Melton Borough Council

Ways of Working: New Working Model

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1.0	2/08/21	New procedure for engagement discussions
1.1	27/08/21	Minor amends following engagement feedback for SLT review

Consultation

Title	Date	Version No
Engagement Session with MLT and selected employees	2/3 August 21	1.0

Distribution

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Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic resulted in our employees responding magnificently and having to adapt very quickly to new ways of working. This rapid change in a short space of time has provided us with the opportunity to reflect on how and where we work and to evaluate our overall approach to agile working and what this means for our people.

As we move from the restrictions of working virtually to a more balanced approach, we recognise the importance of re-introducing face to face meetings where it brings value, supporting the ad-hoc networking discussions which enabled our employees to understand and support other priorities and challenges across the council, and the need for some employees to work differently to support their own wellbeing.

Many organisations are moving to a hybrid working model, expecting most employees to see a balance between home and office, with a focus on coming into offices where collaboration with others face-to-face or an activity requires the use of certain equipment or space. Due to the variety of roles required to deliver our services at Melton Borough Council (MBC) we believe that one size will not fit all, and we are therefore looking to introduce a hybrid working model which enables a culture which supports a model which allows different approaches in different teams but enables greater flexibility and ensures a continued focus on our customer and consistency of approach across MBC.

This document captures the principles which will guide our approach to agile working and the Melton hybrid operating model. It is recognised nationally that "work is what you do – not where you do it". However, at MBC we are a community with a shared purpose, and we believe ensuring our employees remain connected, focussed on outcomes, and have the opportunity for collaborative working, support, networking and creative space is critical to our continued success.

The hybrid operating model and principles captured in this document are underpinned by our values; We Care, We Innovate, We Achieve, and supported by our Team Strategy.

1.0 Hybrid Principles

Our way of working:

- Is centred on our customer, our communities, our organisation, and each other to support the delivery of our purpose and agreed activities and outcomes,
- Accepts that flexibility is the norm rather than the exception, with each individual and team trusted to work and deliver in the most appropriate and best way.
- Recognises the importance of and provides opportunities for collaboration, connectivity, and joint working at the most effective location and time,
- Continuously challenges traditional and new approaches to how we deliver our services to make sure they are fit for purpose and use appropriate digital and virtual tools to improve our services and interactions.
- Ensures consistency of approach in how we approach flexible working, using pragmatism to accept that specifics may differ for each team, role, and person,
- Respects and supports individual circumstances, concerns, and changing needs of our employees, providing wellbeing support and development as required,
- Enables reduced carbon emissions and accommodation costs.

As an organisation we will:

- Provide training, equipment, and the tools required to fulfil your role effectively and efficiently,
- Support our managers to:
  - ensure safe and effective working practices are easily understood and followed,
  - take accountability for team's progress and commitment to workplace culture,
  - manage individual requirements, including specifics such as reasonable adjustments and the needs of newly appointed employees,
  - undertake regular performance development conversations and be both intuitive and available to provide necessary support,
- Focus on ensuring working space in our offices suits all needs, including collaborative space as well as quiet and confidential areas,
- Ensure information about the Council, your employment and specifics related to your role are kept up to date and easily accessible via an employee intranet,
- Provide as much notice and detail as possible about activities and duties which need to be completed at a specific location and time,
- Support everyone, regardless of role to achieve the a positive work/life balance,
- Enable face to face collaboration to be completed in any suitable space appropriate to the confidentiality of the discussion,

As employees we will:

- Consistently deliver a quality service, ensuring where and when we work remains focussed on the needs of our customers.
- Maintain positive communication and engagement within and across teams, including delivering virtual meetings and interactions in an appropriate manner,
- Ensure a working environment which is conducive to delivering our very best, meeting health & safety and working time directive requirements,

- Respect and support individual circumstances, participating in team activities, sharing learnings and best practice with colleagues,
- Manage our time to ensure delivery of agreed outcomes, sharing any challenges or concerns so a solution can be found,
- Work with our teams to ensure cover for our customers and colleagues, ensuring calendars and communication tools are effectively used,
- Agree our team charter and actively participate in this,
- Comply with ICT security and data protection requirements, taking care of all equipment provided,

2.0 Hybrid Approach

In many cases, employees will blend different flexible working options, according to the needs of our customers, communities and the activities and outcomes required to deliver the services for them. This involves a substantial move away for many teams from the idea that an individual applies for and is granted a single work pattern that is set in stone, although it should be noted that some teams have been working in a flexible way for some time to ensure evening and weekend work is covered. It is important to take a team approach so that flexible working arrangements can be planned to cover the service needs as well as promote more flexible working arrangements for employees. Please refer to your team charter (refer appendix 1 for our master template) for your team's agreement to how they will work together.

To consider the hybrid working arrangements which would be suitable for a specific role or team, we will first analyse the activities involved in each job role, considering how effectively they can be done at different times, different locations and the need for face-to-face interaction to gain the best outcome. We will then consider the impact on teamwork and/ or customer service to agree the worker profile for each role.

The worker profile will be the same for every role in a team and enables the employee and their manager to be clear about how much flexibility there is to deliver a role. This is then overlaid with the individual personal preference. The table below captures our two forms of worker profile: **Hybrid** and **Fixed**. Most of our roles are classified as hybrid, which is then further broken down into the requirements of the hybrid role. In addition, a set of standard equipment for each role will be agreed.

All worker profiles will have a standardised set of equipment, support and any specific requirements captured for each profile. .

Worker profile descriptions

Hybrid - Flexible	Hybrid - Fixed
A role which in the main can be conducted from various locations and although they may have some pre-determined hours/location requirements. Individuals in the team have the autonomy to determine their working hours and/or location within pre-agreed team requirements to ensure the agile working profile requirements are met.	A role which in the main is completed during set hours and/or location. Flexibility is very limited and only on a pre-agreed basis with the team manager. Individuals in the team can work together with their manager to consider how the role can be delivered in a more agile way, but due to the agreed working profile requirement, individuals are not able to have the autonomy to determine their working hours and/or location.

Hybrid – Flexible is then further divided, as outlined below.

Hybrid - Flexible: on-the-go	Hybrid - Flexible: desk based
• A role which starts and finishes their day from a base but during the day moves between locations and places. • Typically, this role needs the flexibility to schedule diaries so they can meet customers/partners and have meetings with teams or their manager in any location. • It is vital they can access files and folders from wherever they are working. • They may work from partners buildings or in public spaces. • They will come back to the office from time to time across the week.	• Typically, this role needs a desk, screen and ICT access to folders and systems. • They don't need a particular location but tend to stay in one location all day. • Their role is mainly desk based. • They may occasionally work from partners buildings or in public spaces. • They are normally able to work from any desk which has standard MBC kit. *NB: Some roles in this category will require a set desk due to specific requirements which can only be set up on certain desk. This will be agreed where relevant.*

Delivering this hybrid approach to ways of working means:

- Our focus is on delivering agreed outcomes and activities, as opposed to the number of hours worked. Employees still have a total contracted number of hours, with an agreed work pattern, however where and how these are worked will vary from person to person.

- The use of both virtual and digital working is critical, however we accept that there is sometimes great benefit in being face to face, such as when inducting new people, introducing a new procedure or building rapport with a client.
- Our accommodation will incorporate more collaborative space, enabling a mixture of face to face, remote and virtual and face to face meetings and discussions to be undertaken between colleagues/customers and partners.
- Our desk layout will allow for touch-down spaces for our on-the-go colleagues, quiet and confidential areas for those that require this and other desks which are suitable for any employee to use.
- We would expect to see an increase in mixed working groups and opportunities for networking across teams.
- It is important to take a team approach so that working arrangements can be planned to cover the service needs as well as promote more flexible working arrangements for employees, (refer section 3, Hybrid Team Management)
- Reviewing what opportunities are available for teams which have been classified as 'hybrid-fixed'.
- Business hours may in time differ between services. Any changes will be based on customer and activity needs, and full discussion and consultation will be undertaken before any change is agreed. In addition, the support required to deliver these services would need to be considered and agreed.
- Our approach to this way of working will evolve as we learn and develop together.
- The introduction of a virtual meeting etiquette (refer appendix 2) to support improved on-line meetings and discussions.
- Consideration of the various duty requirements and how these will be fulfilled.

3.0 Hybrid team management

When working in different locations and at different times, social relationships need to be maintained and appropriate online and offline mechanisms need to be developed, such as buddy schemes for new recruits, regular team meetings, employee briefings etc.

It is the responsibility of teams to look out for each other, and for managers of dispersed teams to spot problems and resolve them before they become major issues. These may be teased out through regular conversations, or clues may be spotted in terms of performance. If necessary, the manager and team member can agree an alternative work style. It is about finding the right work style for the individual, and about providing the appropriate support to overcome the problem.

The aim in moving to our new ways of working is to create the context in which teams can operate more dynamically and have better physical and online spaces in which to interact. Though they may no longer sit next to one another, the new technologies should allow much more effective sharing of work and enable team members to communicate more effectively than before. New ways of working will also support more effective cross-team working amongst services.

It is important to have clear expectations about what is to be done and how team communications will work. This is captured in the Team Charter. However,

development for managers in how to work and manage virtually will be available and all teams should ensure there is:

- clear reporting structures,
- sharing of calendars and schedules,
- rigorous use of electronic document management systems and digital technology once available, to ensure work is easily accessible,
- equality across the team, with no member of the team disadvantaged by the choices of others, e.g., in providing office cover or attending meetings,
- useful online communications, and etiquette in virtual meetings is followed,
- signposting and availability for phone contact or online discussion,
- fairness in use of space when in the office.

4.0 Hybrid personal choices

This policy focusses on most of our employees, who are able to work in a hybrid-flexible way, as outlined in section 3, with the points in this section specifically for roles which have been classified as **hybrid – flexible**.

However, we recognise that for some employees the option for hybrid - flexible working is greatly reduced or not available, due to the nature of their role. This is normally where a person is undertaking a role which is required to deliver a service from a specific location or at a specific time. These are known as **hybrid – fixed** roles and in these cases, local options will be discussed and agreed to allow as much flexibility as possible for all employees. Managers and employees are reminded of the legal right for people to make flexible working requests and all formal requests which are not enabled through our hybrid working model will be dealt with in line with the ACAS code of practice.

For hybrid – flexible roles:

We do not believe in the future there will be a requirement for a formal flexi time scheme, however we understand for many employees this scheme is a helpful way to record and manage their hours and time would need to be allowed for consultation, transition, and the trust to be built up between managers and employees that time can be managed without the need for the formal scheme.

All our employees where their role allows are empowered to manage their hours of work to ensure customer needs and partner requirements are met. However, working extra hours and accruing excessive hours is not something that we support and should only be completed in exceptional circumstances and with prior agreement.

Although we are supportive of our employees with caring responsibilities, these duties will need to be managed in their own time through flexible working.

We understand the impact on well-being for some members of employees from working in their home environment, even if their working set up meets the DSE assessment. We would not want any employee's wellbeing to be negatively

impacted by working from home and would encourage all employees to discuss any concerns with their manager, so appropriate action can be taken.

As per our current terms and conditions, there may be occasions where we need to ask our employees to change their working hours to meet a new demand, or an employee wants to change their hours on a permanent basis. This is relevant to part time employees with an agreed set of working hours or full-time employees who have agreed a specific flexible working pattern e.g., a nine day fortnight. This would be completed in consultation with you and following our correct processes.

5.0 Hybrid specifics

Data security & Information Management

Maintaining the security of the information we work with is vital and those working remotely are responsible for the security of the data they keep and should comply with all relevant legislation and organisational policies, just as if they were working in a fixed council office.

Specifically:
- Confidential or sensitive conversations/work should not be carried out whilst in any public areas,
- Other individuals (including family members) should not have any access to personal data either on paper or as electronic records,
- All printed or other paper records must be safely locked away when not in use,
- Confidential waste should be disposed of in the normal way,
- All council data stored outside of the councils' network, must only be stored on council systems and/or encrypted council owned devices. Council data must not be stored on any personal devices and/or employees should not send work related emails to their personal email address,
- If employees are using a laptop or other portable device, they must be aware of the additional security risks if leaving this device unattended,
- If employees become aware of any loss of council data, they must contact their line manager immediately

It is the responsibility of all employees to ensure that information is handled correctly and not used for personal benefit or gain.

Personal usage of equipment and technology

Employees who choose to use an MBC computer for personal use must accept, as a condition of doing so, that any use of the system and emails etc. may be monitored. People using MBC computers/systems waive any rights regarding privacy of personal information/emails on MBC computers/systems.

Occasional personal use of MBC equipment is allowed this includes occasional personal emails and occasional internet use. Any use must not be excessive. It should not count as working time and must not interfere or detract from Council business / Council work or distract any other individual from their work.

Please refer to the ICT Acceptable Usage Policy for more information

Health & Safety

The employer's duty of care is the same wherever employees are working, whether in the employer's workplace, at home, on the move or in some other working environment. In general, when it comes to health and safety, the aim is to enable rather than prohibit – that is to enable employees to work safely wherever is the most effective and efficient location to get the work done.

Employees also need to be responsible for ensuring their workstation is fit for purpose and that they follow the health & safety tips and guidelines provided. Further information can be found on the health and safety pages on MIKE.

It is a requirement that you complete the Workplace DSE workstation assessment form which should be returned to your line manager, please discuss any specific requirements from your assessment with your manager e.g. the need for specific equipment to be duplicated between two work locations. To download the DSE assessment form for working at home, go to MIKE.

If you are working remotely then your comfort and safety is just as important as it is when working in an office. Using laptops for prolonged periods in an office or home office environment may require the use of a laptop stand and/or additional properly positioned screen, with a separate keyboard and mouse.

There are also some simple steps you can take to increase your physical and mental wellbeing whilst working from home or remotely:

- breaking up long spells of DSE work with rest breaks (at least 5 minutes every hour) or changes in activity,
- ensuring meetings are booked in and short gaps are left between them,
- avoiding awkward, static postures by regularly changing position,
- getting up and moving or doing stretching exercises,
- avoiding difficult or upsetting work related calls in home personal space,

Please note the council will not contribute to any additional household costs such as heating, lighting, electricity usage, wear and tear, resolving wifi issues (including the provision of wifi extenders or dongles), parking costs, etc. as remote working arrangements are deemed a mutual benefit with savings in respect of transport costs, commuting time etc. The office is still available for those whose situation does not allow for them to work remotely or are concerned about additional personal costs.

Working hours

One of the benefits of working more flexibly is that it can help create a positive work-life balance. For example, it can ease the daily commute and/or help employees manage family, caring or domestic responsibilities during lunch breaks or directly before and after they work. Employees should ensure that whilst working from home

they do not work excessively long or low hours on a regular basis and should only work their contracted hours. More information can be found on the gov.uk website:

https://www.gov.uk/maximum-weekly-working-hours.

Alongside other initiatives to promote a healthy workplace, flexible working practices can reduce absence and in particular reduce stress. A significant proportion of absence from work is due to minor ailments that make the thought of commuting and sitting in an office with colleagues not feasible but manageable if working from home – being able to work from home on these occasions can have a significant impact on 'sick leave'. In these instances, employees should speak with their line manager to agree if working from home is a viable option; employees should not feel obliged to work from home if they are sick - if the employee is not well enough to work from home, then the normal sickness absence procedure will apply. Employees should also ensure that annual leave is taken on a regular basis for their wellbeing and to ensure adequate rest.

Environmental sustainability

One of the primary components of the carbon footprint of work relates to travel. Travelling thousands of miles each year for work/ meetings that can be carried out using video or telephone conferencing is an unsustainable and unproductive thing to do. Decisions about where we work, where we expect our colleagues to work, and the ways in which we communicate can increase or reduce our need for travel, our energy consumption and consumption of physical resources. We would therefore want to support the continued use of virtual meetings if it is believed it can be completed with the same outcome remotely.

**Melton
Borough
Council**

Team Charter

Name of team	

Our purpose: (links to service blueprint and what we as a team believe we are here to do/ outcomes (not activities) we deliver to achieve our goal)

Our team measures of success for delivering our purpose (could include service standards, however this is more about what good looks like to us as a team):

Our customers (includes internal and external customers):

Other teams we work with and what we need to consider ensuring we are able to work out our best together:

How we work

Including how we:
- communicate & share information,
- agree & monitor workload,
- measure & celebrate success,
- maintain team cohesion when we are working in more flexible ways,
- encourage everyone to share their skills, knowledge, and experience,
- ensure everyone's voice is equal and respected.

What we do	How we do it
The way we set outcomes, define expectations, prioritise tasks, make decisions, focus effort, and develop our skills and talents.	

Where we work

How we:
- ensure quality of service is not impacted
- ensure tasks are completed in the most effective way,
- minimise time travelling to different locations, to reduce need for unnecessary travel,
- agree set periods or situations when we are encouraged to come into the work base,
- use digital approaches to enable better collaboration and sharing of information,
- induct new members of the team.

What we do	How we do it
The types of spaces we need to deliver our services in a way that best meet the needs of our customers.	

When we work

How we:
- agree and cover our fixed hours of business,
- ensure we are valued for the outcomes we deliver and how we deliver them, rather than the number of hours we work,
- enable greater autonomy and flexibility over working times,
- help each other in busy and stressful times, support the wellbeing of each other.

What we do	How we do it
Agreeing working arrangements that balance service, customer, team & individual needs.	

How we bring the values to life as a team:

We Care	
We Innovate	
We Achieve	

Virtual Meeting Etiquette

Your space

- Check that you are in a space where you are not likely to be disturbed. It can be really helpful if needed to set some ground rules with your family or those you live with, for times when you are on a virtual meeting
- Try and be by yourself – we need to consider both confidentiality and how comfortable other people at the meeting might be with what they can hear or see. If disturbance is unavoidable, please make people aware at the start of the meeting and take action as appropriate if there is an issue
- Please make people aware if you are expecting an interruption at the start of the meeting
- If it is not possible for you to be in a quiet/private space, please use the Teams background option
- Ensure it fits with DSE assessment requirements
- If you are in an open plan office, please where a head set

Camera view

- Your camera view should be appropriate for the meeting and fit with safeguarding requirements
- If it is best for you to use a Teams background option. Please consider which background you will use
    - Corporate background for customer and external stakeholder meetings
    - Alternatively, you could promote something e.g. new leisure centre
- Are you appropriately dressed for the meeting?
- Make sure you are sitting facing or to the side of a window or light, so there is no issue with darkness and exposure

Disturbances

- If you know you might be disturbed e.g. you are expecting a delivery, please let the chair or other people at your meeting know at the start

- If something happens and you need to leave the meeting. Please send a short message on the chat and then take your camera off and mute your mic, sending another message and putting back on your mic when you are back

Setting up the call

- Try to book meetings with a short gap before the next meeting. E.g. 50 mins as opposed to 60 mins. This allows a small gap for people between meetings, to either get up and walk around, pick up something urgent with someone on the call if required and/or to allow time for a quick chat after the meeting between people
- We only support recording of calls where there is a strong rationale, such as group formal meetings, e.g. Council meetings. Informal and 1:1 meetings should not be recorded.
  - If you are holding a group formal meeting which needs to be recorded, please ensure that attendees are aware the call will recorded.
  - We will be introducing "official sanctions" for calls being recorded when there isn't a need or when attendees are not aware of the recording.
- If you are the chair of the meeting, ensure an agenda is in place and shared with attendees

On the call

- Test your equipment before the call and if you are going to share your screen during the meeting, please check what else is on your screen
- Always join the meeting with your video on
- If there are more than 3 people on the call or you have background noise, please mute your mic
- Please always have your camera on, unless previously agreed. For example, some longer meetings have agreements in place for attendees to turn their camera off for specific agenda items they are not involved with
- If your camera has to be off for a specific reason, please let the chair of the meeting know and always say your name when you start to speak
- Use the Teams 'hand' icon to let the chair know you want to talk and leave on until you have spoken
- If you are late joining the meeting, please send a short 'chat' message to those already on the call to let them know you have joined
- Always speak clearly and loudly as not everyone might have as good a connection as you
- Be present in the meeting, your focus should be on fully participating in the meeting, not checking emails or completing other work

Chairing a meeting

- Always have a chair if you have four or more people on the call
- The chair is responsible for:

- o ensuring introductions of those at the meeting. Please remember everyone can have a different view, you will therefore need to say who is next to introduce themselves
- o ensuring people have the opportunity to speak and checking the chat for any comments
- o setting any additional meeting etiquette guidelines as required
- o checking that people who have not spoken, are able to also share their views
- o reminding people to mute their mic and follow the correct meeting etiquette
- o time keeping

Hybrid meeting

This etiquette is relevant for hybrid meetings as well, however it is also helpful to:

- ensure all remote people are able to see and hear before the meeting starts. It is important to remember that remote people may not be able to see everyone in the room, so it is good to talk through what they can see and also confirm who is in the room.
- ensure all people have introduced themselves if they don't know each other
- agree how people can let others know they want to speak – for virtual and face to face attendees