

Committee(s)	Dated:
Establishment Committee – For approval	12 May 2021
Subject: Corporate Home / Remote Working Policy (Health and Safety) (Draft)	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	1,2
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of: Chrissie Morgan, Director of HR	For Decision
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Summary

This report outlines a proposal for new corporate policy for Home and Remote Working.

The purpose of the policy is to set a corporate framework with articulated responsibilities and arrangements, to protect staff, so far as is reasonably practicable, from the risks that are associated with home and remote/agile working and support the delivery of our corporate outcomes.

Recommendation(s)

Members of the Establishment Committee are asked to:

- Endorse the draft Home Working and Remote Policy (Health and Safety)

Main Report

Background

1. Incorrect use of Display Screen Equipment (DSE) or poorly designed workstations or work environments can lead to pain in necks, shoulders, backs, arms, wrists and hands as well as fatigue and eye strain. The causes may not always be obvious.
2. The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 (as amended) apply to employees who use DSE daily, for an hour or more at a time. They apply to employees who work at a fixed desk, work flexibly in agile or remote way and to home workers.
3. Covid-19 has presented major challenges to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of employees and others during the pandemic. The necessity for homeworking came very suddenly as a result of lockdown, and perhaps many employees did not expect to be working from home for such a prolonged period.
4. Agile/remote working, this new way of working means staff may work from home some of the time, from an office base some of the time, or from a variety of different workplaces such as a partner building, or a community space – or maybe even a mix of all these. Work will become more about what you do, not where you do it from.
5. Research suggests that many public bodies have documented health and safety home / remote working arrangements. ACAS and London Councils also propose standardising home working provisions through policy arrangements, not just in response to the Covid-19 pandemic
6. The draft policy was discussed at the Health and Safety Managers Forum in November 2020 and it was agreed to endorse for tabling at the Corporate Health Safety and Wellbeing Committee. Other stakeholders were also consulted. The Town Clerk agreed to this draft policy proceeding to the Establishment Committee.

Current Position

7. The City Corporation has started developing a range of flexible working practices to enable more effective working in a variety of ways from a range of work settings.
8. There is specific corporate guidance on home working and various other related guidance notes in place.
9. The City Corporation used a soft wear system called “WorkRite” for DSE training, testing and assessment. The system was not adapted for homeworking which meant that “paper” based homeworking DSE assessments were manually loaded onto system during the first national lockdown in early 2020. Self-reported compliance by departments, as monitored by the Recovery Group, was high.

10. The Corporate Health Safety and Wellbeing Team are in the process of implementing an Agile DSE solution which will allow DSE assessment, training and testing to be completed in home working, agile/remote and office-based environments.

Proposals

11. That a new corporate Home and Remote Working Policy (Health and Safety) is developed as set out be endorsed with the aim of it being finally approved by the Establishment Committee.
12. This draft policy provides a framework for consistent and fair practice on the issues to be considered when considering agile and home working arrangements.
13. The proposed (new) policy aims to:
- provide a corporate policy and arrangements for managing home / remote working
 - support the implementation of the new Agile DSE software system
 - reduce risks associated with agile and home working to a reasonably practicable level
 - establish the standards, working practices and supported configurations of home and remote working solutions
 - facilitate the adoption of modern flexible working practices where appropriate to do so, in line with our equality and diversity obligations

Corporate & Strategic Implications

14. Everything we do supports the delivery of the Corporate Plan's three strategic objectives, including contributing to a flourishing society, especially:
- *People are safe and feel safe (Outcome 1)*
 - *People enjoy good health and wellbeing (Outcome 2)*
15. The draft Home / Remote Working Policy is entirely consistent with the above, providing the governance and framework (safety management system) to support these outcomes, and drive performance.

Legal and risk implications

16. The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 remains the primary legislation which sets out the legal duties on health and safety. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) are the principal enforcers and have a statutory duty to enforce the requirements of the legislation.
17. Effective health, safety and wellbeing management is good for business and contributes to our strategic objectives, including reduced potential for sickness absence, litigation, enforcement action and unnecessary (additional) financial costs.

Financial and resources implications

18. There are no additional financial implications other than that noted above. Additional equipment has been provided for home working as justified by DSE risk assessment.

Equalities implications

19. Remote / Homeworking can help enables organisations to embrace diversity and inclusion by hiring people from different socioeconomic, geographic, and cultural backgrounds and with different perspectives—which can be challenging to accomplish when recruiting is restricted to a certain specific locale that not everyone wants, or can afford, to live near.
20. Remote / Homeworking where this is business possible also gives people who may have a hard time finding steady employment at an onsite job, like those with disabilities or caregivers who need a flexible schedule, the opportunity to follow their career goals without having to worry about commuting back and forth to an office, and with the flexibility to get to doctor's and other healthcare appointments when needed.
21. The City Corporation is committed to its duty to fulfil the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. Where reasonable adjustments are already made at an employee display screen workstation, such as ergonomic and/or personalised equipment, that same help, support and protection shall be afforded to homeworkers

Climate implications

22. Likely to be beneficial. Heating and lighting may be offset. Reduced travel.

Security implications

23. Remote/home workers must ensure the security and safekeeping of any confidential information provided by the City Corporation for use in the remote working environment. Such information should not be accessible to family or visitors of the remote/home worker. Employees must ensure that all reasonable precautions are being taken to maintain confidentiality of material in accordance with the City Corporation's requirements. All personal data must be processed in accordance with GDPR and City Corporation data protection protocols.
24. It is City Corporation policy that computer users are not permitted to load non-standard applications and other software on the City Corporation's PCs or laptops. Home/remote workers should not download any application or software without specific advance permission.

Conclusion

25. A home / remote working policy, with articulated responsibilities and arrangements, aligned to our corporate outcomes will provide an organisational framework for managing these occupational issues. The evidence from implementing agile and home working suggests that many more problems are anticipated than actually arise and that, once any initial problems are overcome, most people appreciate the greater flexibility and autonomy that agile working brings.
26. Supporting the opportunities for agile and home working gives to the City Corporation the opportunity to modernise its working practices in line with our commitments to flexible working where this meets business needs and our obligations to improving equality and diversity.

Appendices

None

Background papers

[Corporate Health Safety and Wellbeing Policy](#)

[Corporate DSE Policy](#)

[Home / Remote Working Guidance](#)

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