

For General Release

REPORT TO:	CABINET 21 September 2015
AGENDA ITEM:	10
SUBJECT:	Supporting Flexible Working in our Borough
LEAD OFFICER:	Paul Greenhalgh, Executive Director of People Jo Negrini, Executive Director of Place
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Alisa Flemming, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Learning Councillor Toni Letts, Cabinet Member for Economy and Jobs
WARDS:	All
CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT: Child poverty strategy	
AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON & WHY ARE WE DOING THIS: Increasing employment and reducing poverty across all communities This supports the Council's ambition to reduce inequality and promote fairness for all of its communities by working with partners in the public, business and voluntary sectors order to secure better outcomes for all.	
FINANCIAL IMPACT There will be a one-off cost of £9,000 which includes consultancy and support for auditing, review and development of an improvement plan and then an annual renewal fee of £3,500.	
KEY DECISION REFERENCE NO.: This is not a key executive decision	

The Leader of the Council has delegated to the Cabinet the power to make the decisions set out in the recommendations below

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 The Cabinet is recommended to endorse Croydon as a Flexible Working Borough and agree to the promotion of flexible working practices with the community, partners, contractors and employers in Croydon as set out in the proposed workstreams in the report.
- 1.2 The Cabinet is recommended to agree that the Council seek Timewise accreditation as this is considered the most effective way of strengthening flexible working opportunities in Croydon and would send a clear signal to residents of the Council's commitment to this.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 There is strong evidence that flexible working benefits employers, employees and the local community. In December 2014 a national government survey found that there were positive attitudes towards flexible working but over the previous six years there had not been a great increase in flexible working opportunities or take-up nationally. Increased opportunities for flexible working would make employment more accessible to parents and those with other caring responsibilities and contribute to reducing child poverty.
- 2.2 By endorsing Croydon as a Flexible Working Borough and promoting flexible working practices with the community, partners, contractors and employers in Croydon the number of accessible working opportunities to the most disadvantaged should increase.

3. DETAIL

Part one - The case for strengthening flexible working in borough

- 3.1.1 The term 'flexible working' describes a type of working arrangement which gives some degree of flexibility on how long, where, when and at what times employees work. The flexibility can be in terms of working time, working location or the pattern of working. It includes:
 - **Part-time working:** work is generally considered part-time when employers are contracted to work anything less than full-time hours.
 - **Term-time working:** a worker remains on a permanent contract but can take paid/unpaid leave during school holidays.
 - **Job-sharing:** a form of part-time working where two (or occasionally more) people share the responsibility for a job between them.
 - **Flexitime:** allows employees to choose, within certain set limits, when to begin and end work.

- **Compressed hours:** compressed working weeks (or fortnights) don't necessarily involve a reduction in total hours or any extension in individual choice over which hours are worked. The central feature is reallocation of work into fewer and longer blocks during the week.
- **Annual hours:** the total number of hours to be worked over the year is fixed but there is variation over the year in the length of the working day and week. Employees may or may not have an element of choice over working patterns.
- **Working from home on a regular basis:** workers regularly spend time working from home.
- **Mobile working/teleworking:** this permits employees to work all or part of their working week at a location remote from the employer's workplace.
- **Career breaks:** career breaks, or sabbaticals, are extended periods of leave – normally unpaid – of up to five years or more.

3.1.2 Both employers and employees can gain from flexible working opportunities as both parties have the flexibility to organise their working arrangements in a way that suits them.

'Employers who introduce flexible working achieve tangible improvements to their recruitment, staff retention and overall employee relations.' Jennie Willott, Minister for Employment Relations, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (10 June 2014).

3.1.3 Mainstreaming flexible working benefits employers, employees and the local community. Employers can attract, retain and progress the best talent, deliver services cost efficiently and adapt to changing business conditions. Individual employees are able to better balance their work, family life and community commitments. Social benefits of increased flexible working opportunities include: creating a more inclusive local labour market, reducing the number of people dependent on benefits; reducing the number of children of working parents who live in poverty; enabling older workers to stay in the labour market; and enabling carers to balance their caring responsibilities with paid work.

3.1.4 From June 2014 nationally all employees have had the legal right to request flexible working.

3.1.5 In May 2012 the Chartered institute of Personnel and Development undertook a survey of employers and employees on flexible working provision and uptake. Over 70 per cent of respondents reported a positive impact on retention, motivation and employee engagement and over half reported a positive impact on recruitment, productivity, absenteeism, diversity of the workforce, talent management and business. The main barriers to flexible working were operational pressures (52%) and customer service requirements (40%) whilst management attitudes and organisational culture were barriers for around 30% of respondents.

- 3.1.6 In December 2014 the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills published The Fourth Work-Life Balance Employee Survey. It found that over the previous six years ‘there had been an increase in positive views concerning the impact of flexible working on the workforce and human resource management issues (such as employee motivation and commitment, employee relations, absence reduction, labour turnover, recruitment and productivity), suggesting that there may be growing acceptance of flexible working among both employers and the workforce as a whole.’
- 3.1.7 However, it found that despite 97 per cent of workplaces offering at least one form of flexible working, including job sharing, flexitime and working remotely, over the past six years ‘there have not been great increases in either take-up or availability of flexible working.’ This is why the policy, Supporting Flexible Working in the Borough, is now being proposed.
- 3.1.8 In early 2014 a survey of lone parents in Croydon was carried out by the council in partnership with Jobcentre Plus and children’s centres. The parents, all of whom used children’s centre services, reported that barriers to finding sustainable work were high costs of childcare and a lack of part-time and flexible jobs which allow parents to combine caring responsibilities with work.
- 3.1.9 Around half of respondees recognised that beyond the additional income, being in work would increase their independence and to provide a positive role model to their children. In addition a sense of purpose (by one in four) and social contact (by one in five) were identified as factors.
- 3.1.10 However disadvantages of being in work were identified as less time to care and support their children, cost of childcare and availability of flexible childcare, for example at weekends, and therefore potentially having overall less money once childcare costs were taken into account.
- 3.1.11 The majority were seeking work which would enable them to work term time only, school hours or flexible hours but concerns about zero hours contracts were raised and the ability to earn enough.
- 3.1.12 In addition to lack of flexible jobs and affordable childcare, lack of skills, lack of confidence with applying for jobs, worrying about interviews and inability to afford appropriate clothes for interviews and work were also reported as obstacles to working.
- 3.1.13 One in ten respondees identified that their physical and mental health had suffered as a result of not being in work.
- 3.1.14 Enabling more people to work flexibly will improve their lives by providing a better balance between work and home. It will also reduce the number of people dependent on benefits, reduce the number of children of working parents who live in poverty, enable older workers to stay in the labour market, and enable carers to balance their caring responsibilities with paid work and help employees in general to have a better work–home balance.

Part two - What the council and other partners are already doing to strengthen flexible working in Croydon

Croydon Council as Employer

- 3.2.1 The council is committed to improving the work-life balance of all employees and in June 2014 refreshed and relaunched its flexible working policy in recognition that when effectively managed, working flexibly to improve work-life balance can lead to improved service delivery and/or productivity, as well as improving retention.
- 3.2.2 As part of the cultural change exemplified in the 'New Ways of Working' approach, the council aims to encourage existing employees to work flexibly with the aid of new technology, new processes and new workspaces. Currently approximately 30 per cent of the workforce have a non-standard working pattern. While this is an indication of levels of flexible working, not all of those employees will have achieved the flexible working pattern they need to meet out of work demands. Part-time workers comprise 19 per cent of the workforce with the majority being women. The council undertakes regular surveys of staff. Over the last six surveys around 70 per cent of staff agreed that they were able to 'strike the right balance between my work and home life'.

Council People Gateway service

- 3.2.3 The Gateway and Welfare services proactively engage with customers to ensure a sustainable outcome for the residents that require Council help. The cornerstones of the offer are creating independence and financial stability through helping people manage their money as well as maximising their income through identification of appropriate benefits and/or increase the scope of their employment opportunities in the specific context of the individual or family, including caring responsibilities.
- 3.2.4 The services adopt a customer focused approach, developing an action plan with the customer with timed goals. All customers receive budgeting advice and if necessary, advice on reducing spend and accessing affordable credit via for example Credit Unions as well as a referral to a specialist debt advisor if required. Discretionary Housing Payments can be used to financially support the customer whilst they are working towards their sustainable solution.
- 3.2.5 These services, which include co-located Jobcentre Plus staff, the Gateway and Welfare team have assisted 552 residents over the last 18 months into employment. Where employment is identified as a sustainable solution customers are segmented into work ready tranches with the majority of customers being assisted with an up to date CV, interview skills and a review of their job goals and subsequently assisted with job searches. For those customers further away from the job market a full evaluation of their training and skills requirements is undertaken. We have developed links with local employers which has meant that customers can access both work experience placements and employment opportunities. Where appropriate the service have assisted a number of single parents access appropriate child care and employment that supports reduced and flexible working in areas such as food, retail and security.

Croydon Brokerage Service

- 3.2.6. In December 2014 approved 'Employability, jobs and skills; Local jobs for local people' which provides a robust, transformative and coordinated approach to delivering the employability, jobs and skills agenda for the Borough. It addresses the Borough's aspiration to create 16,000 new jobs by 2020 and ensure that Croydon's residents have the required skills, competences and attitude to compete successfully for these opportunities. A new co-ordinated Job Brokerage Service for the borough will be set up to deliver a much larger quantum of jobs to local people.
- 3.2.7. A key aim of the Brokerage Service will be to co-ordinate services delivered by partners that all respond to local people, and it will work in close partnership with Job Centre Plus and other relevant partners such as the local colleges and apprenticeship agencies (e.g. Croydon Adult Learning and Training, Croydon College, John Ruskin College, etc.). Building on the work delivered through the customer service and future welfare service, there will be a streamlined client facing engagement and assessment protocol, involving Jobcentre Plus staff on the front line to work alongside the Council and consider each individual's needs holistically. This will create the best possible referrals and support for those people into employment and an alignment of overall solutions. This in turn will support residents to become more independent and self-sufficient as it will combine job, debt and housing support.
- 3.2.8. The Service will work with employers to develop a clear pipeline of job opportunities which need to be filled including jobs which may be particularly accessible to key groups for example young people and people with specific needs . It will work with residents to ensure that they are prepared for these roles through employability training, CV development, mock interviews and relationship building between employers and applicants. The service will also consider the local growth sectors and ensure that skills and training providers are lined up to deliver the necessary courses to ensure residents are job ready. Equally, it will ensure that apprenticeships are created and placed in the appropriate businesses.
- 3.2.9. The ultimate aim will be the ability to provide employers with three job ready applicants for every vacancy created across the Borough. In this way, the Job Brokerage Service will be a one stop shop where Croydon residents can receive advice about their employment options and training needs, and where employers across London can place their vacancies to recruit quality staff.

Croydon Adult Learning and Training (CALAT)

- 3.2.10. CALAT provides a range of courses to support people to improve their employment options. These range from fundamental skills to apprenticeships and professional vocational qualifications. CALAT provides courses in English, maths and IT from basic to GCSE level as well as English for Work and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) to improve English language skills for work, life or study in the UK.

- 3.2.11. The certificate in developing personal and social skills for work is aimed at individuals who have had a period of time out of employment and is suitable for individuals who want to develop their confidence in a positive and safe environment. It includes: Planning for Progression; Behaviour at Work; Effective Communication; Introduction to ICT; Searching for a Job; Applying for a Job; Improving Personal Manner and Conduct; and Developing Personal Skills.
- 3.2.12. Vocational courses cover a range of careers including early years, childcare and teaching assistants, health and social care, beauty, teacher training, business administration, customer service and bookkeeping.
- 3.2.13. CALAT also works with businesses and employers to deliver training aimed at raising the skills level of employees and developing the workforce. Learning Curves is CALAT's career information, advice and guidance service. Trained staff give independent advice, guidance and support on a range of careers related topics; identify new job and career opportunities; provide support with CVs, completing application forms and job interviews; find courses or training; find equivalent overseas qualifications; and offer access to the internet for job search and researching opportunities.
- 3.2.14. Some learners are referred from JobCentre Plus and others come directly through general marketing of the service. In 2013-14 academic year a total of 4587 CALAT enrolments were learners on means tested benefits, of whom 464 were referred by JCP (329 were ESOL). Full figures for 2014-15 will not be available until autumn 2015, but provisional data shows that 528 ESOL enrolments (269 learners) have been mandated to attend classes by JCP. All learners applying for vocational courses are assessed prior to enrolment, and signposted to more appropriate provision within CALAT if their skills need further improvement to reach the required level.
- 3.2.15. An important aspect of provision is Family Learning which gives parents the opportunity to go back to learning in the safe and familiar environment of their child's school or local children's centre. This can be an important first step for many, especially those lacking confidence, into more formal learning opportunities. A new course piloted as part of the Family Learning programme during the 2014/15 academic year in a children's centre, Small Steps into Work, engaged targeted lone parents in sessions covering a range of employability skills alongside managing family commitments as a working parent. Outcomes were particularly positive, including one learner who made her first ever job applications, eleven in a week, another who had her first ever job interview, one who changed her email address to one more suitable for applying for work, and another with learning disabilities who collated all her certificates into a portfolio.

Contribution of strategic partners – Jobcentre Plus

- 3.2.16. In addition to the contribution Croydon's Jobcentre Plus make to the People Gateway and Job Brokerage service, JCP has a team of specialist lone parent

advisors who support this group of parents into work. The team use the full range of provisions available and assist lone parents with Universal Job Match accessibility and refer them to vacancies. They are mainly referred to training provisions for up skilling as a priority to improve their long term job prospects. JCP also has a Flexible support fund that is not guaranteed but can sometimes help support Lone parents with their initial childcare costs when returning to employment. As well as the provision available across the borough, there is also now have a programme in JCP to help motivate and build confidence for lone parents who may have never worked or be returning to work after a long break.

Examples of existing flexible working arrangements in Croydon

3.2.17. There are many examples of people successfully working flexibly in Croydon: two are set out below and further examples are in the appendix. At a board meeting on 16 July 2015, members of the Children and Families Partnership from across sectors identified a range of existing examples they were aware of, of local people improving their work-life balance and managing their caring commitments through working flexibly.

Sara is contracted for three full days a week. By spreading her hours over four shorter working days she is able to look after her children in the morning and pick them up from school.

Flexible working is a great for Sara since it allows her to have a happy balance between work life and life outside work. She says that Flexible working gives her more motivation at work and makes her much happier which increases her performance in work. Sara prefers to spend this time with her children rather than to have a carer. As an employee she says that she feels much more appreciated at work which yet again makes her feel much happier to work.

Sara thinks it can be hard for employers to fit the job to the times for people who need to work flexibly however it's extremely helpful as it creates a much more loyal, motivated, sharper employee which also helps the organisation increase its overall performance.

Voluntary sector

Amanda & Sam: Amanda and Sam job share a senior role within the Council. Job sharing allows them to pursue other interests as well as meet family commitments. "We've been job sharing this post now for almost a year and it's really working for us so I would definitely recommend it. We both have individual projects that we lead on as well as things that we work on together so even though we share one role we still get the independence and personal responsibility you would without job sharing"

Croydon Council

- 3.2.18. Members of the Partnership also identified a number of perceived barriers to flexible working which they believed would need to be addressed if flexible working opportunities in Croydon were to increase. These included:
- Costs, availability and location (in relation to home and work) of childcare
 - Home and mobile working depending on having appropriate and effective IT systems to support it.
 - While some employers had in place flexible working policies these were not implemented uniformly across the board and so not all staff had the opportunity to work flexibly and in some cases staff were reluctant to even apply to work flexibly
 - People who had a flexible working arrangement could be reluctant to develop their career through concern that they might not be able to achieve the same flexibility in their working arrangements.
 - Organisations with high levels of part-time staff have additional costs of managing a larger number of people and difficulty in arranging time for training.
 - A challenge might be balancing the needs of customers who increasing wanted services early evening and weekends and staff who preferred not to work at these times

- 3.2.19. Members of the Partnership also identified actions they felt Croydon employers across all sectors needed to consider to strengthen flexible working. These included:
- Promote flexible working through recruitment.
 - Put in place Support and training for managers to facilitate culture change
 - Pilot providing services during non-standard hours
 - Development of performance management to take account of home working
 - Monitor productivity of different working models
 - Champion uptake of parental leave
 - Review of flexible working requests in each organisation to ensure policies implemented fairly and appropriately.
 - Promote the added value that flexible working would bring to all organisations
 - Encourage more use of working from home.

Part three – Becoming a flexible working borough

- 3.3.1 Part two of this report above identifies that the Council as an employer and through service delivery is already contributing to increasing flexible working opportunities for Croydon residents. Despite, some perceived obstacles, Croydon residents are already benefitting from these opportunities. However, it is proposed that the Council strengthens its role in influencing other local employers and increase flexibility in the local job market to become a ‘flexible working borough’.

3.3.2 A significant way of doing this is to work towards Timewise accreditation. The London Borough of Camden has Timewise status; an accreditation scheme that helps councils stimulate flexibility in the local jobs market by sharing learning from their own workforce practice, using this experience to influence suppliers and local employers. Camden was the first Timewise accredited Council and the programme is being rolled out to other local authorities including: Stoke on Trent, Enfield and Waltham Forest councils; Leicestershire county council; North Dorset district council and Carlisle city council.

Case Study: London Borough of Camden

“The London borough of Camden decided to become a Timewise council in 2014 after research in 2012 highlighted that 37% of local mothers in Camden are unemployed, a higher rate than both London and UK averages. One of the greatest problems wasn't that they lacked skills, but that they lacked local, quality and flexible jobs to apply for.

One year on, Camden now encourages flexible working requests as part of all job adverts. More than one in five new employees have been hired on a flexible working pattern, with all requests granted. Many more new recruits and existing employees are also able to work flexibly on a more informal basis. As a result, the council has seen an increase in the volume and calibre of candidates for jobs and a reduction in sickness and absence levels.

It has launched a back-to-work support service to address the needs of mothers and has included information on flexible working and social value into procurement guidance for suppliers. It has reached out to over 10,000 businesses in Camden to actively champion the benefits of flexible working and helped more than 500 women to access advice on building careers to fit with family life.

Flexible working is a benefit to business, not a hindrance, and the public sector should do more to champion it.”

Case Study: London Borough of Lambeth – second Timewise accredited Council in London

Lambeth had a positive approach to flexible working with good policies in place but recognised a need to encourage more flexible working to achieve savings through their estate rationalisation approach.

Increasing flexible working in Lambeth was led by the Leader and Chief Executive of the Council to benefit employees, residents and citizens. Timewise were involved to demonstrate a strong commitment to flexible working to its managers, employees and residents.

The Council have changed their approach to flexible working so applications are approved unless managers can make a business case why it will not work; In addition there is a commitment to advertise all roles as available for flexible working. Decisions are devolved to a local level but managers are held accountable for their decisions.

In services where flexible working is embedded staff are more satisfied with their job and work/life balance. Being able to offer flexible working has enabled the Council to attract staff in hard to recruit areas. Managers have been provided support and tools to facilitate performance management which has improved the overall quality of performance management. The main focus is now on supporting families to have more opportunities to skilled employment.

- 3.3.3 The Timewise Council accreditation programme supports local authorities to drive transformational change in flexible working practice, and recognises their achievements.

“We are already seeing value back from the work we undertook to become a Timewise Council. Not only does being more ‘timewise’ help us recruit and retain key talent as an employer, it helps us deliver services more effectively and tackle key social challenges faced in the borough.”

Cllr Sarah Hayward, Leader of Camden Council

(Timewise is an organization that provides an accreditation programme to help local authorities drive transformational change through flexible working)

- 3.3.4 Timewise consider that local authorities are in a unique position of power and responsibility to make a difference to the working lives of both their employees and their local residents. Flexible working has the potential to unlock local jobs for those who need to combine work with caring responsibilities. For others, it can free up their time to volunteer for charities or local community services. And finally, flexible working can benefit local authorities as employers, helping them to attract and retain the best talent, and deliver services more efficiently in the face of significant change.

- 3.3.5 Timewise Council accreditation recognises the distinct roles of local authorities as:

- Significant employers in the community, often the largest single recruiter and working across a wide range of functions to deliver their services.

Nationally, local authorities and associated bodies employ around 1.4 million people.

- Influencers of other employers through procurement of goods and services, with a requirement to consider social impact.
- Important hubs for engaging with citizens, businesses and the voluntary sector and for sharing learning and promoting best practice.

3.3.6 To achieve Timewise Council status, authorities work with Timewise to develop an improvement plan for the ways in which they can drive change in flexible working practices. The aim is to foster a culture of learning and continual improvement that aligns the benefits to employees with improvement in workplace efficiency, and seeks to work through understanding barriers to developing and progressing plans to overcome them.

3.3.7 Timewise Council accreditation provides an opportunity for local authorities to participate in a national programme of learning and improvement around flexible working by sharing experience and best practice. Working with Timewise will enable Croydon to build on the experiences of other local authorities and achieve external, objective accreditation.

3.3.8 The Timewise Council programme includes a flexibility audit, and advisory support provided by Timewise to develop improvement plans on incorporating best practice in flexible working within organisational development strategies. The programme also includes a seminar for senior leadership teams to understand the benefits of an organisation-wide approach to flexible working, as a tool to develop a lean and agile organisation and to gain advice. Upon submission of a satisfactory improvement plan, councils will be awarded Timewise Council status. All councils undertaking the Timewise programme become annual members of the Timewise Partner network.

3.3.9 Councils having undertaken the Timewise Council programme can renew their status on an annual basis. Renewal includes:

- Audit review and feedback session to support with ongoing plans to embrace flexibility
- Access to ad hoc advisory support from Timewise associates
- Access to the network and Timewise regional roundtables
- Unlimited job postings

3.3.9 The table below shows the proposed 2015-17 workstreams to meet the Timewise criteria in Croydon.

Timewise criteria for a Flexible Working Borough	Proposed workstreams for Oct 2015 to Mar 2017	Responsibility
Leadership: The commitment to flexible working is embedded in its strategy and policy and is understood, supported and championed by elected Members and senior officers of the Council.	Embedding flexible working in Council strategies and policies.	Strategy, commissioning and communities team
	Maximising opportunities for elected Members and senior officers to raise awareness of Flexible Borough Policy.	External communications team
Workforce: The commitment to flexible working is reflected in the Council's HR policies and procedures. System to monitor flexible working across functions and job levels is developed and clear indicators to measure progress agreed.	Systematising recording, reporting and monitoring of flexible working arrangements including outcomes of flexible working requests	(a) HR Service Centre and (b) HR and Organisational Development team
	Developing learning and development activities for council staff to support flexible working	Learning & Organisational Development team
	Maximising opportunities to communicate flexible working borough policy to Council staff.	(a) HR Team and (b) Communications team
Residents: Raises awareness of opportunities for flexible and part time work and provides information and advice for people seeking to combine work with other commitments, especially those currently unemployed. Council has a clear strategy for delivery of services to residents that improve opportunities for flexible working.	Gateway services raise awareness of flexible working opportunities when supporting families and feedback barriers to finding flexible work which families are reporting.	People gateway service
	Maximising opportunities for influencing local child care market to better support flexible working.	Early intervention service
Employers: Support and advice provided to local employers on how to overcome barriers to flexible working and there are opportunities to share learning and best practice.	Maximising opportunities for influencing local employers sharing council learning and best practice.	(a) Economic development service and (b) HR and Organisational Development Team
	Using feedback from families on barriers to flexible work to shape dialogue with local employers.	Economic development service Children and Families Partnership team
Suppliers: Influencing suppliers to adopt and embed flexible working practices, especially where this can improve their business performance and help secure best value.	Maximising opportunities for strengthening flexible working through commissioning and social value contracting.	Strategy, Commissioning and Communities team

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 Consultation that has already taken place with lone parents is included in Section 3.1. Further work is planned with the parents of young children through Children’s Centres and at the Family Learning Festival. The purpose will be to understand to understand the types of flexible working opportunities parents need and their barriers to employment.

5 FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 If the Council seeks Timewise accreditation there will be a one-off cost of £9000 which includes consultancy and support for auditing, review and development of an improvement plan and then an annual renewal fee of £3500. It is expected that implementation of flexible working can currently be delivered within existing resources and through existing project and service delivery.

1 Revenue and Capital consequences of report recommendations

	Current year	Medium Term Financial Strategy – 3 year forecast		
	2015/16 £'000	2016/17 £'000	2017/18 £'000	2018/19 £'000
Revenue Budget available				
Expenditure		9	3.5	3.5
Income				
Effect of decision from report		9	3.5	3.5
Expenditure				
Income				
Remaining budget	<hr/>	<hr/> 0	<hr/> 0	<hr/> 0
Capital Budget available				
Expenditure				
Effect of decision from report				
Expenditure				
Remaining budget	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

Approved by: Lisa Taylor Head of Finance and Deputy S151 Officer 19.8.15

6. COMMENTS OF THE COUNCIL SOLICITOR AND MONITORING OFFICER

6.1 The Council Solicitor comments that there are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Approved by: Gabriel MacGregor, Head of Corporate Law on behalf of the Council Solicitor & Monitoring Officer 12.8.15

7. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

7.1 There is no direct impact arising from the matters contained within this report.

Approved by: Heather Daley, Director of Human Resources 19.8.15

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.1 An Initial Equality Analysis was undertaken to assess the likely adverse impact on protected groups compared to non-protected groups. This concluded that a full analysis was not required as the policy would not have an adverse impact on any protected groups compared to non-protected groups.

8.2 Mainstreaming flexible working benefits employers, employees and the local community. Individual employees are able to better balance their work, family life and community commitments. Social benefits of increased flexible working opportunities include: creating a more inclusive local labour market, reducing the number of people dependent on benefits; reducing the number of children of working parents who live in poverty; enabling older workers to stay in the labour market; and enabling carers to balance their caring responsibilities with paid work.

8.3 By endorsing Croydon as a Flexible Working Borough and promoting flexible working across its partners, contractors and local employers the number of accessible working opportunities to the most disadvantaged will increase. Enabling more people to work flexibly will improve their lives by providing a better balance between work and home. It will also reduce the number of people dependent on benefits, reduce the number of children of working parents who live in poverty, enable older workers to stay in the labour market, and enable carers to balance their caring responsibilities with paid work and help employees in general to have a better work-home balance.

8.4 An Initial Equality Analysis was undertaken to assess the likely adverse impact on protected groups compared to non-protected groups. The analysis found that the majority of council employees (75 per cent) were aware of the right to request flexible working, with awareness being more common among parents (79 per cent). Awareness was also higher among those in managerial/professional occupations (85 per cent) with particularly low awareness among those in routine or manual occupations (64 per cent). Fifteen per cent of employees had not requested flexible working due to reasons related to the business/employer, which may be real or perceived.

8.5 The council's workforce profile for 2014 defines anyone working less than 36 hours per week as working part-time. Part-time workers comprise 19 per cent of the workforce with the majority (17 per cent of the total workforce) being

women. Sixteen percent of the workforce have a disability and over half of these work part-time. The proportion of Council staff that work part time increases with age with the greatest differential in the 61+ age group who make up 6.4 per cent of the full time workforce but account for 15.4 per cent of the part-time workforce.

- 8.6 Currently flexible working opportunities are open to all both within the Council and for other employers however there are differences in take-up which is likely to reflect different preferences. However, there may also be particular groups of staff who would like to work flexibly but are unaware of the opportunities or feel that it would not be perceived favourably. Part-time working is only one type of flexible working and more analysis needs to be done to establish the full range of flexible working opportunities that people are taking-up within the Council and how these impact on particular protected groups.
- 8.7 The analysis recommended that as steps are taken towards becoming a flexible working borough, flexible working should be discussed with the Council's Women's and Carers' Networks and extending this to the other networks in order to enable the gathering of qualitative data from Council staff on the need, opportunities for and barriers to flexible working amongst particular protected groups. It also recommended considering how to increase awareness and acceptability of flexible working in order to give all staff who would like to work flexibly the opportunity to do so.
- 8.8 The analysis concluded that a full analysis was not required as the policy would not have an adverse impact on any protected groups compared to non-protected groups.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 9.1 No impact identified

10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

- 10.1 No impact identified

11. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS/PROPOSED DECISION

- 11.1 The support provided through seeking Timewise accreditation is considered the most effective way of strengthening flexible working opportunities in Croydon and would send a clear signal to residents of the Council's commitment to this.

12. OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 12.1 The 'no change' option was considered and rejected as unlikely to have significant impact of strengthening flexible working opportunities in Croydon.

CONTACT OFFICER:

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Mark Fowler, Director of People Gateway Services
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BACKGROUND PAPERS

Initial Equality Assessment

Appendix 1 Flexible Working Examples of Good Practice

'I wished to slow down as I headed towards retirement, but I couldn't afford to give up work completely. I chose to job share on my current roster within my current team to improve my work life balance.'

'I work part time as an Airport Security Officer, and in peak periods I increase my hours to full time, remaining with my same crew and roster for these agreed periods. By doing this, I am able to supplement my income and work flexibly around childcare issues without managing full time hours permanently.'

Gatwick Airport

Sam runs a car valeting business in Croydon. Work starts at 9am seven days a week and finishes when the last customer comes to collect their car between 6 and 7 pm. Staff have a working rota but often need to change this for family commitments. Sam is able to allow staff to change their working days because he can always find other staff who are willing to cover.

The work is long, physical and repetitive and so it is difficult for workers to remain motivated and there can be a high turn-over of staff. Allowing staff to work flexibly means that they are more motivated and provide a high quality service and can valet more cars which allows the business to grow. Staff are willing to swap shifts to cover other workers because they know when they need to swap shifts everything will be done to ensure they can take time off. Staff are happier and more likely to stay with the business.

Car Valeting Business

Sharon is a support worker for patients with mental health problems. Sharon works term time which enables her to spend time with her children during the school holidays. Both Sharon and her children value this time and it also avoids spending on costly childcare.

Sharon has to manage her case load carefully to ensure that all cases are closed or handed over before she goes on leave and that partners in other agencies are aware that she is going to be absent. She can only do this because she works in a team that is very supportive. Her employers gain as she is happy at work and less likely to look for other job opportunities or to take sick leave.

NHS

Mary and Mark's flexible working pattern has been put in place since Mary's return to work after maternity leave. The 36 hours they work each week are compressed into four days, starting at 8.00am and finishing at 6.00pm.

Mary works Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays and Mark works Monday to Thursday. This flexible working pattern enables Mary and Mark to continue working full time while caring for their young child.

The arrangement is flexible so non-working days can be swapped if necessary, for example, to attend important team meetings.

"Our arrangement works really well," Mary told us. "The council's flexible working policy has enabled us to have a better work/life balance. We're trusted to get the work done, and we, in return, give 100% commitment in our roles."

Croydon Council

Catherine has a child with ADHD and has reduced her work time to three days a week. When working full time Catherine found it very stressful fitting the demands of caring for her child and associated appointments with a full time job and this had led to a lot of stress related sickness. Having reduced her working hours Catherine finds life a lot less stressful and is able to enjoy the benefits of working whilst meeting the needs of her child. Her employers have an experienced, committed, happy and less stressed member of staff.

NHS

David works in the audit and fraud team, who've proactively opted for a flexible working pattern. Every member of the team, including the head of service, has a flexible working arrangement.

Investigators spend two days of the week offsite and some staff have lengthy commutes. Flexible working provides a better work life balance for the team; they spend less time and energy commuting and are more able to devote time to their work.

David says "the year we made this change, despite some concerns raised by a few of the team, we had our best team performance year ever. It's also forced people to think about time management and look across the team for capacity. Everyone updates the team diary weekly, and mutually takes responsibility for making sure there's office cover. It works really well for us."

"Staff are happier and have benefitted from trust, trusted to manage their time on their own, their outputs and developed an understanding that technology and communications are now so good that colleagues and customers do not notice any difference in service delivery."

Croydon Council

Katherine has worked flexibly on a part-term basis following her return to work after the birth of her daughter in 2011. Rebecca, who also has a young child, joined the team in 2014, also on a part-time basis.

Katherine works Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Rebecca works Wednesday to Friday, enabling a handover on the day they are both in the office. This flexible working pattern enables both Katherine and Rebecca to continue working while

