



## Axminster Town Council



### AXMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL HOMEWORKING POLICY

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Also see attachment: Homeworker Self-Assessment

This is an example of an employment policy designed for a small council adhering to statutory minimum requirements and does not constitute legal advice.

As with all our policies it should be consistent with our terms and conditions of employment.

## **1. Policy**

1.1 The Council recognises the advantages of working from home - although it does not suit everyone, and some roles may not be appropriate to undertake at home.

1.2 This policy describes the working arrangements and expectations that will apply if employees work from home.

## **2. Scope of this policy**

2.1 This policy applies to all employees whenever they work from home. If employees are considering whether to request home-based working, they should refer to the Flexible Working Policy.

2.2 This policy applies when employees are required to work from home, eg. during times of pandemic

## **3. Safe home working environments**

3.1 Health and safety for home-based employees applies in the same way as office-based employees. Employees should work in a safe manner and follow all health and safety instructions issued by the Council.

3.2 Employees working at home must complete and submit a 'Homeworker Self-Assessment' to the Clerk. If home working relates to the Clerk, this must be submitted to the Chair of the Employment Committee.

This is a checklist to identify any possible hazards in a home working area. Following completion of the checklist, measures may need to be taken to control any risks identified. This checklist should be completed annually, or more frequently if there are any changes to home working arrangements such as new equipment or changes to a home-office space.

3.3 Employees must complete and submit a homeworkers self- assessment and ensure that this remains up to date. If they have any questions about the self-assessment, or if they identify any potential risks when carrying out the assessment, they should refer these to the Clerk, or the Chair of the Employment Committee in the first instance.

3.4 Some of the most important considerations include:

- if possible, an area should be set aside from the rest of a living space to ensure that it is possible to work from home without distractions
- a home workspace should have adequate room in order to work safely and comfortably
- a desk should be large enough to accommodate required equipment and paperwork

- there should be sufficient storage and a workspace should be organised so that equipment is close to hand
- a work area should be well lit, with natural lighting if possible
- equipment and sockets should be situated to avoid potential trip hazards
- staff working at home must ensure that they visually check the cables of any electronic equipment supplied by the Council regularly (and at least every 6 months) and report any defects

3.5 Line managers reserve the right to visit employees at home at agreed times for work-related purposes, particularly health and safety matters, and to ensure equipment is inspected, serviced or repaired as needed (e.g. for PAT testing). In the case of the Clerk, the health and safety issues of home-working would be referred to the Chair of the Employment Committee.

#### **4. Facilities and equipment**

4.1 Should equipment be required the Council will provide employees with the following items for home-working and will maintain and replace these items when necessary.

- desk
- office chair
- lockable container (for those staff who hold confidential data)
- laptop
- mobile telephone

4.2 It is each employee's duty to ensure that proper care is taken of the equipment provided to them and to let the Clerk or the Chair of the Employment Committee know of any need to maintain or replace equipment. Should the self-assessment identify any further equipment that is necessary, this should be discussed with the Clerk or the Chair of the Employment Committee.

4.3 All equipment provided by the Council is to enable employees to work safely and effectively at home and cannot be used for personal use by them or their family.

4.4 All equipment will belong to the Council and employees will be required to return it to the Council promptly should they leave Council employment.

#### **5. Hours of work**

5.1 As an employee working from home, the contract of employment remains unchanged. it will specify the hours when the Council expect employees to be at work and to be contactable by telephone or email. In the event that there are times during the working day when an employee is not available for personal reasons other than work, these should be flagged to the Clerk or the Chair of the Employment Committee for prior authorisation.

5.2 Employees working from home will be asked to provide information about work priorities and tasks undertaken and to provide timesheets to the Clerk or for the Clerk – to the Chair of the Employment Committee, as part of regular supervision arrangements.

5.3 Employees must be mindful to take adequate rest breaks which should as a minimum be:

- a break of at least 20 minutes during each working day over 6 hours
- a daily rest break of at least 11 continuous hours, i.e. the time between stopping work one day and beginning work the next day
- at least one complete day each week when no work is done

## **6. Potential conflicts of interest**

6.1 During agreed hours of work, the Council expects that a home working environment enables employees to work effectively and not distracted by domestic matters. It is not appropriate to combine homeworking with caring for a dependant.

6.2 If there is an emergency and an employee needs to attend to a non-work matter, then they should notify the Clerk or the Chair of the Employment Committee as soon as is reasonably possible.

## **7. Data protection**

7.1 As a home-worker, an employee is responsible for keeping all documents and information associated with the Council secure at all times. Specifically, homeworkers are under a duty to:

- set up and use a unique password for computers
- keep all documentation belonging to the Council in a secure container at all times except when in use
- ensure that documents are saved to the server rather than the computer's hard drive.

7.2 Furthermore, any equipment provided by the Council must be used only for work-related purposes and must not be used by any other member of the family at any time or for any purpose.

7.3 If employees have telephone conversations at home, where they are discussing confidential work matters, they must ensure that such calls take place in privacy to avoid any inadvertent breach of confidentiality.

7.4 Any information held or stored or used by an employee working at home – should be in full compliance with the Privacy Policy of Axminster Town Council.

## **8. Visits to work premises**

8.1 On occasions home-based employees may need to attend Council offices for training, performance assessment meetings, team briefings etc. This will normally not be frequent, and the dates and times of such visits will be agreed in advance.

## **9. Insurance, mortgage or rental agreements**

9.1 Whilst our Employer's Liability Insurance extends to home-based employees, and any Council equipment installed in the home of an employee will also be covered, employees should ensure that any agreement with their landlord or mortgage lender allows them to work from home, and that their house buildings and contents insurance will not be invalidated by working from home.

10. This is a non-contractual procedure which will be reviewed from time to time.

### **Note**

The 'Good Councillor's Guide to Being a Good Employer' provides further advice and guidance around how to manage a homeworker.

Date of policy: January 2021

Approving committee: Employment

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