

**Wiltshire Council**

**Council**

**13 November 2012**

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**Questions from Councillors**

**From Cllr Ernie Clark, Hilperton Division**

**To**

**Cllr Allison Bucknell, Chairman of Staffing Policy Committee**

**Question 1**

How many full time staff are currently employed by Wiltshire Council as 'office staff' (i.e. excluding teachers etc.)? How many of these employees work 'compressed hours' in order to work on four, rather than five, days a week? When working 'compressed hours', how are members of the public able to contact these members of staff outside the time when the telephone switchboard is open?

**Response**

It is difficult to answer the first part of Cllr Clarke's question as Wiltshire Council does not recognise the term "office staff", similarly working patterns for staff are not recorded centrally so we are unable to provide details of the number of full time staff who work compressed hours.

As you know the council has a range of flexible working policies available for staff and these include a compressed hours policy. Officers are encouraged to work from home where practical and hot desking is becoming the norm under the new ways of working. This is delivering significant savings for the council as the saving per workstation is estimated at £4,000. For example there are 650 desks provided for 1150 staff in the new county hall facility, and this arrangement can only work if staff adopt the new ways of working, and this includes working flexibly.

Officers are also encouraged to adopt a "we go to them" approach which means that some officers, e.g. planning officers, are likely to be out of the office for a greater proportion of their working time.

The role of some officers, e.g. Customer Services and Social Care helpdesk, is to be available to answer calls from the public during core working hours. Outside of these working hours, there is an Out of Hours service to deal with emergencies. There is no requirement for an officer to be available to the public outside of core hours unless that officer provides a service which necessitates that, or the officer has made an arrangement.

Managers, in services which have direct or indirect contact with the public have a primary regard to operational requirements when considering requests from staff to work compressed hours. They may refuse requests if agreeing to compressed hours would have a negative impact on customers and their ability to access the service. Each manager is responsible for making arrangements for dealing with contact from the public in line with the councils published guidelines with respect to opening hours. This information is available to the public via the council's website, and is listed under council offices and departments.

The link is <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/council/councilownedpremises.htm>

The council is committed to flexible working and recognises the benefits it can bring as it enables us to shape our services around the needs and concerns of our customers, as well as providing improved motivation, morale, increased productivity, better work life balance and reduced levels of stress for our employees.

Many service areas and functions are involved in Systems Thinking reviews to redesign services to ensure that that customer is at the heart of everything we do. If Cllr Clarke has a specific issue with officers or a service area, he is advised to contact the manager of that service directly to discuss ways of improving the service or even getting involved in the review process.