

**Lancashire County Council**

**Employment Committee**

**Thursday, 17th November, 2022 at 2.00 pm in Committee Room 'B' - The Diamond Jubilee Room, County Hall, Preston**

**Agenda**

**Part I (Open to Press and Public)**

**No. Item**

- 1. Apologies**
- 2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests**  
Members are asked to consider any pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests they may have to disclose to the meeting in relation to matters under consideration on the agenda.
- 3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 November 2022** (Pages 1 - 2)  
To be confirmed and signed by the Chair.
- 4. Working Flexibly Policy & Procedure - 6 Month Review** (Pages 3 - 10)
- 5. Urgent Business**  
An item of urgent business may only be considered under this heading where, by reason of special circumstances to be recorded in the minutes, the Chair of the meeting is of the opinion that the item should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency. Wherever possible, the Chief Executive should be given advance warning of any member's intention to raise a matter under this heading.
- 6. Date of Next Meeting**  
The next meeting of the committee will be held on Friday 9 December 2022 at 9.30am at County Hall, Preston.



**7. Exclusion of Press and Public**

The committee is asked to consider whether, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, it considers that the public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that there would be a likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the appropriate paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972, as indicated against the heading to the item.

**Part II (Not Open to Press and Public)**

**8. Shortlisting for the Director of Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer) Role (Pages 11 - 12)**

L Sales  
Director of Corporate Services

County Hall  
Preston



**Lancashire County Council**

**Employment Committee**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday, 3rd November, 2022 at 12.00 pm in Committee Room 'B' - The Diamond Jubilee Room, County Hall, Preston**

**Present:**

County Councillor Philippa Williamson (Chair)

**County Councillors**

A Vincent	J Mein
A Ali OBE	D O'Toole
L Beavers	A Riggott
P Buckley	

**1. Apologies**

None

**2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests**

There were no interests declared. However, County Councillor Riggott advised that one of the candidates was known to him professionally.

**3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 30 September 2022**

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**4. Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business.

**5. Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting of the committee would be held on Thursday 17 November at 2pm at County Hall, Preston.

**6. Exclusion of Press and Public**

**Resolved:** That the press and members of the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that there



would be a likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the appropriate paragraph of Part I of Schedule 12 A to the Local Government Act 1972. It was considered that in all the circumstances the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

**7. Longlisting, Interview Questions and Presentation Topic for the Director of Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer) Role**

(Exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972. It was considered that in all the circumstances of the case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interests in disclosing the information).

The Committee considered the applications received for the role of Director of Law and Governance, and arrangements for the presentation topic and interview process.

**Resolved:** That

- i. The agreed candidates be added to the longlist and that they go forward to the technical assessment
- ii. The interview questions and presentation topic to be used as part of the interview process, as set out in the report, be approved

L Sales  
Director of Corporate Services

County Hall  
Preston



**Employment Committee**

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 17 November 2022

Electoral Division affected: None;
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**Working Flexibly Policy & Procedure - 6 Month Review**  
(Appendix 'A' refers)

Contact for further information:

Deborah Barrow, Tel: (01772) 535805, Head of Service Human Resources,  
Deborah.Barrow@lancashire.gov.uk

**Brief Summary**

Following the launch of the updated Working Flexibly Policy and Procedure, a commitment was made to undertake a six-month review to determine if the policy continues to be aligned to organisational priorities.

The Employment Committee asked that the outcome of the review was presented at a future meeting.

**Recommendation**

The Employment Committee is asked to consider the review report and note the recommendations within it, as set out at Appendix 'A'.

**Background and Advice**

As part of the HR policy review programme, the Working Flexibly Policy and Procedure was reviewed, updated, and launched under a set of policy principles.

The principles are aligned to the organisational priorities in that our working practices have become increasingly flexible, with more agile working practices including, working hours/patterns, working from home or other work locations whilst effectively delivering services and meeting the needs of the business.

Although the nature of some roles within the county council cannot be completely flexible due to the service requirements, we continue to encourage services to think flexibly about service delivery to meet the best outcomes and meet objectives.

This can also support managers and staff consider how flexible working options can support their ability to flexibly adapt to changes in working practice and service needs.

A thorough review of the policy since its launch has been undertaken, taking account of available data, stakeholder and survey feedback. Unison, trade union, also undertook a survey with their members

Whilst the outcome of the review does not propose changes to the Working Flexibly Policy and Procedure, a number of recommendations have been made to further support embedding the policy within the county council. These are set out at the end of Appendix 'A'.

## **Consultations**

Consultations have taken place with the recognised trade unions and Unison has also shared their survey results from their membership. This feedback has helped to inform some of the recommendations.

## **Implications:**

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

## **Risk management**

The council is legally required to ensure that its Working Flexibly Policies and Procedures comply with current employment legislation, and the policy continues to meet this requirement. We have ensured that the language and tone is clear, straightforward, and understandable, and should enable employees and managers to understand the processes to be followed with flexible working arrangements.

## **Financial**

There are no financial implications to the revised policy and procedure.

## **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**

### **List of Background Papers**

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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None

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A



# Appendix A

## Working Flexibly Policy & Procedure – 6 Month Policy Review

### Policy Principles

Our ways of working are becoming increasingly flexible, with growing numbers of employees working from home or other locations, working part-time and varied hours, and we recognise the many benefits of agile working practices. Overall, we value flexibility as it supports us to meet individual and service requirements, which in turn improve the service we offer to our customers and residents. It also allows us to look at alternatives to reduce travel time and increase efficiency.

Although the nature of some roles within the council cannot be completely flexible due to the service requirements, we encourage managers to consider flexible working practices to effectively deliver their services.

This can also support managers and staff to consider how flexible working options can support their ability to flexibly adapt to changes in working practice and service needs.

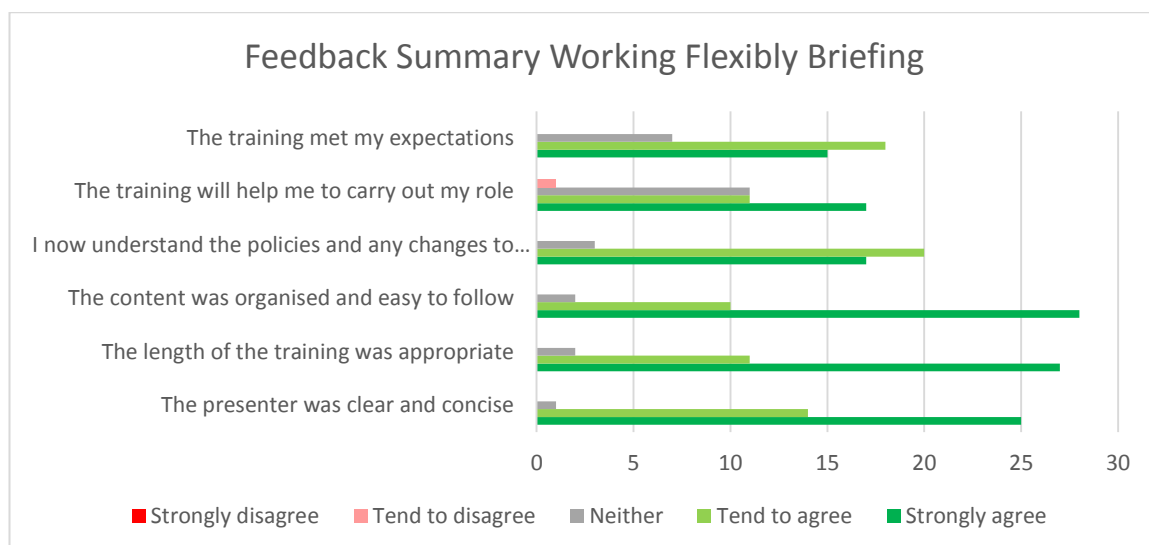
### Policy changes now in place since the policy launch

- Right to request flexible working from day one of employment.
- Flexibility for management to consider more than one flexible working request within 12 months if the service wishes to consider it.
- Removal of flexi-time scheme (with time off in lieu available if required).
- Homeworking requests can now be made for any reason.
- Career break scheme removed, and sabbatical extended from six months to twelve months.

### Feedback following the policy launch

#### General

- Low numbers of queries received (18 in total), of which questions were largely routine and procedural queries
- Positive feedback received on the number of flexible working options available
- Negative feedback centred around the removal of the flexi scheme, in response to which advice was provided on the application of time off in lieu
- Positive feedback received from the delivery of the working flexibly briefing as shown below



## Trade Union Survey









Unison conducted a staff survey to understand views from their members on the updated working flexibly policy. Unison confirmed that approximately 40% of their members (non-schools) participated in the survey. A summary of the key points is as below:

- The ability to work flexibly may be dependent on the attitude of the manager, which led to the perception of inequality of opportunity to work flexibly.
- It was felt that time off in lieu was not being utilised satisfactorily, particularly for those that were using flexitime previously.
- Flexibility on where you work appears to be the most common improvement although 16% said that they believe their role is denied this flexibility.
- When you work is the second most common improvement although 30% said that they believe their role is denied this flexibility.

The survey results showed:






- The updated policy had an overall approval rating of 5.12 (out of 10), and in relation to the management attitudes/approach to the updated policy the approval rating was 4.43 (out of 10).
- 12.78% of respondents had made a flexible working request under the new policy. 73.33% of those applicants had their flexible working request agreed by management.
- 3.64% of respondents had experienced an employer led flexible working request under the new policy.

Respondents were asked what the benefits were to the new policy:

Answer Choices			Response Percent
1	Better work life balance		57.47%
2	Helps with caring responsibilities		33.48%
3	Helps with health (eg reasonable adjustments, disabilities, managing health conditions)		37.56%
4	Greater flexibility		45.25%
5	Choice of when and how to work		33.48%
6	Don't know		18.55%
7	None		11.76%
8	Other (please specify):		13.12%

- A good proportion of respondents said their work/life balance had improved, that the policy has supported staff with caring responsibilities, has supported staff managing health/disabilities and has afforded greater flexibility

Respondents were asked what are the problems with the policy?

Answer Choices			Response Percent
1	My job does not allow for flexibility		25.95%
2	Managers attitudes to flexible working		47.03%
3	TOIL not recorded/granted		25.41%
4	Removal of flexi time		42.16%
5	Other (please specify):		15.68%



- As above the main issues centre around management attitudes and the removal of flexitime.
- The survey showed that 68.95% of respondents were not affected by the removal of the flexitime scheme. The 31.05% of respondents who said they were affected said that they felt the main issue was an inability to reclaim additional hours worked and a lack of flexibility. This may suggest that time off in lieu is not being utilised correctly (if the additional hours are required owing to business need).

Overall, it demonstrated further work could be undertaken to embed the policy and ensure that management understand the policy and how it can be applied for both the benefit of the service and employee experience.

## Staff / manager stakeholder engagement

### Returning to the workplace pulse survey

In the recent returning to workplaces pulse survey for employees and managers the response was positive regarding the ability to work in a more flexible way:

#### Employee survey

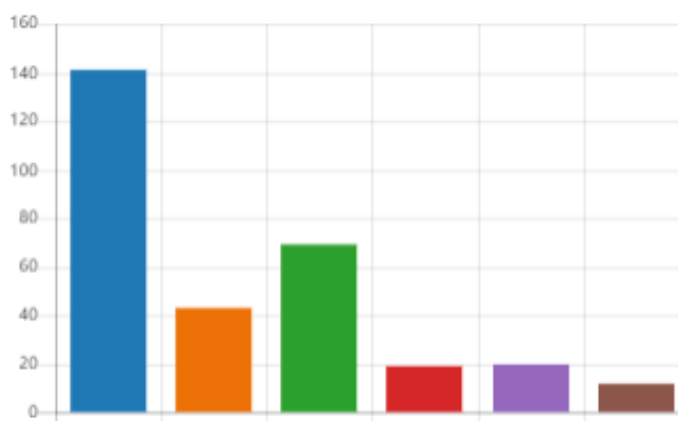
- It was very encouraging to see that 23% of staff were already working flexibly before the policy and procedure was launched and 61% of staff were able to carry out their role in a more flexible way after the launch of this policy in Nov 2021.
- It was also surprising to see that 6% of staff had no support to carry out their role in a flexible way and 4% were not sure on this matter. Also, it was helpful to learn that for 6% of staff, flexibility did not apply to their role and reinforces our understanding that “one size does not fit all”.

### 7. Since the launch of the working flexibly policy in Nov 21, do you feel that you have been able to carry out your role in a more flexible way?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

Yes - definitely	141
Yes - sometimes	43
Not really as I worked flexibly ...	69
No - not supported to do so	19
No - delivery of my role does ...	20
Not sure	12



#### Manager survey

- It was very encouraging to see that one third of managers and their teams were already working flexibly before the policy was launched and 62% of managers were able to support their teams to deliver their service in a more flexible way after the launch of the policy in Nov 2021. 16% of managers have also seen an increase in requests to work more flexibly.
- Only 6% of managers felt they were unable to support their teams with working flexibly practices as there are service delivery constants not conducive to apply this policy in practice.
- 17% of managers reported seeing an increase in flexible working requests.

5. Since the launch of the working flexibly policy in Nov 21, have you been able to support your team to operate in a more flexible way?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

Yes - definitely	104
Yes- sometimes	42
Not really - we have adopted f...	77
No - not possible due to servi...	14
No - was not aware of the wor...	1



6. Have you seen an increase in flexible working requests since the working flexibly policy was launched in November 2021?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

Yes	39
No	186
Maybe	10



### Feedback from leadership and management sessions

Between January and April 2022, the Skills, Learning & Development service asked delegates participating in leadership and management training sessions to provide their views on the working flexibly policy and whether this has supported their services in their delivery and benefited their staff. Their responses in summary were as follows:

- Managers felt they had embraced working flexibly throughout the last 2 years and recognised that staff had adapted their home life around this.
- It was seen that some staff felt they found working from home more productive, and in one case life changing as they struggled to commute owing to their disability.
- Generally positive response about being able to informally allow flexibility around start and end times to the day to meet caring needs.
- Managers felt the application of the policy will help with recruitment and retention.
- Delegates advised there is also a requirement to focus on business need.
- Managers spoken to had generally not seen an increase in flexible working requests.
- Staff understand the policy and understand the procedure involved in making flexible working requests.
- Small number of staff had raised they felt they had lost out on the ability to accrue 18 flexi days. Generally, it was felt that the culture had changed around time off in lieu in terms of it being service led as opposed to employee led and this was seen as a positive from a management perspective.
- Some managers needed to reinforce to staff to take regular breaks.
- Some managers felt they needed structured rules to apply flexibility.

### Feedback from manager stakeholder group

A manager stakeholder group was conducted on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2022, and the feedback received is as follows:

- There has been an increase seen in working flexibly requests, particularly around compressed hours.
- Consistency of application of working flexibly practices may vary from manager to manager.
- It was felt that guidance could further endorse business needs.

- The participants advised they believed that it was a good opportunity to reset the culture around accruing working time from being employee led to service led. They shared it was good to have the ability to flex when time can be taken back to suit the individual and service, however there was a suggestion that a cap is applied so that individuals are unable to accrue too much time off in lieu. Time off in lieu is felt to be preferable to using casuals to cover (due to the experience of existing staff) and it is seen as a good retention tool.
- Front line services find applying flexibility challenging.
- Managers are generally seeing increased productivity as a result of working flexibly and further ability to work remotely in some services, saving time on commute which may mean more access for service users to our staff.

## **Recommendations / actions**

The below sets out the recommendations and actions identified as a result of the review following input from stakeholders, the trade unions, and the data review.

The below actions will allow us to further embed the policy within the council and enhance further the working flexibly guidance.

- Offering hosted training for managers on the updated policy and procedure.
- Enhance the working flexibly guidance for managers around dealing with flexible working appeals
- Update guidance surrounding care for dependants to give further clarity on how this should be considered and how it links into other policies and procedures.
- Consider communication methods to further embed the policy principles, alongside the work being undertaken by the working flexibly board.
- No proposed changes to the working flexibly policy and procedure.

## **Wider Developments**

Whilst the review was for a specific purpose as part of the consultation with the trade unions, since that time developments have taken place that consider the wider impact of flexible, agile and hybrid working arrangements to meet business needs. In addition, strategic workforce priorities have developed that will further focus on delivery of a people strategy, the aim of which is to fully ensure we work in a way that will actively deliver our priorities and enable our council to meet the needs of our residents.



# Agenda Item 8

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION: By virtue of paragraph(s) 1,3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. It is considered that all the circumstances of the case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information)

Document is Restricted

