances.

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The background documents to this report are open to inspection in accordance with
Section 100D of The Local Government Act 1972:
Work Life Balance Policy