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Y Berthynas Waith
Cyngor Rhondda Cynon Taf, gweithio gyda chi, gweithio gyda'n gilydd

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workwell**

Employee Relations
Rhondda Cynon Taf Council, working with you, working together

Hybrid Working Policy

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg/This document is also available in Welsh'

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CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	WHAT IS HYBRID WORKING?	1
	2.1 Key Principles of Hybrid Working	2
	2.2 Some key things to remember about hybrid working:	2
3.	THINGS TO THINK ABOUT	3
	3.1 Working Hours and Keeping in Touch.....	3
	3.2 Equipment and Environment	4
	3.3 Display Screen Equipment.....	5
4.	YOUR WELLBEING	6
5.	EXPENSES AND COSTS.....	6
	Travelling time	6
6.	TECHNICAL ISSUES	7
7.	AT THE OFFICE.....	8
8.	WORKING FROM OUTSIDE THE UK AND HOLIDAY HOMES	8
9.	IF YOU NEED FURTHER SUPPORT	8
	HYBRID WORKING - WORKPLACE ATTENDANCE GUIDANCE.....	9
	1. General Covid Rules.....	11
	2. Occupying Core Office Accommodation	12
	3. Flexible Hub Space	13
	4. Attending a Workplace other than a Council Building	15
	APPENDIX – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS).....	16

1. **INTRODUCTION**

To ensure that we provide the best possible services we can to our communities, the Council aims to support staff to do their best work, have a good work life balance, work flexibly whilst staying connected and being effective in our roles. This Policy supports the Council's key ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030.

For many staff, where and when you work has changed radically because of the pandemic. Your expectations about what work looks like have also changed. You have provided feedback either through surveys, your managers or the trade unions and we have listened to that feedback. We know that choice and flexibility are important to you and that what works for some, will not work for others.

The purpose of this policy is to set out a framework for keeping the good bits of working flexibly whilst looking at how our office space can support everyone to stay connected and work in the best way.

As the Council provides such a diverse range of services, this policy won't work for or be available to everyone. Your service area may have particular requirements that may determine how you work. It will also depend on the kind of role you do, the part of the Council that you work in, the level of supervision you need in your role, any minimum levels of physical cover required as well as the technology and environment you require and have available to you.

We do all have a responsibility to maintain those things which have been a cornerstone of our success in the past - positive culture, teamworking, wider networking across teams, mentoring and staff development, wellbeing, and we recognise that some 'face to face' contact can help to facilitate this.

Hybrid Working is not about returning to the office on a full-time basis.

2. **WHAT IS HYBRID WORKING?**

Hybrid working is designed to give you more choice over deciding when and where you work best in a way that balances the needs of the Council, your team and yourself. It is about giving you more choices about how you do the right work, in the right place, at the right time. It offers a mix of working remotely at home and working in an office environment. Where, when and how you work might depend on the task you are doing and the kind of role you have.

If you are looking to permanently change your work pattern or the hours you work, please use the Council's Flexible Working policy instead.

2.1 Key Principles of Hybrid Working

- It is based on trust. We trust you to choose the best times, places and technology to match the work you do, your personal preferences and to balance this with your own needs and the needs of your team.
- Hybrid working should not detrimentally impact the level or quality of service to customers or your colleagues.
- Work is an activity and not a destination.
- It is open to everyone who has a suitable role regardless of how long they have worked for the Council and whether they are permanent or temporary.
- Physical presence does not equal great performance. Your performance will be evaluated during your 121's, supervision and annual performance reviews and will be assessed on the impact you have and the outcomes you deliver.
- We will work with you and your needs to help get the right technology and equipment to support you to work in this way. Please note that if your **role** requires specialist equipment and software this may preclude you from working in a hybrid manner.
- The majority of the Council's policies will apply in every location you work from including your home.
- Community and connection are important for your wellbeing. We will continue to provide safe office spaces for you to collaborate and connect with each other. (Appendix 1)
- We know that there might be times when being onsite is crucial, such as when you first start working at the Council or have started a new role. At these times we would encourage you to make the most of visiting the workplace to familiarise yourself with the facilities and support available to you. When visiting or working from any Council office you should familiarise yourself with the relevant health and safety procedures for that location, including for fire, first aid and the current measures to comply with COVID restrictions (if applicable).
- This policy works in conjunction with the Council's Flexi Working Hours Scheme

2.2 Some key things to remember about hybrid working:

- Your manager will work with you to explore how hybrid working could work for you and your team based on the needs of the business, your preferences and the needs of your role. Examples may include (not an exhaustive list):
 - A fixed number of days in the office
 - Rota to cover service calls and queries at key times throughout the day, either virtually or face to face
 - Availability to meet Service customers/citizens/partners, face to face

- Availability to meet colleagues face to face, for development sessions
 - Block attendance at the office for focussed project work
 - Focus session to deal with Service demand and performance
- It won't work for or be available to everyone. It will depend on the kind of role you do, the part of the Council, the level of supervision you need in your role, any minimum levels of physical cover required as well as the technology and environment you have available to you. (availability/accessibility to customers).
 - **It follows therefore, that our teams will function in different ways depending upon the role they undertake driven by the needs of the business i.e., in summary, there will be no one model of operation across the Council.**
 - Hybrid working will also not be available for those who need to be on-site for the whole of their contractual hours to do their jobs (e.g., frontline, predominantly customer and community facing roles)
 - Working in this way will not change your contractual terms and conditions of employment in respect of working hours or normal location of work. The policy may be changed from time to time depending on business needs and any public health concerns.
 - The expenses you can claim will be unchanged
 - It is not the same as a flexible working agreement. If you want to make a more permanent change to your hours, work/working pattern, you will need to request this separately through our Right to Request Flexible Working scheme
 - For employees with disabilities, hybrid working may be considered as a reasonable adjustment
 - Just so you know, we will always try to support this way of working if we can and if your role is suitable. **However, please remember that any hybrid working arrangement is subject to the ongoing agreement of management and sometimes might need to be changed for business reasons. It is an option and not an entitlement.**

3. THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

3.1 Working Hours and Keeping in Touch

Subject to business needs, we want to empower you to flex the times you work so you can balance your home life around the needs of your role. We trust you to manage your own time and make sure you do the hours you are contracted to do. However, there are some important things we would like you to be aware of:

- You should expect to make yourself available to others during office hours when you are needed by your team.
- We may ask you to be available at certain times to meet the needs of the business, to physically be in the office to collaborate or attend training/team development sessions. In respect of this point, then in normal circumstances a week's notice is considered more than adequate to call people in. However, the Council reserves the right to bring people in to deal with urgent matters when such situations arise. That might entail ringing staff in the morning to attend asap that day (with a lunch time attendance being the latest time to arrive) or they may be required to attend the next day.
- Flexing your working times should not result in extra work for other members of the team or compromise the objectives of your team.
- If you choose to work late outside core Council hours, please be courteous and respectful to your colleagues. Be mindful that your colleagues are not expected to respond outside core Council hours.
- We recognise in the Council we have many unpaid carers and working from home can give some caregivers the flexibility to juggle but for others getting back to the office is the best thing to do. This policy is intended to support the flexibility that is required for unpaid carers and works alongside existing policies.
- Just so you know you won't be automatically entitled to any overtime if you choose to work outside Core Council hours or more hours than you are contracted to do. **Any such additional time accrued will be compensated under the flexi working hours policy.**
- We know that modern life is complicated and that working in this way can help you balance your home and work life. However, hybrid working is not suited as a way of managing sickness or for long-term childcare if it has a significant impact on your ability to carry out your day-to-day role. Please refer to relevant policies to assist you in how the Council can support you to address your specific needs.

3.2 Equipment and Environment

- It is important for us to know that wherever you are working from, you have the equipment and environment you need to do your job well and that you feel safe, well and comfortable.
- We will provide you with workstation and IT equipment that you need to be able to do your job. Just so it is clear, you won't be able to claim expenses for any equipment that you buy yourself.
- All workstation requirements need to be ordered and IT equipment needs to be ordered through <https://forms.office.com/e/f0M3gwGTni> and IT equipment needs to be ordered through [Ordering Hardware and Software](#).

- Similarly if you need any extra equipment to help you do your job, again click here for ICT equipment [Ordering Hardware and Software](#) this link contains information on how to order equipment. Please discuss any workstation technical or supportive equipment requirements that you have with your line manager before ordering as approval will be required.
- If you already have reasonable adjustments in place, it is important that a conversation takes place with your manager prior to commencing hybrid working arrangements, to ensure appropriate adjustments are available in workplace locations. You may want to familiarise yourself with the work location prior to a return to ensure the equipment and environment are accessible to your needs. The Reasonable Adjustments Scheme will support this conversation.

3.3 Display Screen Equipment

- If you are setting yourself up to working remotely or at home, you will need to complete the [Guidance on Working from Home with DSE](#). This will support you to make sure that your place of work is safe, supportive, free from risk and that any access to confidential information or data is treated with care.
- Colleagues working remotely or at home must ensure they have a secure, private and appropriately lit and heated space to work in, with a reliable and secure internet connection. For more information about [HS11 Display Screen Equipment](#) and [HS11A Scheme – Eye and Eyesight Tests and Special Corrective Appliance](#) policies and keeping yourself safe please use the above links.
- When working outside of your normal office location, please be mindful of any potential confidentiality or IT security risks. To read more about keeping information safe and confidential please refer to the [Data Protection Awareness](#) e-Learning module on RCT Source.
- If you have a disability and need any reasonable adjustments to be made to your workstation whether in the office or in another location, please discuss your needs with your line manager
If any equipment gets lost, damaged or stolen, you will need to let your line manager know as soon as possible. You should also inform your home insurance provider that you are working from your home as any changes to use could potentially invalidate the policy.

If you are working from a Council premises, please make sure that you know how to evacuate the building (including the place of assembly and who you need to report to) in the case of an emergency and that you are aware of how to contact the first aider on site.

4. YOUR WELLBEING

We know that for many of you, working in this way can boost your wellbeing, however there are still some important things for you to be aware of:

It can be easy to lose track of time and work more hours than you usually would when working remotely. It is important that to remember to take regular rest breaks; of not less than 30 consecutive minutes if working for 6 hours or more and make time to switch off. Where working for long spells at a screen make sure you take regular breaks away from your screens. Working in this way should not significantly change how many hours you usually work.

Workers have the right to either:

- an uninterrupted 24 hours without any work each week
- an uninterrupted 48 hours without any work each fortnight
- Hybrid working should not be used as a way of carrying on working when you are sick. If you are ill, then you would need to take time off until you have recovered and follow our Sickness Absence Policy. Should your absence be due to Covid-19 please follow the current guidance in terms of isolating and testing
- We know that collaboration, connection and having a sense of belonging can help you stay well. We encourage you to think about what this means for you and to actively make time to connect with your colleagues. To find out what support the Council offers to support your wellbeing contact our wellbeing line (Tel: 01443 424100 e-mail: wellbeingHelpline@rctcbc.gov.uk)

5. EXPENSES AND COSTS

Your contractual normal location of work won't change when you adopt a hybrid way of working so your entitlement to claim will travel expenses will remain the same.

Travelling time

Where an employee spends part of a day on site and either travels directly from home to site or directly from site to home, the time recorded should reflect the provisions of the Scheme for payment of travel expenses and redeployment e.g., if travelling to or from staff's fixed centre, the working day starts and ends at the fixed centre. Alternatively, if travelling to another base or from home, then the shorter distance and time rule will apply.

Similarly, staff cannot claim flexi time, or expenses for travelling to and from their fixed base for part of a day e.g., if starting the day working from home, travelling to their fixed base for a meeting, returning to work from home following the meeting – the time spent travelling cannot be claimed as flexi and travel expenses cannot be claimed.

Travel expenses are in-line with the Council's expense policy, that is only official business mileage will be reimbursed. For clarity, no mileage should be claimed or will be reimbursed for journeys that are constituted as a commute:

- initial/home journey to and from your fixed base
- initial/home journey to a temporary workplace utilised under the flexibility of this policy
- note that if you are required to attend on-site business meetings (excluding your fixed base) with colleagues outside of your immediate service area, then the usual 'shortest distance' claimable rule will continue to apply as per Council expense policy

For more information you can read the Councils expenses policy

Just so you know, any costs for wi-fi, heating, lighting and electricity and commuting costs to your designated place of work will always be a personal expense in line with HMRC guidelines.

We would also advise that you check that there isn't anything that would prevent you working from home, for example in your mortgage agreement, lease or insurance. You should also get confirmation of cover from your home insurer should work equipment cause any damage to your home.

6. TECHNICAL ISSUES

On occasions where you experience instances of technical system 'downtime' which prevents you from undertaking your role at home, the following actions should be taken:

- should your laptop fail, you must immediately inform your manager and log a call with the ICT Service desk. Where a new laptop is required then arrangements should be made to either attend a suitable office with pc facilities or you can request to take leave until a replacement laptop is available.
- where you may experience a prolonged downtime with your home wi-fi, again you should inform your manager and arrangements should be made to either attend a suitable office or another secure environment with the appropriate connections.
- where your operating system is taking down for maintenance (planned maintenance scheduled outside core working hours where possible), you may be required to attend your fixed base so that alternative work or team development can be undertaken.

7. AT THE OFFICE

- When returning to offices, staff are asked to maintain the clear desk policy introduced during the pandemic to ensure desks/workspaces/meeting rooms are available for use by other colleagues when not in use.
- Personal belongings are not to be left on desks, any lockers are to be kept locked when not in use and staff are asked to wipe down the desk/facilities before and after use.

8. WORKING FROM OUTSIDE THE UK AND HOLIDAY HOMES

- Due to the potential complex legal and tax implications, wider compliance issues around access to systems and data security, particularly from countries with a greater 'cyber' threat, working from abroad is not allowed in any circumstances.
- Similarly, unless there are exceptional circumstances staff should not work from holiday homes, holiday caravans or other peoples' homes within the UK area. Any such request must be agreed by your SLT Director in discussion with the Director of Human Resources.

9. IF YOU NEED FURTHER SUPPORT

Remember we have an employee wellbeing line & HR support.

HYBRID WORKING - WORKPLACE ATTENDANCE GUIDANCE

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg/This document is also available in Welsh and other formats are available when requested

CONTACT

CorpEstates.OperationalProperty@rctcbc.gov.uk

CONTENTS

HYBRID WORKING - WORKPLACE ATTENDANCE GUIDANCE	9
1. General Covid Rules	11
2. Occupying Core Office Accommodation	12
3. Flexible Hub Space	13
4. Attending a Workplace other than a Council Building	15
APPENDIX – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)	16

1. General Covid Rules

All employees must comply with any national restrictions imposed by the UK Government and/or the Welsh Government, as appropriate, together with any imposed locally by RCT Council's Senior Leadership Team (SLT). This includes not attending the workplace if you have symptoms or are required to isolate.

In addition, to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus and to help protect the health of employees, and others:

Managers need to:

- Ensure a suitable risk assessment for COVID 19 is undertaken and implement any necessary controls (refer to WG COVID RA)
- Take reasonable measures to **ensure a 2m physical distance** is maintained between all employees, whenever possible
- Provide **hand sanitiser/wipes/handwash arrangements** in appropriate locations
- **Not exceed** the max number of employees in the office, kitchen, and toilets
- Ensure an **enhanced cleaning regime** is introduced for the office and workstations
- **Use virtual meetings where practical if** physical distancing is not possible
- Ensure a **clear desk policy** is maintained
- Ensure employees **do not cross on stairs**– for example, use one-way travel
- Restrict use of **lifts to one person** (and a carer) at a time
- Mark out **2m exclusion zones** in appropriate locations
- Ensure kitchens are kept clutter free and provide disinfecting wipes for staff to clean equipment after use
- Consider having **staggered start/finish times** for employees to avoid gatherings in confined spaces
- **Communicate effectively with employees** and ensure they adhere to the regulations and any site-specific rules

Employees are encouraged to:

- Get vaccinated and take regular lateral flow tests (LFTs)
 - Regularly wash/sanitise hands
 - Practice other good hygiene techniques, for example, coughing/sneezing into a paper tissue, depositing used tissues into a lidded bin, etc.
 - Maintain 2m physical distancing where practicable
 - Wear face coverings where maintaining 2m physical distancing is not practicable
 - Use common sense when moving around the workplace and be courteous to colleagues, particularly any with disabilities who may require additional space, when waiting to enter spaces/use equipment
 - Adhere to the clear desk policy and ensure individual workstations are cleaned/sanitised before re-use.

2. Occupying Core Office Accommodation

2.1 Core Office Accommodation is your contractual place of work. Your contractual place of work has not changed as a result of the introduction of the hybrid way of working. However, the way in which employees occupy that place of work has changed:

- A **clear desk policy** is in place so that all desks can be used by all employees. All desks should be clear, with the exception of ICT equipment installed by ICT for office use or installed as a reasonable adjustment for an employee. Files, papers and personal belongings are not to be left on desks. This includes those desks allocated to 'fixed workers' so that the desks are available to other employees during periods of absence, such as leave or sickness. There may be exceptions for some employees with reasonable adjustments
- In order for the hybrid working system to be implemented fully, a central **Hub Space** Booking System will be introduced using Microsoft Outlook. Until full implementation of the booking system is rolled out, employees must continue to book meeting rooms using current methods

2.2 Managers must ensure that:

- The **clear desk policy** is maintained, whilst considering any reasonable adjustments that are in place for individual employees
- The Council's Health and Safety policies relating to the protection of the health, safety and welfare of employees are complied with. Managers will particularly need to consider arrangements for COVID, fire, first aid and working with display screen equipment (DSE). There may be a need to train more first aiders and fire wardens to ensure adequate cover is maintained at all material times
- The use of energy is minimised

2.3 Employees must:

- Ensure they 'book in' when they arrive and 'book out' when they leave, so that there is a record of when they are on the premises, in case of an emergency
- Familiarise themselves and comply with any particular workplace COVID rules in place, such as one-way systems, maximum number of occupants, etc.
- Familiarise themselves with the particular workplace fire procedures, such as location of fire alarm call points, extinguishers, escape routes and final exits, assembly points, etc.
- Familiarise themselves with the particular workplace accident and first aid procedures, such as who to report any accident to, name and contact number of first aider(s), etc.
- Ensure the workplace is well ventilated, for example, opening windows and doors (except where doors are required to be kept closed/locked, e.g., for fire safety/safeguarding purposes)
- Before use, sanitise work surfaces, any in-situ workstation equipment, etc. they are to use, e.g., with anti-bacterial wipes
- Ensure the workstation is set up properly and that they can achieve a comfortable working position (guidance is available in the Health and Safety Team's [H&ST] document *Employees' Guide to Setting up your Workstation and Using Portable Devices*. This document is accessible on the *RCT Source* – log in to the *Source*, click on *Your Health, Safety and Wellbeing*, then on *Your Health and Safety*, then on *Workplace Safety*, then on *Display Screen Equipment*; the document is accessible under *Additional Resources*. Alternatively, contact the H&ST via:
 - HealthandSafetyTeam@rctcbc.gov.uk)
- After use, sanitise work surfaces, any in-situ workstation equipment, etc. they have used
- Discuss any reasonable adjustments they need with their manager

3. Flexible Hub Space

- 3.1 A Flexible Hub Space is an area designated for use by employees across the Council for meetings and touch down spaces. Flexible Hub Spaces will be created within the Council's Core Office Accommodation and other Council buildings, such as libraries, leisure centres, as opportunities arise.

This will allow flexible booking of Council owned spaces, offering employees more choice and making more efficient use of the Council's property estate.

- 3.2 Flexible Hub Spaces are being piloted at Tŷ Trevithick, Tŷ Sardis, and Tŷ Oldway for use by employees who are based at those offices. **If you are not based at Tŷ Trevithick, Tŷ Sardis or Tŷ Oldway, the Flexible Hub Spaces are not yet available to you.**
- 3.3 Details of the **location** of the Flexible Hub Spaces can be found on Inform, and this will be updated as new Flexible Hub Spaces are made available. Flexible Hub Spaces will be bookable via the central Hub Space Booking on Outlook.
- 3.4 Employees must:
- Clear the Flexible Hub Space after use, leaving the space ready for use by other employees and visitors
 - Wipe down desks and equipment before and after use
 - Not use the Flexible Hub Space without prior booking via the Central Meeting Room Booking Space
 - Check the Flexible Hub Space can accommodate your reasonable adjustments, where applicable
 - Leave the Flexible Hub Space promptly and not later than the end of the booking
 - Choose a space that is the right size for the number of attendees, in the most suitable location and equipped with the facilities needed for the meeting (e.g., do not book a room with capacity for 10 attendees with a digital screen for a meeting for 6 attendees that does not need a digital screen)
 - Ensure they 'book in' when you arrive and 'book out' when you leave, so that there is a record of when you are on the premises, in case of an emergency
 - Familiarise themselves with the particular workplace fire procedures, such as location of fire alarm call points, extinguishers, escape routes and final exits, assembly points, etc. Details will be available on the online Hub Booking system and displayed in prominent places within the Hub Space
 - Familiarise themselves with the particular workplace accident and first aid procedures, such as who to report any accident to, name and contact number of first aider(s), etc. Details will be available on the online Hub Booking system and displayed in prominent places within the Hub Space.

4. Attending a Workplace other than a Council Building

- 4.1 There may be occasions when you will need to work in buildings other than a Council building, e.g., a café, a community-run office, the public area of a library, or similar. When working other than in a Council office setting, the above rules apply in principle, but will not always be feasible/practicable/applicable, depending on the particular location. For example, there may be no means to book in or out, or you may have to take it on good faith that the work surfaces and equipment you are to use have already been sanitised by the premises management, etc.
- 4.2 When working other than in a Council office, it may well be that that a standard DSE workstation will not be available for your use and that you will have to set up your DSE as best as you are able to. In this instance, the guidance provided in the H&ST's document *Guidance on Working from Home with Display Screen Equipment* may be of assistance. This document is also available on the *RCT Source* – follow the instructions on the preceding page in 2.3 to access the topic *Display Screen Equipment*; the document is accessible under *Working From Home* or is again available from the H&ST via the email address given in 2.3.
- 4.3 Working other than in a Council office setting will also present different risks that you will need to be aware of, assess and take measures to control. These include, for example:
- The possibility of a physical assault or attempted theft of equipment, either whilst in the premises or after leaving it – equipment should not be left unattended, it would be advisable to always carry a fully charged mobile to enable you to summon help, perhaps a personal alarm or an alarm app downloaded to your phone which you could activate to deter any would be assailant, or similar
 - The possibility of displaying to others information of personal/confidential nature that should not be disclosed – you will need to ensure that you are so situated when working that others are not able to read your display screen, that you shut down your computer if others approach you, etc.

APPENDIX – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

Q1 How do I book a meeting room?

A1 There are 2 ways of booking meeting rooms:

- If you have been informed that you can book the Flexible Hub Spaces, you can book meeting rooms using the Central Meeting Room Booking system
- If you have not been informed that you can book the Flexible Hub Spaces, you can book a meeting space in your office in the way that you did before Covid, e.g., spreadsheet, diary, calendar

Q2 How will I know that I can use the Flexible Hub Spaces?

A2 Corporate Estates will contact your Directors Service Directors/Heads of Service to agree how the Flexible Hub Spaces will be rolled out to your service area. You will receive training on how to use the Central Meeting Room Booking system, together with access to an online manual. You will be given a confirmation date from which the Flexible Hub Spaces will be available for your use.

Q3 How do I find out the location of the Flexible Hub Spaces?

A3 Details of the Flexible Hub Spaces will be available on Inform as they become available.

Q4 How do I find out what facilities are available at the Flexible Hub Spaces?

A4 Details of the facilities will be available on Inform and also on the Meeting Room Booking system.

Q5 How do I report problems/issues/concerns?

A5 All queries and concerns about the use of the Flexible Hub Spaces can be directed to Corporate Estates using CorpEstates.OperationalProperty@rctcbc.gov.uk Corporate Estates will help answer any queries you have and will update you on progress until the query / concern is resolved.

Q6 What is a 'Touch Down' space?

A6 A 'Touch Down' space is an informal space from which employees can work from their laptops quickly and efficiently in between meetings and appointments. It will usually consist of a chair, table, monitor and docking station that can be booked for up to an hour.

Q7 What is a ‘Flexible Hub Space’?

A7 A ‘Flexible Hub Space’ is a specially designed office space that offers a variety of workspaces, such as different sized meeting rooms, interactive meeting rooms, meeting pods, touch down spaces, quiet zones and informal break out areas.

Q8 What is Core Office Accommodation?

A8 Core Office Accommodation is the office that employees are contractually designated to work from, e.g., Corporate Estates employees are based at Tŷ Trevithick – Tŷ Trevithick is Corporate Estates’ Core Office Accommodation, Legal Services employees are based at The Pavilions – The Pavilions is Legal Services’ Core Office Accommodation.

Q9 What shall I do if a space is not available at my preferred Flexible Hub Space?

A9 Whilst all efforts will be made to provide sufficient spaces throughout the County Borough, there may occasions where a desired Flexible Hub Space is fully booked. If this happens, you will need to choose an alternative location.

Q10 How will I gain entry to a Flexible Hub Space?

A10 All information on how to access the Flexible Hub Space will be available on Inform and on the Meeting Room Booking system.