

TOSTOCK PARISH COUNCIL

HOMEWORKING POLICY

Adopted 2024-05-14; Reviewed and Confirmed as Current 2025-03-11

1 Policy

The Council recognises the advantages of home-based working whilst acknowledging that it does not suit everyone. This policy describes the working arrangements and expectations that will apply to the role of Clerk which is, necessarily, home-based.

2 Safe Working Environment

- 2.1 Health and safety applies to the home-based role in the same way that it would if the post-holder was office-based. Accordingly, as far as reasonably practicable, work should be conducted in a safe manner and any Council instructions to that end must be followed.
- 2.2 A 'Home-Based Worker Risk Assessment' shall be applied to the position of Clerk. This is represented by a checklist to enable the post-holder to identify any possible hazards in the home working area. On completion, appropriate measures may need to be taken to control any risks identified. The checklist should be completed annually, or more frequently should there be any changes to working arrangements.
- 2.3 A workstation risk assessment should be undertaken which must be kept up to date. Any potential risks identified, unless they can be mitigated, should be referred to the Chair of the Council in the first instance. Important considerations include whether:
- ◆ a dedicated work area can be set aside to enable the post-holder to work without distractions;
 - ◆ a 'home office' has adequate space to facilitate working safely and comfortably;
 - ◆ a desk is sufficiently large to accommodate equipment and work papers;
 - ◆ there is adequate storage and the workspace is organised so that equipment is close to hand;
 - ◆ the area is appropriately and properly lit, with natural lighting if possible; and
 - ◆ equipment and sockets are situated to avoid potential trip hazards.
- There should be regular visual checks of cables of any electronic equipment supplied to the post-holder (at least every six months) with any defects notified to the Chair of the Council
- 2.4 The Council reserves the right to visit the home at agreed times for work-related purposes, including health and safety and to inspect, service or repair equipment.

3 Facilities and Equipment

- 3.1 The Council, where required, will provide a business laptop (computer) and printer/scanner/copier for home working which will be maintained and replaced when necessary.

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- 3.2 It is the duty of the post-holder to ensure that proper care is taken of the equipment provided and to inform the Chair of the Council when maintenance or replacement is believed to be needed.
- 3.3 Should the risk assessment identify any further equipment that is necessary then this should be discussed with the Chair.
- 3.4 Equipment provided shall be used for Council business only and may not be used for personal purposes.
- 3.5 All equipment provided will belong to the Council and must be returned within seven calendar days when the post-holder leaves Council employment.

4 Hours of Work

- 4.1 The contract of employment will specify the hours expected to be worked. There may be particular times, e.g. holidays, when a home-based worker is not available. Where this is the case, the Chair should be notified in advance for the Council to grant prior authorisation and to enable any alternative arrangements to be put in place, as necessary.
- 4.2 A home-based employee must be mindful to take adequate rest breaks which should be, as a minimum:
 - ◆ a break of at least 20 minutes during each working day over six hours;
 - ◆ a daily rest break of at least 11 continuous hours, i.e. the time between stopping work one day and beginning work the next day; and
 - ◆ at least one complete day each week when no work is done.

5 Potential Conflicts of Interest

- 5.1 During working hours the Council expects that the work environment enables Effective and efficient work with no matters causing distraction. It is not appropriate to combine homeworking with caring for a dependant.
- 5.2 If there is an emergency and a need to attend to a non-work matter, then the Chair should be notified.

6 Data Protection

- 6.1 All documents and information associated with the Council must be kept secure at all times. Working from home includes a duty to:
 - ◆ keep filing cabinets, drawers etc. locked when not being used;
 - ◆ ensure that all Council documentation is properly safeguarded and unable to be seen by others;

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- ◆ employ a unique password/login on any laptop/PC/device used for Council business; and
- ◆ ensure that electronic data is backed-up regularly.

7 Insurance, Mortgage or Rental Agreements

Whilst the Council Employer's Liability Insurance extends to home-based staff, and any council equipment in the home, the employee should ensure that any agreement with a landlord or mortgage lender provides for work from home, and that house buildings and contents insurance will not be invalidated by home-based working.

8 Homeworking Allowance

In recognition of the costs of working from home, particularly in terms of electricity, lighting and telephone use the Council will pay the current weekly HMRC-approved homeworking allowance.

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Home Worker Self-Assessment Checklist

Risk/Hazard	Yes/ No	Action/Comments
Is the office/work space used as a place of work by anyone else in the household?		
Is there adequate desk space to work comfortably?		
Is the height of the workstation appropriate and acceptable?		
Are there any trailing cables which need to be tied-up?		
Is the working area warm, well-lit and well-ventilated?		
Is the space clutter-free?		
Is the chair adjustable?		
Is the chair set up correctly with back support and armrests?		
Are the keyboard and mouse clean and within easy reach?		
Is the software available sufficient to enable the work to be undertaken efficiently and effectively?		
Is the display screen positioned so that there is no glare?		
Is the screen positioned appropriately at eye level so that there is no neck/head discomfort?		
Can everything needed be reached without upper body twisting and straining?		
Are smoke detectors in place and tested regularly?		
Is waste removed and disposed of securely and safely?		
Is noise or any other regular distraction likely to interfere with the working environment?		
Does electrical equipment show any signs of wear or risk?		
Is electrical wiring generally in good order and in a safe condition?		
Are any wires frayed or worn and in need of replacement?		
Is equipment switched off when not in use?		
Is Council data (including papers) secured when not in use?		
Are emergency arrangements in place in the unlikely event of fire or other problem?		
Are regular breaks taken away from the workstation?		

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Is there easy access, if needed, to first aid equipment?		
Are there any obvious manual handling issues and, if so, is training required?		
Are there any trip hazards around the workstation?		

Date Assessment Conducted:

Assessment Completed By:
(Employee)

Signed:

Assessment Reviewed and Agreed By:
(Councillor)

Date:

Signed:

Actions Recommended	Action Taken (Date)

Assessment Reviewed and Recommended Action(s) Completed:

Signed (Employee):

Signed (Councillor):

Date: