

# THRAPSTON TOWN COUNCIL

77 High Street  
Thrapston  
Northamptonshire  
NN14 4JJ  
Tel: (01832) 734 673  
Email: [clerk@thrapstontowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@thrapstontowncouncil.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.thrapstontowncouncil.gov.uk](http://www.thrapstontowncouncil.gov.uk)



## WORKING AT HOME POLICY

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### 1. Introduction

Employees may undertake some of their duties away from one of the Town Council's workplaces or away from their normal place of work, for a number of reasons and with varying degrees of frequency.

The Town Council recognises that working at home can be beneficial for individuals and, to this end, will seek to accommodate it wherever possible.

Working at home is understood to mean working from home on an occasional, ad hoc or temporary basis. It simply means that employees conduct their job from home with the same contractual obligations, such as core working hours.

Regular working from home or home working is covered via the Flexible Working Policy and any applications to work from home permanently should be pursued in line with that policy.

The Town Council may request or require employees to work at home for a period of time in response to government guidelines e.g. Covid-19.

Whatever the circumstances leading to a situation where employees have been granted permission this policy applies and all employees must comply with the requirements set out below.

### 2. Eligibility

Employees are eligible to apply for working at home in the following circumstances:

- where the employee has successfully completed the probationary period attached to their job role
- where the employee's role does not involve supervisory duties that require undertaking in person alongside the team members involved
- where their home environment is suitable
- no aspect of the employee's recent appraisal was marked as unsatisfactory
- the employee's disciplinary record is clean.

Applications for working at home will be granted where the Clerk is satisfied that the needs of the Town Council can continue to be met while the employee works from home.

Working at home must be cost-effective and ensure that there is no significant increase in workload on colleagues. The work done by the employee must be capable of being done from home.

The Clerk may liaise with the Personnel Committee in relation to applications for working at home to confirm the arrangements.

### 3. Making working at home applications

Employees that wish to apply to temporarily work at home should submit an application via email to the Clerk.

### 4. Occasional/ad hoc working at home applications

The application should set out the reasons for requesting working at home.

Examples may include a project or set of tasks that requires peace and quiet and a lack of interruptions. A backlog of tasks or a major project may also give rise to an employee wishing to request working at home.

There may be family commitments such as the long term illness of a relative or dependant. In this situation, we would also ask that you refer to The Town Council's Employee Handbook on time off for dependants.

There could be issues relating to the recovery from mental or physical illnesses which may make a request for working at home conducive to the smooth recovery of the employee.

The above list is not exhaustive.

#### **5. Application decisions**

The Town Council aims to respond to formal applications for working at home within one calendar month of the application being received by the Clerk unless it is a matter of urgency where the Clerk may make a quicker interim decision.

The Clerk may visit the employee's home to carry out a risk assessment.

#### **6. Accepted applications**

If the Clerk accepts the employee's application, written confirmation will be provided detailing arrangements and timescales for the employee to sign and return.

Each request is considered on its own merits. The Town Council is under no obligation to permit a period of working at home just because it has agreed to it in the past.

#### **7. Rejected applications**

If the Clerk is unable to accept the employee's application, the reasons for the rejection will be issued in writing to the employee. The employee may appeal the decision within 5 working days of the decision being issued. The reasons for the appeal should be set out in writing and sent to the Chair of the Personnel Committee.

#### **8. Home trial period**

The aim of the trial period is for both the employee and the Town Council to evaluate whether the new working arrangements are working out as planned.

At the end of the trial period, the Clerk will meet with the employee to evaluate the success of the trial. The Clerk will determine whether the trial has been successful and confirm that working at home may continue. During the trial period, or at the evaluation meeting, either side may propose reasonable amendments to facilitate a smoother working arrangement. The Town Council reserves the right to terminate working at home declaring the trial has been unsuccessful if proposed amendments are unreasonable, unworkable, no amendments can be implemented or the employee's work output, quality, oversight etc suffered to the detriment of the Town Council.

#### **9. Working at home practical arrangements**

The Town Council supplies homeworkers with the necessary equipment relevant to their job role. The equipment remains the Town Council's property and will be installed and removed at the Town Council's cost. The Town Council may need to attend the employee's home to update, maintain or repair/replace the equipment and will give the employee reasonable notice of the need for this.

Employees should take reasonable care of Town Council equipment and only use it for Council business. IT and telephony equipment may only be used in accordance with the Town Council's IT, telephony, data protection and monitoring policies.

Personal equipment that an employee uses for work purposes remains their responsibility and the Town Council is not liable for any loss, damage, repair or replacement of any personal equipment. If an item of equipment is deemed necessary for work, the employee should contact the Clerk.

Employees should maintain regular contact with the Clerk so that the Town Council can work towards early resolution of any problems. This applies to problems with Town Council equipment and also in relation to the ongoing suitability of the working at home arrangement; pressures and stress occur equally to employees who work at home as they do to those working at the Town Council's offices and the Town Council encourages the early reporting of these issues so that practical steps can be considered and implemented to the mutual agreement of both the employee and the Clerk.

The costs of electricity, water, heating, telephone, broadband and other utilities will not be covered by the Town Council. These costs will remain the employee's responsibility.

Employees must keep Council data and Council materials safe and secure at all times, ensuring reasonable precautions are being taken to maintain confidentiality in accordance with the Data Protection policy.

Employees should refrain from revealing to residents or contractors, that they work from home and should not share their personal address or personal contact details. Meetings between residents, contractors and employees at home are prohibited. All communications should be routed through the Town Council workplaces.

#### **10. Health and safety for employees working at home**

The Town Council's health and safety policy applies to employees working at home. Employees should refer to the separate health and safety policy for more details.

Employees are required to comply with a number of health and safety considerations in respect of the space utilised as their workplace in their home environment. Employees are required to attend the office to undergo health and safety training.

#### **11. Risk assessment**

A risk assessment will be undertaken to determine any relevant risks and to prevent harm to the employee or anyone else who may be affected by their work, in respect of the workplace itself and the working arrangements. The Town Council may need to check such workplaces from time to time as the working at home arrangement proceeds. The Town Council may require self-assessment of some aspects of the workplace and training may be provided as necessary. Any steps necessary from these various risk assessments will be undertaken to ensure the employee has a safe workplace.

A specific risk assessment will be done on employees who inform the Town Council that they are pregnant. In order for this to take place, employees who become pregnant should notify the Clerk of their pregnancy immediately.

#### **12. Positioning of equipment**

Training on the ergonomic positioning of IT equipment will be provided during the implementation of the working at home arrangement, together with best practice guidance on breaks. The Town Council will provide checklists for this for the benefit of employees.

**13. Working hours**

Employees are responsible for ensuring they complete their working hours as defined in their contracts of employment.

**14. Working time**

Employees are responsible for ensuring they take their rest breaks as defined in their contracts of employment. Working time should be monitored and rest breaks of at least 20 minutes for every six hours of working should be taken.

**15. Home insurance**

Working at home may invalidate an employee's home contents insurance policy. Employees are required to check the policy prior to applying to work at home.

**16. Employee conduct**

If working at home becomes unsuitable due to employee conduct or performance, the working at home arrangement may be terminated immediately. Further disciplinary action may also be taken in line with the Town Council's disciplinary and grievance procedure.

***The Town Council reserves the right to amend and update this policy from time to time.***

Adopted by Thrapston Town Council  
23<sup>rd</sup> June 2020

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Chairman

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Town Clerk