



# **Teignmouth Town Council Home Working Policy**

**Adopted: 23 June 2020**



## Teignmouth Town Council Home Working Policy

### 1. Introduction

Teignmouth Town Council (“the Council”) understands that there may be instances when an employee needs to work from home, the Covid-19 pandemic has required home working which may be in place for many months to come so provisions must be made in this case.

In general and depending on the nature of that employee’s role the Council may consider occasional home working appropriate.

### 2. Definition

Occasional home working is when an employee undertakes some of their duties from home on an ad hoc basis. This is usually planned and may be for complete or part days. Examples of the type of work considered suitable for home working include report writing, preparations for meetings, project work etc.

Working from home enables work to be carried out more efficiently in a quiet location and without disruption. It may also prove a more efficient use of time if employees who have been away from their work base for part of day and are closer to their home on their return journey, complete the working day at home rather than at their normal place of work.

In cases where office facilities are shared, or the employee risks continual interruption, the Town Clerk may agree that an employee can work from home for a short-specified period. This may include agreeing to home working for a fixed period e.g. two weeks as well as shorter ad hoc periods. Managers and employees should be aware of the potential impact home working could have on teams e.g. isolation from the team, and/or Council activities, a reduction in effective managerial support or supervision.

In cases where the Town Clerk requests a period of home working the Chairman of the Council will consider the request.

Due to the nature of individual tasks some roles within the Council are not deemed suitable for home working.

### **3. Rules**

- (a) Home working arrangements should work for both the Council and the employee.
- (b) Wherever possible requests for home working should be made at least one month before the employee wishes to start the arrangement.
- (c) Risk assessments of the home working environment, in line with legal requirements, must be undertaken. An application and self-assessment form (*Appendix 1*) must be completed by the employee and agreed by the Town Clerk before home working can commence.
- (d) Requests should be considered on their own merits, considering resources, impact on colleagues and working relationships.
- (e) When working from home employees are responsible for ensuring they are contactable during normal working hours. This must be via a Council mobile telephone or via the 3CX system.
- (f) As a general rule it is not considered necessary for those working from home to require supplies of stationery etc. Large volumes of printing and collating of documents should be carried out on Town Council premises. Certain circumstances as the Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated that those working from home will require supplies plus IT support where needed. Arrangements therefore are to be made to support employees in such circumstances.
- (g) Under no circumstances should home working be used as an alternative method of meeting carers needs (i.e. childcare).
- (h) Home working agreements will be reviewed considering any change of circumstances, whether relating to employee, work they are required to undertake, or the working environment.
- (i) In the event that staff are required to work form home as per the Covid-19 pandemic then team meetings will be had by virtual means on a regular basis plus daily telephone contact.

## **4. Responsibilities**

### **4.1 Employer Responsibilities**

**Health & Safety** - In line with the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 ("the Act") and their Health & Safety Policy the Council will ensure, as far as reasonably practical, the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees, including those working from home. The Council reserves the right to inspect home working premises in order to ensure that the Act, current risk assessments and Council policies and procedures are being adhered to. Reasonable notice will be given to employees before any inspection.

**Insurance** - The Council accepts liability for accidents which are proven to have been caused by the authorised use of equipment provided by them in line with any instructions issued.

**Data Protection, Security & Confidentiality** - Council employees will be instructed that in instances where their colleagues are working from home, they will not disclose any personal details e.g. telephone numbers to anyone outside of the Council.

### **4.2 Employee Responsibilities**

**Health & Safety** - Employees are expected to carry out their work in such a way as to ensure, as far as reasonably practical, that there is no risk to health and safety to themselves, members of their family or visitors.

**Insurance** - Home working may have an effect on domestic insurance policies. Employees wishing to work from home must inform their insurance company of the change in circumstances and the use, and identity, of equipment owned by the Council. An employee's mortgage provider may need to be informed. Employees living in council or privately rented accommodation should notify their landlord and/or examine the terms of their lease. Any equipment belonging to the employee but being used for Council business should be operated in line with any instructions issued.

It is reasonable for the Council to assume that this done.

**Accidents, Incidents & Dangerous Occurrences** - In line with the Council's Accident Reporting Procedure, employees must inform their line manager of any accidents, incidents or dangerous occurrences which take place whilst working at home. The initial report should be via telephone with the appropriate paperwork being completed on the employee's return to the workplace.

**Policies and Procedures** - All work carried out on Council business is covered by the requirements of the Council's policies and procedures, even if this work is undertaken at home.

**Data Protection, Security & Confidentiality** - Arrangements for home working should ensure that the employee can maintain the security and confidentiality of documents within the home environment whilst complying with Data Protection legislation and the Council's Email, Internet and Computer Use Policy & Procedure (employees should be aware that even when using their personal equipment to undertake Council business they must comply with this procedure).

**Remote Access** - Employees who wish to work from home may use remote access to emails on Outlook via Office365. Homeworkers will be provided with a Council laptop which is encrypted.

Access to the server will be action by the Town Clerk and the Councils IT providers instructed to provide a secure virtual private network link (VPN)

Employees must not divulge any information held on the database to any third party. All Data Protection, GDPR, security and confidentiality rulings must be adhered to.

**Council Tax** - If the area of the house being used for home working is also used by the rest of the family at other times there are no implications regarding Council Tax.

However, if the area is used solely for business and is not available to the family there may need to be a change of definition. In such cases the employee should check the details with the Billing Authority.

**Taxation** - Employees choosing to work from home are not entitled to tax relief on additional outgoings. As there is no requirement to work from home there would be no tax relief on any proportion of the costs for heating, lighting and rent on rooms used for business purposes.

**Covid-19** where you have been required to work from home, tax relief may be applicable. Speak to the Town Clerk.

## 5. Equipment

The Council has purchased laptops which are encrypted and secure, these laptops must be used for homeworking and nothing more.

If any equipment owned by the Council is subsequently lost or damaged by an employee that employee shall be expected to pay for its replacement.

Covid-19. Any equipment as required to carry out duties will be provided.

## 6. Making an application for home working (in general).

- a) An employee requesting occasional home working should complete the application form and risk assessment form (*Appendix 1*) and forward it to the Town Clerk.  
Employees are encouraged to complete the form electronically providing as much information as possible. ***All electronic copies must be saved to personal U:\ drives to ensure the information remains confidential.***
- b) The Town Clerk will discuss the application with either the Line Manager or the Chairman of the HR Committee and the employee in person. Discussions should confirm the type of work which can be undertaken, arrangements for covering other duties in the office and the exact pattern of home working being requested.
- c) If the risk assessment highlights any cause for concern the Town Clerk should seek advice from Health & Safety before any further action is taken.
- d) The Town Clerk will sign the application and risk assessment form and return a copy to the employee whilst advising them of the decision on their application. This will normally be within two weeks of the request being submitted.
- e) If an employee wishes to appeal against the decision, they may do so by using the Council's Grievance Procedure.
- f) Home working arrangements will be reviewed on an annual basis, or sooner if circumstances change.
- g) Employees must be aware that any abuse of the home working arrangement may result in the Council taking disciplinary action.

## 7 Special Circumstances and Business Continuity

Covid-19 pandemic has required those staff that can, to work from home in accordance with government guidance and legislation.

In such instances now and in the future, it is expected that all will work together supporting one another ensuring business continuity, reducing the pressures upon colleagues who may be required to come into council offices for the purpose maintaining a degree of continuity for the community that we all serve. The Council as the employer will adhere to all health and safety requirements to make the workplace safe.

## Occasional Home Working: Application form and Risk Assessment

(to be reviewed annually or if circumstances change)

### Risk Assessment on the home working environment

Questions	Yes / No	Comments
<b>1. Chair</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is the chair height adjustable?</li><li>• Is the back rest adjustable in height &amp; tilt?</li><li>• Does the chair have a five-staff base?</li><li>• Is the chair comfortable?</li><li>• Do you need a footrest?</li></ul>		
<b>2. Desk / work surface</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is the area large enough for all the equipment and the full range of tasks to be undertaken there?</li><li>• Is there sufficient clearance beneath the area for thighs and knees and to stretch the legs?</li><li>• Have you sufficient space to access your desk as well as more space around it?</li><li>• If you use a document holder is it positioned at same height and distance as your monitor?</li></ul>		
<b>3. Keyboard</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is there sufficient space in front of the keyboard to place a wrist rest?</li><li>• Are all the keys present and in working order?</li></ul>		
<b>4. Mouse</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is there sufficient space adjacent to the keyboard for the mouse to be used comfortably?</li><li>• Is it positioned close to the keyboard to prevent overextending or cramping of the wrist?</li><li>• Do you have a mouse mat?</li></ul>		

<b>5. Screen</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the monitor positioned firstly in front of you? <input type="checkbox"/> Is the monitor positioned at the correct height? <i>(when looking horizontally eyes should be resting just below the top of the screen)</i></li> <li>• Does the screen tilt and swivel easily?</li> <li>• Is the image on the screen clear and stable?</li> </ul>		
<b>6. Environment</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there any manual handling issues relating to you working from home? Is the work area free from trip hazards including:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The tidying of cables and leads?</li> <li>• Does the route to your workplace involve using a loft ladder?</li> <li>• Are there access problems if you carry large or heavy items?</li> <li>• Is the general lighting adequate?</li> <li>• Can you eliminate strong light sources / reflections?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		

Questions	Yes / No	Comments
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the temperature and ventilations adequate and free from draughts?</li> <li>• Is the work area free from distracting noise?</li> <li>• Will your home working activities involve significant use of the telephone?</li> <li>• Are you intending to use a mobile phone for this purpose or will you have access to a land line?</li> <li>• In relation to your electrical equipment is there any evidence of damage to plugs or leads?</li> <li>• Is there any evidence of overheating?</li> <li>• Are combustible materials kept away from sources of heat?</li> <li>• Do you have a smoke alarm fitted?</li> <li>• Do you know what action to take in the event of a fire?</li> </ul>		
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**Town Clerk’s response to employee’s self-assessment of the proposed working arrangements:**

Actions taken in relation to any risks identified:

**I have reviewed the employee’s request for home working with their line manager and:**

- a) I agree to the proposed occasional home working arrangements
- OR** *(delete as appropriate)*
- b) I do not agree to the proposed occasional home working arrangements for the following reasons:

**Signed:**.....

**Date:**.....

**Completed forms to be passed to the HR**