

Item no

Report to **District Council of Easington**
Date: **1st December 2005**
Report of: **Head of Personnel**
Subject: **Home and Remote Working Policy**
Ward: **All**

1 **Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 This report recommends the adoption of a Home and Remote Working Policy for employees of the Council.

2 **Consultation**

- 2.1 In preparing this report, I have consulted with the Management Team, the Scrutiny Management Board, Corporate Support Team and the Joint Trades Unions. The consultees support the proposals in the report.

3 **Background**

- 3.1 The Council's agreed E-Government Programme requires the authority to develop and implement a Home and Remote Working Policy.
- 3.2 The Government believes (from evidence produced from National Projects) that home and remote working can produce benefits in terms of improved access and convenience of service delivery for users of Council services. In other words home and remote working can help facilitate the delivery of services at the convenience of the customer rather than the service deliverer.
- 3.3 There are potential benefits in terms of improved efficiency where services are delivered from a remote site or from an employee's home where this is a practical proposition.
- 3.4 Such a Policy will provide guidance for the Council and its managers when considering the feasibility of allowing a member of staff to work at home or from home. It covers all the key considerations for home and remote working such as business case, protocols, ICT provision, security, health and safety, management, flexible working hours and training and development implications.
- 3.5 The agreed E-Government Programme requires the Council to both develop a Home and Remote Working Policy and implement it by the end of this calendar year.

4 **Proposals/Options Appraisal**

- 4.1 The National Projects have demonstrated that there is real potential for improved service delivery and/or access to services. These potential benefits are set out in Appendix 1 to the attached Policy Document together with the potential pitfalls or challenges that home and remote working can bring.

- 4.2 There are clearly some real benefits to be gained by home and remote working, not least the potential to increase flexibility around service delivery for our customers and better utilisation of staff resources, short/medium term home or remote working can help us reduce our sickness absence levels and accommodate the needs of disabled employees and those with particular health problems.
- 4.3 The pitfalls identified in Appendix 1 to the Policy Document could become significant risks particularly for health and safety aspects if not properly identified and managed. However in reality these challenges are considered to be manageable and controllable by the application of a consistent policy and appropriate risk assessments.
- 4.4 Consequently it would be appropriate to prepare a policy that both promotes home and remote working and also addresses the challenges and risks that new working arrangements can bring. Whilst there may currently be limited opportunity for home and remote working (on a permanent basis) at present, it is felt necessary to include a requirement for Heads of Service and managers to examine, on an ongoing basis, the potential for home and remote working in the light of emerging new technology.
- 4.5 A Home and Remote Working Policy has been prepared for Members' consideration and is attached to this report. It consists of:-
- a definition of what we mean by home and remote working
 - a framework for determining if home and remote working is feasible
 - an explanation of the responsibilities of managers and employees
 - an explanation of the rights of the Council and its employees
 - identification of the benefits that can be obtained by home and remote working
 - identification of the pitfalls
 - a flow chart of the process to be followed
 - a check-list for homeworkers
- 4.6 The Policy document records Council support for the principle of home and remote working and asks Members to adopt the following statement:-
- 'The Council will support home and remote working where such proposals aim to improve service delivery and meet the specific requirements as set out in the Home and Remote Working Policy'.**

5 **Implications**

- 5.1 Financial - Adoption of the Policy in itself does not involve any additional cost
- 5.2 Legal - Health and Safety implications are addressed in the Policy Document

- 5.3 Policy - If adopted the document would become a policy of the Council
- 5.4 Risk - A risk assessment has been carried out and an action plan developed to address those risks
- 5.5 Communications - The Policy will be communicated by ways of briefings to senior managers and staff groups as necessary.

6 **Corporate Implications**

- 6.1 It is considered that this Policy will assist the Council to meet its objectives. In particular it will support:-

QS1 To provide and promote accessible customer focussed, crosscutting services which achieve E-Government targets.

SFE1 To ensure effective recruitment, development, motivation, recognition and rewarding of staff.

SFE2 To develop the capacity to achieve in the organisation

6.2 **Equality and Diversity**

This Policy will help the Council accommodate the needs of employees with disabilities and carer's responsibilities.

6.3 **E-Government**

This report will deliver one of the requirements in the Council's agreed E-Government Programme.

6.4 **Procurement**

There are no procurement implications.

7 **Recommendations**

- 7.1 Members are asked to consider the report and adopt the attached Home and Remote Working Policy.

Background Papers

R21 Aims and Expectations Document