Accommodation and Hot-desk Policy

1. Scope

This policy applies to all council employees other than those in schools, who have local arrangements. The policy is part of a suite of policies and guidance that support mobile and flexible working in Merton:

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**Overarching Mobile and Flexible Working Policy**

2. Definition

Office space will be designed and allocated to support a flexible way of working, which can include fixed, shared and hot-desking principles. Accommodation and hot – desk sharing generally refers to an arrangement where staff do not have a work station specifically allocated to them. Flexible working provides:

- Effective use of office space to optimise the use of buildings
- A greater choice of work area to fit the variety of activities that take place in a typical working day
- Reduced accommodation and energy costs
- Improved quality of work environment

**Fixed Desks** will be the exception rather than the rule and will be available only to the following groups of staff:

- where specialist equipment is required to carry out a job role;
- following a recommendation from Occupational Health
- where a reasonable adjustments assessment has determined that the worker requires specific workstation equipment to carry out their work
- those whose work style has been identified as ‘task-based office worker’ (see Overarching Flexible Working Policy for clarification) and therefore spend at least 80% of their work time desk-based
- Directors and Assistant Directors/Heads of Service who have their own office due to the nature of their work
When employees who use a fixed desk are away from the office (for instance on leave) these desks must be left clear and available for others to use if required.

3. Practical arrangements

Team Zones

Typically each team will be allocated a ‘team zone’ in the civic centre which will be configured to meet the needs of the team based on their mix of work styles. This will include hot desks and, if required, fixed desks; plus access to other types of space such as informal meeting areas.

All desks will allow staff full access to their personalised desktop profile, applications and personal settings and staff will be able to ‘log in’ to any phone with their personal extension number to allow them to make and receive telephone calls.

Whilst zoning is a sensible and pragmatic approach it is important that teams do not become overly territorial about space. If there is no available workstation within the team zone, staff will be able to use vacant desks within other team zones either on the same floor or other floors. This aids cross-team working and is to be welcomed, unless in exceptional case where a work team’s activities are highly sensitive or confidential in nature. In the unlikely event that there are no desks available then touch down meeting booths and other types of work space is available in Merton Junction and other open work spaces within the Civic Centre.

3.2 Standard Workstations

Each workstation will be set up to provide IT, telephony and other equipment to allow employees to effectively carry out their job. In order to facilitate flexible working and hot desking each workstation in the Civic Centre will be provided with:

- A desk
- A fully adjustable chair
- A Wyse terminal with access to all required systems, or docking station for laptop use
- A Mouse and keyboard
- Adequate space, heat and lighting
- A “follow me” telephone
- Access to MFD printer / copier / scanner
- Access to antiseptic wipes / gel spray

In addition each employee will be provided with a lockable hot box and a lockable hot-desk locker, with mail slot, allocated for exclusive use which can securely hold the hot box.

3.3 Hot desking ‘protocols’
The following protocols will help ensure that desk-sharing and flexible working is effective. These are provided as a consistent start point for all teams, although there may be discussions locally about how these work for each individual team.

- Meetings should be carried out in an appropriate meeting space or room rather than at desks
- Work in progress, and personal items should only be located on desks whilst they are in use. When not in use these should be stored in personal lockers or allocated team storage areas.
- If a desk is to be left unoccupied for more than 2 hours the desk should be cleared for use by others
- When a desk or work area is vacated, it should be left completely clear for use by other members of staff
- Employees must ensure confidentiality is maintained, all records are kept secure and follow data protection and governance procedures at all times
- The kitchens on each floor should be used for eating, particularly at lunchtime and for consuming hot food. Hot and cold drinks can be consumed at shared work spaces, however, all spillages must be promptly cleaned away, and cups removed.

3.4 Desk clearance
When vacating a workspace, either during or at the end of each day, desks need to be left clear with all belongings/files etc. being put away in lockers or cupboards. This applies to all work styles.

3.5 Health and Safety Policy
It remains the joint responsibility of the line manager and the individual employee, irrespective of where staff work, to ensure that appropriate and proportionate measures are taken to ensure the health, safety and welfare of staff and others working in their teams. These measures include information, instruction, supervision and training. Managers and staff have a duty to comply with these standards.

Use of display screen equipment - All employees will be required to complete a Display Screen Equipment assessment which can be found at http://intranet/dse_self_assessment. This should be completed before commencing work and be reviewed annually, or immediately after any significant change of situation.

When starting work at a new workstation, employees should ensure that they make necessary adjustments (adjusting the chair, screen height etc.)

Cleanliness and hygiene - Where a work station is used by several people there is an increased risk of passing germs between staff. Washing hands
regularly will assist and a supply of antiseptic wipes / gel spray will be available to ensure the cleanliness of telephones, keyboards and mouses.

3.6 Use of IT equipment
Any employee who uses IT equipment for a significant part of their duties must undertake a Display Screen Equipment self-audit and pass it onto their manager. The manager should decide whether additional control measures are required. Staff with disabilities or who require specialist IT or ergonomic equipment as a result of this assessment may need to be allocated with individual chairs or allocated work stations.

It is the responsibility of all employees sharing a desk to undertake a self-assessment and adjust the setup of the work station to meet their individual health and safety requirements.

The IT equipment on desks has been set up carefully to meet necessary standards. Therefore, other than making reasonable adjustments, for example to the height and angle of monitor screens, employees should not make any significant adjustments to the desk layout or configuration of equipment.

3.7 Secure use of the Council’s Systems and Information
The employee must ensure that information and equipment are kept securely. In particular private and confidential material must be kept in lockable secure storage at all times. Line managers must be satisfied that all reasonable precautions are taken to maintain confidentiality of material in accordance with the Council’s ICT policy http://intranet/it-policy and Information Security Policy http://intranet/is-policy

A lockable hot box will be provided.

4. Review
This policy will be reviewed from time to time as appropriate.

5. Further advice and support
Further information, including comprehensive guidance for staff and managers and useful contact details are available on the Council’s Flexible Working Intranet Pages.