

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of Human Resources (Introduced by the Executive Member for Resources)	Executive Cabinet	25 th May 2006

HUMAN RESOURCES POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To seek elected members approval to implement a new Flexi Time Policy.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

2. This report particularly relates to the Strategic Objectives to Improve Access to services and to ensure Chorley Borough Council is a performing organisation.

RISK ISSUES

3. The report contains no risk issues for consideration by Members.

BACKGROUND

4. A staff forum was set up in October 2005 to examine and advise on all employee policy's and procedural issues. The forum has a staff representative from each service unit and the representatives consult with all staff members. The group was encouraged to consider how to move the Council forward to make Chorley Borough Council an excellent place to work and striving towards the goals set within the HR strategy of entering The Times 100 best employers.
5. The first policy that the forum considered to need a review was the Flexi Time Policy. The policy was introduced in the 1980s and at the time was very progressive. In research conducted by the Forum it has been found that other neighbouring local authority's policies were less restrictive than our own and offered staff greater choice with regard to their working hours and patterns.
6. It was found after carrying out research within the Directorates that the rules in the current policy were not being followed in a consistent manner and several Directorates had made adaptations to the policy to make it more flexible. A common example of this was allowing 2 days flexi leave in one settlement period. The policy states only one day should be taken. The amount of time claimed for employees while travelling out of the business was also vastly inconsistent, there were many different examples of the problems with the current policy and the forum considered it to be inconsistent and unfair. In the research stage other neighbouring local authority's flexi policies were examined and it was found that our policy had the most restrictions and was the least flexibility for staff.



7. Not all sections in the Council operate the flexi policy and a commitment has been given to review these areas. Examples of areas not covered by flexi time are Grounds Maintenance, Neighbourhood Wardens, Housing Repairs and CCTV. It is anticipated that in the majority of these areas it will be necessary to remain on fixed time working, but the Forum felt it was import to review this on a regular basis. It may be that some of the flexibilities and provisions of the policy could be applied to these particular service areas subject to business need.

PROPOSALS

8. **Abolish Core Time** – Core time currently 10am – 4pm. The advantages of the removal of core time is employees will be given greater flexibility to adjust working hours to accommodate ad hoc instances of need necessitated by personal circumstance and to facilitate a better work life balance. Managers are to be given training and support to manage the administration of this provision to ensure that service needs are fully met. There also exists the potential to reduce levels of sickness absence by enabling employees being to come into work for a shorter amount of time.
9. **Change Bandwidth** – Currently Council buildings are open to staff from 8am – 6pm, the proposal is to extend building opening hours to 8am – 7pm and allow staff to work within these hours. This will reduce the amount of TOIL worked by staff, which is difficult to control and manage and reduce overtime costs for the authority. Changing the bandwidth has no effect on IT backups. Operational implications will be around the impact on Civic Services, there is going to be an increase in the number of hours Civic Services staff are required to close, secure and service the buildings and the following costs are attached to that. Based on an increase in weekly working hours from 30 to 33 for the three part-time Civic Services Assistants, the additional cost to the Council would be £4,450 for 2006/07 for the full year. This would equate to £3,710 if the proposal commenced on 1st June.
10. **Medical Appointments** – Currently there exists a requirement to take medical appointments out of core time. Provision is only made for special appointments in which instances time can be claimed back. This is an area where there has been significant inconsistency in the application of the existing policy. It is proposed that the new policy will require all appointments are taken in an employee's own time, this being possible due to the removal of core time.
11. **Days Allowance** – The current policy states that the maximum number of days flexi leave allowed to be taken in a 4 weekly period is 1 (a flexi period is 4 weeks). We are proposing this maximum is increased to 2 days in a period and the intention is to keep the limit at 13 days maximum per annum. This provides staff with greater opportunity to use time accrued, without going against the main principle of the scheme, which is to not to increase leave, but to improve day-to-day flexibility for staff and the organisation.
12. **Real Time** – The proposal is that the new Flexi Policy will allow for time credits to be claimed in real time for travel to off site events - this is currently vastly inconsistent. If an employee is attending a meeting in London and they leave Chorley at 6am then time should be credited from 6am minus time usually taken to travel from home to work. If an overnight stay is involved only travelling time will be credited.

Benefits

13. The improvements to the policy, which will bring the authority in line with other organisations operating similar successful flexi policies, will help in the drive to recruit and retain key members of staff. This is particularly important in certain key areas of service delivery such as planning and building control where there are severe skills shortages and associated difficulties with recruiting and retaining suitably qualified and experienced staff.

The implementation of such policies will ensure that Chorley Borough Council is recognised as a progressive and rewarding employer.

14. By giving staff more choice in how they work, the policy will facilitate the development of a more productive working environment for the Council as staff will be more focussed on their duties rather than being distracted by home commitments. The associated improvement in levels of morale among staff will also benefit the authority and should lead to improvements in levels of customer service and application of role.
15. The Council is exploring the possibility of moving staff to home working to aid with reduction in building costs. When introducing home working employees will be given a significant amount of flexibility and the successful operation of such a policy would involve a trust requirement being placed upon staff. Making the changes to the flexi scheme will be a step towards achieving this change in emphasis and developing more flexible working practices, which will benefit staff and the authority.
16. It is expected that the new policy will help to reduce sickness absence levels as under the provisions of the policy staff will be able to work part days and leave early if they are feeling unwell. This will remove the requirement to register a full day off as sick leave.
17. The Trade Unions have been consulted on this policy and are in support of the changes.
18. The policy will be rolled out with training for all Managers. One of the key provisions of the policy will be the requirement to ensure that, in the application of the provisions of the policy, service, customer and business needs are paramount. It will be made clear that no employee is allowed time off under the new policy if it means service needs will be compromised. A 6-month trial period for all staff currently using the present flexi scheme will fully identify if there are any detrimental service implications to the changes.
19. The new policy will bring clarity to staff and managers regarding what is and is not considered acceptable in the application of the flexi policy and will reduce the number of inconsistencies in the way in which the flexi working operate throughout the authority.

COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

20. The direct costs associated with the introduction of the new policy are the increased costs for Civic staff of a maximum of £4.5k annually. Should members approve the policy, then this sum would have to be contained within the Council's current cash limit. This is in line with the Council's financial strategy, which requires that no additional recurrent costs should be built into the Council's budget in year. To contain the costs within the cash envelope, virements would need to be identified and as there are expected reductions in overtime payments as a result of the new policy, this avenue would be pursued.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

21. That Elected Members approve the implementation of the Flexi Time Policy on a 6-month trial basis for the Authority.
22. That the new policy is monitored, measuring:
TOIL Reduction
Overtime Reduction
Reduction in Sickness Absence

Information on potential savings will be made available to members following a six-month trial period.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)
(If the recommendations are accepted)

23. To comply with best practice.
To ensure that all units are operating in a fair and consistent manner.
To have agreed polices and procedures in place

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

24. None

ANGELA WOLSTENCROFT
DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Document	Date	File	Place of Inspection
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Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Jane Brewer	5175	9 th May 06	ADMINREP/REPORT

POLICY STATEMENT

1. POLICY OBJECTIVE

Flexible working hours replace fixed times of arrival and departure and allow a certain amount of choice in your times of starting and finishing work. It is not the intention of the scheme that credit time should be built up and taken off as leave on a regular basis.

2. CHORLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL'S RESPONSIBILITY

It is the Council's responsibility to ensure that:

- The policy is applied fairly and consistently.
- Constant review takes place for Directorates and sections that are unable to use the Flexi system.
- Managers will be responsible for addressing any misuse or abuse of the Flexi policy.
- The Authority will aim to promote a positive rather than punitive approach.

3. EMPLOYEE'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Employees will be expected to:

- Ensure that Service needs are met.
- Co-operate fully with the rules of the policy.
- Consult and co-operate with colleagues to ensure everyone has maximum flexibility at all times.
- Raise concerns with their manager or Human Resources if they believe the system is being misused.

4. OUTCOMES

To ensure employees have a work life balance whilst maintaining service needs.

POLICY PROCEDURE

1. SCOPE

The scheme will apply to all employees of the Council except Directors and other members of staff whose contract of employment details alternative working arrangements.

Employees excluded from the scheme for operational reasons can have their case reviewed should there be a change in the work situation.

Some officers may have to operate a limited scheme of flexible working hours because of the needs of the service.

2. DEFINITION AND PRINCIPLES

Flexitime Cycle

Flexitime will operate over a four-week cycle of 145 hours.

Standard Working Day

The standard working day is 8.45am to 5.00pm with one hour for lunch. This gives a daily attendance time of 7¼ hours and a half-day attendance time of 3 hours 38 minutes.

Minimum Daily Hours Attendance

Subject to the needs of the service, there is no minimum daily hours attendance.

Weekly Contracted Hours

The working week consists of five standard working days and totals 36¼ hours.

Core Time

There is no core time.

Breaks

A break can be taken at any time during the day. If more than 6 hours are worked, a minimum of half an hour should be taken. If a break is not taken after 6 hours, 1 hour will be automatically deducted. When taking a break an employee must ensure that the service needs of the Directorate are covered and their manager is aware of the length of time they are likely to be away from the workplace. An employee must always ensure they clock out when taking a break (including breaks for smoking and personal errands).

Flexible Time

Flexible time is from 8.00am to 7.00pm. During these flexible periods you will be able to choose when to arrive and depart taking into account:

- o The maintenance of the service in your Section. It will not always be possible for you to please yourself about the hours to be worked because a satisfactory service must be given to the public and other Directorates during the standard working day of 8.45am to 5.00pm.

- ⋮ The control and supervision of the working arrangements is the responsibility of each Manager who must ensure that the normal output of work is maintained and everyone contributes fairly to the workload of the Section.

Band Width

The band width is the earliest time of starting (8.00am) and the latest time of finishing (7.00pm). Time worked outside the bandwidth will not be credited and will only be considered as overtime or TOIL where prior authorisation has been obtained.

- ⋮ **Overtime Working**

Overtime working after 5.00pm does not count in Flexitime. Such overtime must be authorised in advance by the Director or Section Head. Where possible you should clock out to record the end of your Flexitime working and the start of your overtime working. Attendance at work for any reason after 7.00pm does not count for a credit within the Scheme.

Settlement Period

The settlement period is four weeks and you are responsible for ensuring that you work the contracted hours (145.00 for a full time employee) in a settlement period subject to the debit/credit carryover allowance.

Carryover Allowance

The time in credit or debit at the end of each week will be carried forward to the next week. A maximum of 3 days (21 hours, 45 minutes) credit or 1½ days (10 hours, 53 minutes) debit may be carried over into the next settlement period. This is pro-rata for part time employees.

- ⋮ **Credit Hours**

At the end of the settlement period, credit in excess of 3 normal working days i.e. 21 hours, 45 minutes will be automatically deducted from the system. If an employee wishes to regain the deducted hours they must do this by contacting their manager and completing the Hours Reinstatement Form. Manager's need to discuss fully how hours in the future can be managed to remain within the parameters of the system and how the excess hours will be used.

With the agreement of your Manager time can be taken off as a day's leave subject to the requirements of the service and providing you have enough hours in credit to cover this leave. Two days Flexi leave may be taken in a settlement period, up to a maximum of 13 days in a leave year. Part days will not count towards the maximum.

Under special circumstances an employee may be able to have time off regardless of their Flexi balance. This time should be made up within an agreed period of no more than 2 months.

- ⋮ **Debit Hours**

In any settlement period up to 1½ days debit is allowed but you must make every effort to ensure that debit hours do not accumulate. If debit hours exceed 1½ days then this must be made up in the next settlement period.

3. USING WIN TIME

Access to Building

Access to the buildings from 8.00am will not be an issue, as the Cleaners will be working.

Exit from the buildings will be by the present system but access after 5.00pm may be more difficult and staff requiring access should make special arrangements or preferably not come back to clock out, but complete an adjustment form the next day.

How to Log In and Out

Log into the Intranet and click on the FLEXITIME SYSTEM link on the Home page and enter your badge number and password, which for the first time will be password then click on the green arrow

- ◆ Your name should appear on the top right hand corner of the screen.
- ◆ Current status on the left-hand side of the screen should be absent.

To the right of this there is a blue button with a white arrow in. Click on this to clock you into the flexitime system. A green button will appear and current status will now be present. After you have clocked into the system for the first time you should change your password by clicking on change password, which can be found under menu on the left-hand side of the screen.

The system will automatically time you out after 20 minutes therefore it is recommended that once you have clocked in you should log out of the system. The system will continue to record your time provided that you have clocked in using the blue button

When you wish to clock out of the system i.e. lunchtime, cigarette break you will need to log back into the system and click on the green button. Current status will now read absent and the button will now be blue. Log back out of the system until you are ready to clock back in again.

Adjustments

To request Annual Leave or any other type of adjustment, click on Histories under menu and then scroll down to the box at the bottom of the page.

- Select the type of adjustment you require by clicking the down arrow key.
- Select the date and time value you wish the adjustment to be made for.
- Make a note to explain why you are requesting for an adjustment to be made.
- Click on submit. Your request has now been forwarded to your manager.
- The system will display the request in the comments column, under Histories, until your manager has approved the request. Once approved your time will be updated.

General Information

Clicking the Refresh button under your name will bring your record up to date.

Under current status the system will record your booked time and worked time.

- ◆ Booked time – amount of hours worked including time outside the normal bandwidth e.g. before 8am and after 7pm
- ◆ Worked time – amount of hours you will be credited with

The system will display your annual leave balance and the number of the days that have been pre booked at the top of the page.

Yearly Overview on the left-hand side will display a chart for the full calendar year detailing all your actions.

4. MANAGEMENT OF SYSTEM

Each Director is responsible for the administration of the scheme within their own Directorate.

Each Section Head/Supervisor is responsible for ensuring that there is adequate cover by staff during the standard working day particularly for public counters. Staff may be required to undertake various responsibilities on a rota basis and Management have the right to require staff to attend at specified times within the day if necessary to maintain the needs of the service. During the flexible period of up to 7pm, a Manager can require staff to leave work at 5.00pm if no work is available. If no work is available between 8.00am and 8.45am, Management can prevent staff from reporting for work before 8.45am.

Staff have a responsibility to maintain adequate cover during the standard working day. This cover will normally be that which is currently required when other staff are on holiday. Problems and friction will be reduced if staff agree between themselves when any Flexitime is to be taken off. Directors and Managers do not want to have to refuse time off and it is up to staff to ensure that credit time is kept under control, bearing in mind that colleagues will also want time off for Flexitime and leave. Co-operation and consultation will reduce problems.

Medical Appointments

All appointments can be made at any time of the day with agreement from the employee's Manager, using the employee's flexi time.

Credit may be given in *special circumstances* such as regular health check-ups for ongoing medical conditions/treatments and uncontrolled hospital appointments. This can be done for up to a maximum of 4 *special circumstance* appointments per rolling year and evidence of the appointment must be provided. Time may only be credited within a standard working day i.e. between 8.45am – 5pm.

For extreme cases requiring more than the 4 occasions further guidance should be sought from Human Resources.

Allowance for Sickness

All allowances for sickness will be made in real time, within the parameters of a normal working day. For example - An employee who feels unwell in a morning must report this to their Manager in line with the Absence Policy. If they feel fit to attend work by lunchtime, they should come in, clock on to WinTime as normal, and request an adjustment for their sickness period (beginning at the start of their normal working day, e.g. 8.45 am)

Time Allowance for Training and Off Site Meetings

All time allowances for training courses and off site meetings, including travelling, should be credited with real time. In all cases where journeys begin from home, normal home to office mileage will be deducted from the time claimed. Time spent on overnight stays prior to or following any meeting or training course will not be eligible for any time claims.

Exemptions

Certain activities listed below can take place whilst "clocked on".

- Giving Blood
- Collection of ballot box
- Collecting Canvas documentation

Antenatal appointments
Cancer Screening
Occupational Health Appointments including physio and counselling

Leaving the Council

When an employee is leaving the Council it will be the responsibility of the Manager and the employee to ensure that there are no credits or debits on the date of termination. Any debits will result in a deduction from the final pay. Payments of credit hours will only be made in exceptional circumstances with approval of the Director.

5. PROBLEMS ARISING

If any problems arise from the operation of the scheme they should be referred initially to the employee's Manager. If the problems cannot be resolved at that level the normal grievance procedure will operate.

Disciplinary action will be taken against anyone who abuses the scheme.

It is Gross Misconduct to knowingly clock in or out for another employee or to ask someone else to clock in or out for you. Under the Disciplinary Procedure, Gross Misconduct leads to immediate dismissal.

Where there is persistent abuse of the scheme the Council reserves the right to exclude individual employees, sections or departments.

Unauthorised absence from work even if the employee has clocked out, can lead to disciplinary action.

Temporary Cancellation of the Scheme

The Council reserves the right to temporarily cancel the scheme in cases of emergency and disputes, whether internal or external, subject to consultation. At such times staff will work the standard working day of 8.45am to 5.00pm with one hour for lunch or such other times as may be appropriate to the circumstances.