



GMB has now had the opportunity to consider and receive the views of our membership on the following draft policies, which were shared with us on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2022 and revised versions again on the 28<sup>th</sup> November 2022.

These policies were:

- Agile Working Policy
- Mileage Scheme
- Annual Leave Policy
- Flexible Working Hours Scheme

GMB feedback on each is as follows:

#### **Agile Working Policy**

GMB are generally supportive of the draft Agile Working Policy presented and believe that it clearly sets out the principles and tone for agile working moving forward, which we believe will benefit both the Employee and the Council.

We are in general agreement with the categories that have been defined within the policy and agree that these should be subject to regular review, taking account of both service and employee needs.

Whilst we appreciate the need for the majority of staff to be allocated a designated base we disagree that this should be linked to where an employee subsequently claims mileage to and from. We believe that home to designated base mileage i.e. commute mileage, should not be deducted from business mileage where a commute to and from the designated place of work has not been undertaken i.e. instances when an employee is working from home and would go direct to site from their home location on Council business.

Whilst we appreciate the flexibility the draft policy may offer in terms of potentially spreading the working week over 7 days for some, we are resolute that this should be a choice for the employee to make and not mandated or expected in anyway by Management. We wish to be absolutely clear that an 'always on call' culture, be that blatant or subtle, can not be supported by GMB.

We would expect full consultation to take place with the three recognised Trades Unions, GMB, Unison and Unite, if any changes are planned or being considered by Management to staffs contracts of Employment.

GMB are disappointed that a Home Working Payment/Allowance has not been considered within the policy. The costs incurred to the employee because of working from home are real and growing. It is incorrect to assume that home working costs can be offset against a reduction in travel costs. Travel costs are not being offset for many staff as they are required to deduct these costs from any business miles claimed, thereby incurring both artificial commute costs and working from home costs. This is

an unacceptable position which GMB will continue to challenge through consultation with the Council's representatives in HR.

Paragraph 60 of the policy sets out that if an employee is working from home they should advise their household insurer, and that this should not result in any personal cost. Should this not be the case and an employee does incur an additional cost we would expect to see this additional expense reimbursed in full to the employee.

Paragraph 62 makes reference to employees who are working from home being covered by the Council's Employer's Liability Insurance and Public Liability Insurance '*provided the rules of this policy have been followed*'. Further clarity is sought on this as the '**rules**' are not set out in any detail.

### **Mileage Scheme**

GMB are supportive of the changes proposed to those working in the Community but find it difficult to support the approach by which some other categories of workers are reimbursed for business mileage.

GMB is clear that further negotiations are required in order to agree the approach used for those who are working from home, occasionally or otherwise, with regards to claiming business mileage. We do not believe that it is appropriate or acceptable to deduct normal commute mileage and time from employees who are undertaking the work of the Council. However, GMB are prepared to support the document providing agreement can be reached on the above employees.

GMB would request that if agreement cannot be reached, then consideration is given by Council for these staff to be treated the same as those in the community.

### **Annual Leave Policy**

GMB are supportive of the draft Annual Leave Policy and welcomes the additional 5 days contractual annual leave which is being proposed for all staff.

We feel that there is also a lack of discretion within the draft policy to allow a member of staff to carry forward more than 5 days, unlike in the existing Annual Leave Policy. There are many reasons why a member of staff may not be able to use all of their annual leave, for example due to service pressures or personal reasons, consequently staff should not be at detriment because of this. We would request that the element of discretion be retained within the proposed draft policy.

This would then allow staff to apply in writing to their Head of Service to carry over more than five days annual leave, this will then help to avoid any disagreement between staff and Management.

GMB would like to take this opportunity to confirm that we will always encourage members/staff to take their annual leave in the year it has been allocated for, however, we do understand and appreciate that in some situations, this may not always be possible for staff to do.

### **Flexible Working Hours Scheme**

Overall, we are generally supportive of the draft Flexible Working Hours Scheme, however we would like to bring the below points of concern to your attention, and would welcome further consultation on these points with our colleagues from HR.

Paragraph 18 of the draft scheme states that employees will still be expected to predominantly work Monday to Friday '*unless the needs of the service change*'. We would expect that should the needs of

the service change and require staff to change terms and conditions of their contracted working hours this would be carried out in full consultation with the recognised Trade Unions.

Paragraph 37 of the draft scheme states that no payment of flexi will be made to an employee upon termination of their contract, however, if the employee is in a deficit situation, the deficit hours will be reclaimed. We disagree with this practice. If an employee has worked above their contracted hours, they should receive the appropriate remuneration for these hours. If the Council recognises the validity of these hours and would seek to reclaim them, then conversely, they must recognise their validity for payment.

Neil Funnell  
GMB Branch Secretary