

**Report to:** Governance Committee

**Date of meeting:** 30 September 2021

**By:** Chief Operating Officer

**Title:** Adoption of Workstyles Policy

**Purpose:** To seek the Committee's agreement to the adoption of a new Workstyles Policy to support the County Council's implementation of new ways of working post Covid-19.

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**The Governance Committee is recommended to agree the Workstyles Policy, attached at Appendix 1.**

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### **1 Background**

1.1 As part of the Council's reset and recovery arrangements, a 'Workstyles review' has been undertaken in order to understand the anticipated future ways of working for staff across the Council.

1.2 A key part of this work has been an extensive programme of engagement with all services across the Council. This provided a significant amount of information and insight into expected future ways of working and in common with a number of business and organisations across the Country, 'hybrid working' has emerged as the most common future approach.

1.3 A recent BBC survey<sup>1</sup> of the 50 largest organisations in the UK confirmed that 86% will adopt hybrid working in the future. A number of Local Authorities across the Country have confirmed that they are adopting a shift to hybrid models and central government recently introduced flexible travel season tickets to support the change in working patterns nationally.

### **2 Supporting Information**

2.1 In order to adapt ways of working in the Council, it will be necessary to invest in technology, re-configure office spaces and provide staff with the resources they need to work successfully in an hybrid working environment.

2.2 There are many benefits to the Council in adopting a hybrid working model. By adapting the way we work, we will be able to build on the carbon benefits realised over the last year through reduced travel to the office to work, or to attend face to face meetings, thereby supporting the Council's carbon reduction. In addition, such a model will also help support our recruitment and retention aims; recent research has shown that hybrid working is the top search term used by job applicants when searching for a job and that 47% of employees would likely look for a job elsewhere if their employer doesn't adopt a flexible working model.

2.3 A core component to support the adoption of new ways of working is through the Council's corporate policy position. A Workstyles Policy has therefore been developed which sets out the agreed priorities and further considerations to support work being undertaken from alternative locations, as well as the Council's expectations. A key principle within the Policy is that any working arrangements will be determined by the needs of the service.

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<sup>1</sup> BBC Business News 6 May 2021

2.4 A copy of the Policy is attached at Appendix 1. In developing the Policy, we have built on the successful Agile and flexible working arrangements that have been operating for a number of years. The Trade Unions have been consulted on the contents and their comments incorporated appropriately. This policy will replace the current homeworking policy.

### **3. Conclusion and Recommendations**

3.1 The impact of the pandemic has created a large scale shift to how organisations operate and has provided an unprecedented opportunity to put in place new ways of working that support both the needs of the service and the Council's workforce. The Workstyles review has included a significant programme of engagement across the Council to ensure that our future arrangements meet these needs.

3.2 A verbal update on the Workstyles Review was provided to the Place Scrutiny Committee on 23 June 2021. A report will be submitted to the Committee at its meeting on 17 November 2021.

3.3 The Workstyles Policy is a key component in supporting the implementation of our future approach and in order to ensure that it is embedded within the Council, it will be a core part of the engagement and communication arrangements with managers and Teams over the coming months.

3.4 The Committee is recommended to agree the Workstyles Policy, attached at Appendix 1.

**Phil Hall**  
**Chief Operating Officer**

Contact Officers:

Sarah Mainwaring, Head of HR&OD

Tel. No: 01273 482060

Email: [sarah.mainwaring@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.mainwaring@eastsussex.gov.uk)

Kathryn Ellison, HR&OD Manager

Tel No: 01273 336525

Email: [kathryn.ellison@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:kathryn.ellison@eastsussex.gov.uk)