



Smarter Working

Human Resources
January 2024

Introduction

The Council's Smarter Working Policy forms part of the Council's Workforce Strategy and is key to the Powering our Future Programme.

Powering our Future sets the Council's ambition to be a bold, brave and innovative Council. Where together with our partners, we will make sure Stockton-on-Tees is a fair and equal place, where everyone is proud to live and work, where our communities flourish and people feel they belong. We want everyone in our Borough to participate in building a brighter future for all of us.

Our Colleagues will be critical to the success of the Council's Powering our Future Programme and will be empowered to do the best they can for our communities.

It is important that our talented workforce can step up to the challenging budget situation by using their knowledge and skills to work with our partners and communities in innovative, adaptable and dynamic ways with the best interests of our residents being the focus of everything they do.

This will include Smarter Working.

Working smarter applies to all of our employees. This policy is not just about the ability to work remotely; we recognise that many of our employees might not be able to choose where they work but the principles of working with our communities and partners, and doing the right work in the most productive way for the benefit of our residents will apply.

This Policy sets out our high-level principles for Smarter Working, which will be supplemented by detailed guidance, training and support for our employees.

Our Smarter Working Principles are:

- We will work collaboratively with our stakeholders.
- We will drive innovation and continuous improvement.
- We will use our resources efficiently, including data, technology, equipment and workplaces
- Colleagues will have more choice about when and where they work.

What is Smarter Working?

Smarter working is about working with our communities and partners in an innovative, efficient and effective way to meet the needs of the people in our Borough. This will include:

- Being Bold, Brave and Innovative in the way we work
- Working more collaboratively with our stakeholders, including our communities and organisational partners
- Driving continuous innovation and improvement whether through service changes or challenging and changing working practices.
- Using our resources such as data, technology, equipment, and workplaces more efficiently
- More choice about where and when you work, to improve community wellbeing and reduce inequality.

Smarter Working Principles

1. We will work collaboratively with our stakeholders.

We need to move away from our 'traditional' role as a provider of services to one where we enable and empower our communities to do more for themselves in partnership with external organisations and the Council.

In order to do this, we need to change the way we work with our communities, partners and other stakeholders so that we use their knowledge, skills and strengths to deliver positive outcomes for local people. As a result, we need to collaborate more with colleagues internally and externally, consider more integration, joint working and delivery.

This will include removing barriers and silos to ensure we can work collaboratively across teams to secure the best outcomes for our residents and communities.

We need all of our employees to understand and think community and partnership ways of working in everything we do.

2. We will drive innovation and continuous improvement.

We need to focus on providing efficient services that offer value for money and are valued by our residents. We will therefore always look for opportunities to be innovative and improve the way we work, so that we can meet our communities' needs in the most efficient way.

Key to smarter working is a desire to improve working practices and business processes that continue or better meet the needs of our communities ideally by reducing red tape and steps needed in a process.

We will develop a culture that embraces challenge to our service delivery and working practices, where our employees are empowered and involved in improving not only what we do but how we do it. Our employees will need to be adaptable, skilled and resilient to changes in our services and practices.

3. We will use our resources efficiently.

We need to use our resources as efficiently as possible including:

- data to performance manage our services and target resident needs.
- take advantage of existing and new technology to streamline processes and make services more accessible.
- use other equipment in new and innovative ways to make our ways of working more efficient and effective.

Our physical working environment needs to be fit for purpose and office accommodation should encourage shared use of the workplace with spaces that allow for collaboration, innovation and creativity.

Guidance on smarter technology is Coming Soon...

4. More Choice about where and when you work.

We recognise that some of our frontline employees are not able to have a choice as to where or when they work, however, as far as is possible our HR policies and manager discretions will build in as much flexibility whilst meeting business demands.

For our employees who can work remotely, greater flexibility is available to determine where and when work is undertaken, provided that this is in accordance with a manager, team and service area's expectations and requirements. Employees will be provided with the necessary technology, tools and information to work remotely, and be able to decide on the best location based on the task to be completed in support of working with our communities and partners in an innovative, efficient and effective way to meet the needs of the people in our Borough.

When determining where and when work is undertaken employees must ensure:

- they are maximizing the positive impact of their work for communities.
- The needs of the Council are being met efficiently and effectively, and in a way that can demonstrate continuous improvement.
- they remain flexible and adaptable to meet changing work requirements.
- they are available to spend time in the workplace to meet and collaborate with colleagues.

Guidance on Remote Working together with expected behaviours is here ([link to follow](#))

Statutory Flexible Working Requests

This policy does not affect an employee's right to request statutory flexible working – please see [Intranet](#) for further information

Review of this Policy and Smarter Working Arrangements

A 12month corporate review of our Smarter Working arrangements will take place to ensure that the necessary support, training, expectations and behaviours are being embedded.

Individual teams and services can review their smarter working arrangements at any time to ensure that the smarter working principles and service demands are being met as efficiently and effectively as possible.