

**PARISH COUNCIL**

Hainault Road • Chigwell • Essex • IG7 6QZ

Tel: 020 8501 4275**e-mail:** HR@chigwellparishcouncil.gov.uk

Flexible Working Policy

Policy Name:		Flexible Working Policy		
Policy Owner:		Chigwell Parish Council		
Amendments:	Version	Date	Author	Adopted by Full Council
Flexible Working Policy	1	July 2025	Hayley Moore	Date: 24 July 2025
Reviewed and updated				
Reviewed and updated				
Reviewed and updated				

1. Introduction

Flexible working is the idea that your working life can, with agreement, be adapted to suit your needs and preferences. This may mean a change to the hours that you work, your start and finish times, your days of work or the place where you work. We recognise the benefits of flexible working and will consider all flexible working requests with an open mind. However, we will need to balance the request against its effect on the organisation and its impact on other staff.

Chigwell Parish Council appreciates that some of you who work for us have a working pattern which lacks predictability – either in terms of the duration of your contract with us or your working pattern. We understand that you may wish to have more predictability.

Chigwell Parish Council's Policy:

- Sets out your legal entitlement to make a flexible working request
- Explains how requests should be made in each case, and the procedures we follow
- Sets out the circumstances where we may decline your request
- Explains what happens if a request is approved

Chigwell Parish Council's Policy applies to all employees. Parts of the Policy also apply to workers and agency workers – we will say where that is the case.

This Policy does not form part of any contract you may have with us or, in the case of agency workers, any contract you may have with your agency. We reserve the right to amend or remove this Policy.

Chigwell Parish Council's Policy sets out the formal process by which you can request flexibility at work. Before you make a formal flexible working pattern application, we suggest that you discuss your request informally with your line manager and the Clerk

2. Flexible working requests

If you are employed by us, then you may make two statutory requests for flexible working within any 12-month period and, subject to the eligibility requirements as set out below.

3. What is flexible working?

Flexible working might involve reducing or varying your hours or the days that you work or changing the location from which you work. There are lots of options, including:

- Part-time working
- Term-time working
- Annualised hours

- Compressed hours
- Flexitime
- Hybrid, home or remote working
- Job sharing

4. Who can make a flexible working request?

All employees have the right to make a flexible working request. As set out above, normally only two requests can be made in each 12-month period. But if you qualify as disabled, you can make requests to work flexibly as a 'reasonable adjustment', and you can do that more than twice a year.

5. How should a request be made?

Under the formal flexible working regime, a request for flexible working must be sent to HR in writing and must:

- State that it is a flexible working request
- Be dated
- Set out the change that you want and when you want it to take effect
- State whether you have previously made any flexible working requests to us and, if so, when

You can only have one live request at any one time. Once a request has been made, it remains live until any of the following occur:

- A decision about the request is made by us (and any appeal is concluded)
- The request is withdrawn
- An outcome is mutually agreed
- The statutory two-month period for deciding requests ends without an agreed extension

6. Our approach to flexible working requests

We will deal with flexible working requests reasonably.

We will consider the proposed flexible working arrangements, weighing up the benefits to you (and to the organisation) against any adverse impact that granting your request would have on the organisation or other staff.

We may grant your request in full or in part, or we may refuse it. We may also propose changes to your request for you to consider. You may be asked to complete a trial period before we confirm whether we agree to the changes.

7. Meeting

We will usually invite you to a meeting to discuss your request. The meeting will give you the chance to discuss why you are requesting the change, how we can accommodate it, and will allow us to understand how you think such a change will work in practice. We aim to hold a meeting within 14 days of receiving a request.

We will write to you with the outcome of your flexible working request, usually within two weeks of having held a meeting with you.

If we are happy to agree to the flexible working request, then we will confirm our agreement in writing without the need for a meeting.

8. Extending the time that we have to deal with a request

If, for some reason, we are not able to make a final decision within two months of the date that you made your request, then we will ask you to agree to extend the time that we have to deal with the request. This might be necessary if, for example, you have appealed against a decision taken to refuse your request or if we have accepted the request on a trial basis but have not made a final decision. We will record any agreement to extend time in writing.

9. What will we do if we receive requests from more than one employee

We will look at each request individually, on its own merits. Agreeing to one request does not mean we will reach the same conclusion again, nor does it create a right for any other employee. There may be situations when agreeing flexible working with one employee means that others' requests for similar flexible working cannot be granted.

If we receive several requests at the same time, and we believe that we will have difficulty in accommodating all requests, then we will speak to each employee with a view to seeing whether a compromise can be reached. If a compromise cannot be reached, then we will look at the requests in the order that they were received by us (unless a competing request is made as a request for reasonable adjustments because of a disability under the Equality Act 2010, which will normally take priority).

10. Agreeing a request

If we accept your flexible working request, then your new work pattern will form a variation to your contract of employment and will be permanent unless otherwise agreed. We will confirm your new terms in writing.

We will review your new working pattern with you at regular intervals following the approval of your request to make sure that it is working as expected and meeting the needs and expectations of both you and the organisation.

11. Refusing a request

We will try to accommodate flexible working requests where possible. If we cannot accept your request, we will explain why in writing and will rely on one or more of the following reasons:

Excessive Cost to the Council

Granting the request would result in significant additional cost to the Parish Council

Inability to Reorganise Workload

The duties cannot be redistributed effectively among existing staff without causing disruption

Inability to Recruit Additional Staff

It is not practical or financially viable to recruit additional personnel to accommodate the request

Negative Impact on Service Quality

Approving the request would likely reduce the quality of service delivered to residents

Reduced Ability to Meet Demand

The Parish Council's ability to meet public demand or respond to service requests in a timely manner would be adversely affected

Adverse Effect on Individual or Team Performance

Performance levels, either individually or across the team, could be negatively impacted

Insufficient Work During Requested Hours

There is not enough appropriate work available during the hours or days the employee has requested to work

Conflict with Planned Organisational Changes

The request does not align with future plans for restructuring, changes in service delivery or staffing arrangements

Impact on Operational Hours or Public Access

The request would make it difficult to ensure coverage during core hours when Council officers need to be accessible to the public

Health and Safety or Lone Working Concerns

Flexible arrangements would pose health and safety risks or increase lone working in situations where it is not appropriate

If we reject your request, you have the option to appeal our decision.

12. Trial periods

The legal framework surrounding flexible working does not include any right to agree to the request on a 'trial period' basis. However, it may sometimes be useful for both you and us to 'try out' the new working arrangements before a permanent change is made to your contract of employment. In these circumstances, we may seek to agree a trial period with you. We will not impose a trial period on you. If you reject the offer of a trial period, we will have to agree or reject your flexible working

request straight away. If you agree to a trial period, then we will set out this agreement in writing. The letter may also include reference to an extension of the two-month time limit¹ for dealing with flexible working requests (as this period would otherwise continue to run during the trial).

At the end of any agreed trial period, we will make a final decision on your flexible working request and will communicate this in writing. If we decide to reject your request, then you will have the option to appeal this decision.

13. Appeals

You may appeal within one week of our decision. Your appeal should be dated and sent in writing to the person identified as the appeal officer in the decision letter. You must explain exactly why you are appealing.

We will invite you to an appeal meeting. Wherever possible, the appeal meeting will not be led by the manager who held the meeting at which we decided what action to take. You may be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague, in line with the process outlined below. Appeals will normally be determined before the end of the 'decision period' (two months from when you sent your initial request) wherever possible. An extension to the 'decision period' may need to be agreed with you.

Our final decision will be sent to you in writing. We will try to do this within one week of the appeal hearing. You will not have any further right of appeal.

14. Withdrawal of a request

You can withdraw a request for flexible working at any time after it has been made. A withdrawn request will count as one of the two requests that you are able to make under the statutory scheme in any 12-month period.

We may notify you that we have decided to treat your conduct as a withdrawal of your flexible working request where either of the following applies:

- You have failed, without good reason, to attend both the first meeting arranged to discuss your request and the next meeting arranged for that purpose
- We have allowed you to appeal against the rejection of your request and, without good reason, you have failed to attend both the first meeting arranged by us to discuss your appeal and the next meeting arranged for that purpose

We will notify you in writing if we decide to treat your conduct as a withdrawal of your request.

15. Review and updates

This Policy delegates authority to officers and the HR consultant to oversee and manage the process with this Policy. If the Clerk is the subject of this policy, the matter is overseen and managed by the HR consultant and Full Council who may delegate the matter to the Personnel Committee. It is the

responsibility of Chigwell Parish Council's HR department to ensure that this Policy is reviewed and updated at least annually or when there is a significant change in either the regulatory environment or internal processes. Such updates should be made in a timely manner and wherever practical introduced at the same time as the new process or regulation is effective. It is the responsibility of the Clerk to ensure this Policy is formally adopted by the Council on an annual basis.

16. About this document

The information contained in this document is strictly confidential and is intended for Chigwell Parish Council employees only. The unauthorised use, disclosure, copying, alteration, or distribution of this document is strictly prohibited.