

Carbon Footprint & Homeworking

Flintshire County Council Climate Change Committee Notes:

1. That Flintshire County Council, prior to covid, offered a range of flexible working options in a number of roles where this was feasible;
2. That as a result of restrictions imposed during the pandemic, a significant number of staff were required to work from home;
3. That as we have emerged from the pandemic, the council now has a greater number of staff working from home than was the case prior to the pandemic, and that this is reflected in our emissions data, in particular relating to employee transport, and
4. That the experience of staff working from home varies, with some more enthusiastic than others, and some more keen to work from home in the Summer than when energy bills are higher in Winter.

Flintshire County Council Climate Change Committee Believes:

1. That the issue of provision of flexible working options is complex and requires a significant number of factors to be fed into formulation of policy in this area;
2. That one of the factors that must be taken into consideration is the carbon impact of various proposed policy options;
3. That at present, the methodology the council uses, in accordance with Welsh Government guidance, reflects employee travel (and therefore working from home shows a reduction in carbon emissions as people don't drive to the office), but not energy use by staff working from home;
4. That while failing to account for this energy usage may be correct as part of determining the council's own emissions, the council has a wider responsibility to reduce actual emissions and not just those that are accounted for as the council's own;
5. That homeworking in Winter is likely to lead to higher emissions than office based working, while the reverse is likely to be the case in Summer, but that the council lacks firm evidence either way, and
6. That employee preference should remain a significant factor in determining homeworking policy.

Flintshire County Council Climate Change Committee Resolves:

1. To recommend that cabinet reviews the homeworking policy, establishing a coherent and climate-informed framework for the council;
2. To recommend to the cabinet that a study is commissioned in respect of total net emissions from homeworking, whether this takes the form of a survey of Flintshire staff or a review of comparable evidence from elsewhere in the UK if similar studies are already available;
3. To recommend that as an interim measure pending the completion of a review of the climate evidence, the council should allow anyone who wishes to work from the office in Winter to do so, particularly in light of rising heating costs, and
4. To instruct the Chair to write to the Welsh Government's Climate Change Minister requesting that a mechanism that accurately reflects seasonal variation in net homeworking emissions is included in the guidance for assessing emissions, such that the council is not penalised for taking steps to reduce total emissions at the expense of those that show on its own figures.