

BALLYMONEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

FLEXIBLE WORKING HOURS SCHEME

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The following Flexible Working Hours Scheme has been agreed between Ballymoney Borough Council, Manufacturing, Scientific & Finance, and Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance.

The Scheme shall apply to all staff based at the Council Offices, Riada House, 14 Charles Street, Ballymoney.

2.0 BASIC PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 Flexible working hours (FWH) provides a more flexible system of attendance for staff. The number of hours people work on flexitime is the same overall as those worked on standard office hours. The difference lies in the considerable scope which individuals on flexitime have to vary their times of arrival and departure from work, to vary the length of their lunch breaks and to take time off if they work extra hours.

- 2.2 There is however, a guiding and overriding principle that this flexibility shall be achieved without adverse effect on the overall efficiency of departments or on their service to the public and without the need for additional staff to maintain established standards.

- 2.3 Since staff on FWH work the same number of hours as at present their pay is not affected by FWH arrangements. Similarly FWH shall not affect any other conditions of service. Arrangements and agreements which existed before the introduction of FWH shall continue to apply.

- 2.4 Staff who wish to continue with the following standard office hours, are free to do so:

Monday – Thursday 9.00 am – 5.00 pm and
Friday 9.00 am – 4.30 pm
(Half an hour lunch break 1.00 pm – 1.30pm)

- 2.5 To ensure that the FWH Scheme operates satisfactorily and that the high standard of service is maintained, it is accepted that:

- (a) A minimum number of staff in each Department must be in attendance throughout the normal office hours:

Monday – Thursday 9.00 am – 5.00 pm and
Friday 9.00 am – 4.30 pm

This number will be agreed between staff and the Head of Department.

(b) Staff may start earlier than the normal starting time or remain later than the normal finishing time providing, in the opinion of the Manager, there is work available.

2.6 The Council reserves the right, after consultation with staff representatives, to determine those officers or groups of officers who, because of the nature of their work will continue to work normal office hours:

Monday – Thursday	9.00 am – 5.00 pm and
Friday	9.00 am – 4.30 pm

or will have the opportunity to participate in the Scheme in a modified form.

3.0 THE SCHEME

3.1 Core time

In order to ensure that there are periods in each day during which staff can communicate with each other, with other departments and with the public, several hours each day are designated as core time. Core time is the essential part of each day during which staff have to be present, unless they have permission to be away.

Core time will be:	10.00 am - 12.00 noon
	2.00 pm - 4.00 pm

3.2 Flexible Bands

This is the time during which staff have discretion in deciding their starting and finishing times. Staff are free to arrive at work in the morning flexible band and leave for home during the afternoon flexible band, subject to the need to maintain adequate staffing during normal office hours.

The flexible bands during which staff will arrive at work and depart from work are:

Monday – Thursday	Arrival:	between the hours of 8.15am and 10.00am
	Departure:	between the hours of 4.00pm and 7.00pm

Friday	Arrival:	between the hours of 8.15am and 10.00am
	Departure:	between the hours of 4.00pm and 6.30pm

3.2.1 Flexible Lunch Break

The flexible lunch break in the middle of the day enables staff to vary (within limits) the length and timing of their lunch breaks, subject to operational requirements such as the need to maintain adequate staffing levels in the middle of the day.

The flexible band which staff may depart and return from their lunch break is:

Between the hours of 12.00 noon and 2.00pm

A minimum lunch break of 30 minutes must be taken. The maximum lunch break is 2 hours.

- 3.3 The accounting period will be four weeks. The same four week accounting period will be used for all staff. Staff who join the scheme during an accounting period will simply record their hours for the remainder of the month.
- 3.4 The standard hours for each 4 weeks period will be 148.
- 3.5 The Council reserves the right to implement a method of recording by time recording equipment.
- 3.6 At the end of each month there is a reconciliation between hours recorded and standard hours.
- 3.7 Under normal circumstances staff will not be allowed to carry forward more than the maximum credit of 11.25 hours. However staff shall be permitted to carry forward a maximum 22.5 hours into December accounting period on the understanding that the excess hours will be taken in that part (i.e no more than 11.25 hours carried into January).
- 3.8 Only in exceptional circumstances, and with the authority of the line manager, will an employee be permitted to accrue deficit hours up to a maximum of 11.25 hours.
- 3.9 Credit (flexi) leave may be taken as half or full days up to a maximum of 11.25 hours in any accounting period. As is the case with annual leave such absences must be authorised in advance. Approval will not be withheld unreasonably. Credit leave may be taken in lieu of excess hours attended or in anticipation of hours which will be made up later.
- 3.10 The only restriction on the timing of a half-day's leave is that the leave period should not run over into more than one core period. For example, after a morning's leave staff may arrive at the office at any time during the flexible lunch break (12.00noon – 2.00pm) and when taking an afternoons off may depart at any time in the same period. There is no requirement to take a lunch break when taking a half day's leave.
- 3.11 Any excess credit above the maximum is normally lost.
- 3.12 For authorised absence (other than flexi leave) time will be held credited to the flexi record by the manager concerned. Time off will still be allowed for Doctor and Dentist etc. appointments with the prior approval of the manager but staff will be expected to make arrangements for such visits outside core time whenever reasonably possible. Such absence, together with absences of annual leave, sick leave, special leave, training courses will attract a credit to the flexi record. Urgent and unavoidable visits within core time will attract credits.

4.0 ABUSE OF THE SCHEME

- 4.1 The operation and control of the flexi scheme will rest with the immediate manager. Individual flexi scheme records will be checked at the end of each accounting period. Additional irregular checks may be instigated to ensure that the scheme is not being abused.
- 4.2 Serious abuse of the flexi scheme may be categorised as gross misconduct. Under the Council 's Disciplinary Procedure this could result in dismissal if proven. Less serious abuse could result in suspension from the scheme either on a temporary or permanent basis.

5.0 OVERTIME

- 5.1 There is a clear distinction between extra hours worked by individuals on flexi time and additional attendance outside core time which may attract overtime or time off in lieu where appropriate.

Before starting to work overtime staff must record the time at which normal working ended.

- 5.2 It follows that ;
- (a) hours credited to the flexi time total do not attract a payment of overtime as an alternative to credit leave.
 - (b) extra attendance which is authorised as overtime should not be added to the flexi time total.
- 5.3 Because overtime is worked at the request of management and is recorded separately staff are able to work overtime and still accumulate the number of debit hours on their flexi record up to the normal limit.

6.0 ASSIGNMENTS AWAY FROM THE OFFICE

- 6.1 When staff are travelling form home to an assignment without calling at the office, starting time should be calculated as follows:
- (a) If the office is on route starting time is the time at which the office is passed.
 - (b) If the assignment lies in the opposite direction to the office the starting time begins when staff leave their home.
 - (c) If the assignment lies on the route to the office the time begins at arrival at the assignment.

Finishing times will be similarly calculated.

- 6.2 Staff attending an all day meeting, training course, etc where the actual time involved is less than the normal working day should receive full hours attendance (Monday – Thursday 7.5 hours credit and Friday 7 hours credit) if attendance at the office is not practical. For longer meetings, courses, etc credits for more than the full band width (Monday – Thursday 8.15 am to 7.00 pm and Friday 8.15 am to 6.30 pm) cannot be claimed.

7.0 FWH CREDIT/DEBIT ON LEAVING THE SERVICE

- 7.1 An employee working FWH on leaving the Council's service must endeavor to achieve a "Nil" balance by the last working day.
- 7.2 Where exceptionally a "Nil" balance has not been achieved, any debit balance will firstly be off-set against any outstanding annual leave and if this is not possible final pay will be adjusted accordingly i.e by a deduction made for the debit balance of hours.
- 7.3 No payments will be made for a credit balance.

8.0 REVIEW

The operation of this Scheme will be monitored and reviewed after 12 months.