

EMPLOYMENT AND APPEALS COMMITTEE

26 October 2021

FUTURE WAYS OF WORKING

Report of the Strategic Director for Resources

Strategic Aim:	All	
Exempt Information	No	
Cabinet Member(s) Responsible:	Cllr O Hemsley, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Policy, Strategy and Partnerships, Economy and Infrastructure	
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Ward Councillors	N/A	

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee notes the update and progress of the Council's trial of a Hybrid flexible working model.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides Committee with an update to a previous report submitted in July 2021 regarding the development of our Future Ways of Working model.
- 1.2 Many of our staff have worked remotely since March 2020 (either in full or in part) and it is our intention to continue to support such flexibility where this fits service delivery and promotes a healthy work life balance. Some of our services have remained operational from either their existing workplace or within the community.

2 THE EMERGING MODEL

- 2.1 The core principle of our model is that where services enable it, staff are able to choose to work from home or from their normal work base. We believe that our staff can be successful at their role no matter where located and this also built on the principles of trust, accountability, good leadership and employee engagement.

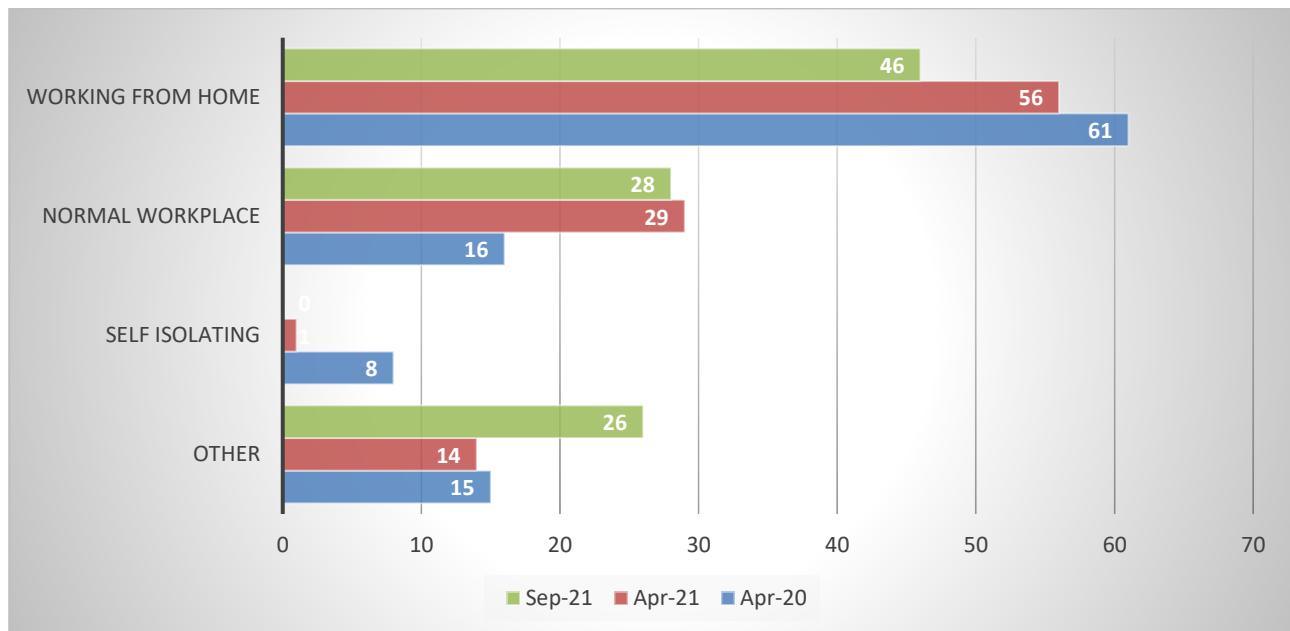
2.2 In support of the model, staff and managers have said it can:

- Provide a better work life balance – improved health and wellbeing and family life.
- Improve productivity – they have already developed new and better ways of working; less paperwork, less printing.

And of course it will reduce our carbon footprint through less travel and commuting.

3 WHAT HAVE WE DONE SO FAR?

3.1 Continued to support staff to work from home wherever possible whilst nationally we have been progressing out of lockdown, and for us specifically part of our Catmose site has been occupied by the Vaccination Centre until September. Our percentage of staff working at home has therefore remained high.



Note: At the time the data was taken, 'Other' = annual leave, maternity leave, not working – non working day).

3.2 We have enabled staff to work from an office base where they have need to i.e. for work purposes or for personal and wellbeing reasons.

3.3 Developed a model and framework that we will consider will work for us – the Hybrid model. This has been shared and presented to staff as part of a first Phase trial for the period October 2021 to January 2022. During this period staff can work from their workplace if they need or choose to, and can also work from home where that also suits the service and role. During this trial phase, we are making no changes to Council Policy, Terms and Conditions and individuals' admin or workplace remains as is. Staff are aware that they may be required to attend their workplace as requested for service and work related issues e.g. work tasks that cannot be carried out at home, team meetings, 1-1s, face to face training.

3.4 Set up a Task and Finish Group – chaired by Dawn Godfrey, Strategic Director for

Children Services – to lead on actions required in order to facilitate more staff back into their workplace – specifically Catmose. This has focussed on the building and IT requirements with key identified actions for completion by end September 2021.

- 3.5 We have carried out an audit of our office equipment, furniture and IT and are able to provide a core offer of necessary IT and equipment without needing to purchase anything additional. We have not therefore needed to incur any further financial expenditure at this stage.
- 3.6 Delivered an in-house programme – ‘Managing and motivating teams during Covid-19 – and beyond’ comprising 6 key modules:
- Communication – Managing by present to managing by outcome
 - Building Positivity – the importance of positive leadership
 - Goal setting, routine and capacity – Effectively prioritising and distributing workload
 - Team working culture – Maintaining team spirit and cohesiveness
 - Change and Challenge – Remaining resilient during change
 - Wellbeing – Prioritising wellbeing
- 3.7 Maintained regular communication with staff – both via email and weekly briefings and also through All Staff Briefings.
- 3.8 Provided briefing sessions for managers – during August and September Managers had the opportunity to ‘virtually drop in’ to a briefing session to raise any specific questions or issues about the Hybrid model and working arrangements eg. use of offices, meetings rooms.
- 3.9 Identified two meetings rooms that will technically support ‘hybrid meetings’ that enables attendance for those in the office and those at home.
- 3.10 Introduced new parking charges that support a flexible and hybrid way of working. These charges recognise that some staff may attend the building for short periods and less frequently.
- 3.11 Carried out a ventilation assessment and audit in line with Government recommendations – this has identified some restricted occupancy levels for some offices. Our current assessment, given the Hybrid model, is not presenting a challenge in terms of insufficient office based accommodation – workarounds can be found in order to accommodate service and individual needs.

4 NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 The key phases and timelines are as follows

Trial Phase – October to January 2022	
	<p>Time to establish a way of working – balance and rhythm – review, learn, adjust.</p> <p>Carry out a review - our general principles behind any future model and hence the ‘test of success’ is that it is able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Enable the business and our services to operate as effectively and

	<p>efficiently as possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meet the needs of staff, continuing with the benefits of working from home as far as possible. - Enable a return to the office for those who cannot/prefer not to work from home.
	Space utilisation study – what is usage of our office estate looking like – how under occupied is it? Take opportunities as they present themselves to rationalise some use of offices and rooms.
	Consider impact of emerging working practices on existing policies, terms and conditions.
	Redesign of our induction process – how we can effectively integrate new staff into a different style of organisation to enable integration and an understanding of our culture – look and feel.
	Continue to engage and communicate with staff; regular check ins; continuation of our Wellbeing support.
Phase 3 – February to March 2022	
	<p>Property Strategy</p> <p>Policy and contractual changes if necessary.</p> <p>Wider use of technology that support access to information and improvement in business processes.</p>

4.2 The Head of HR will provide a supplementary verbal update at the meeting on 26 October based on our first few weeks of the working model.

4.3

5 CONSULTATION

5.1 We are continuing to consult with managers and staff to support the Hybrid model way of working. Towards the end of this first phase we will assess and determine any required changes to existing HR Policies or Terms and Conditions – these will require agreement with the Trade Unions prior to recommending approval by Employment and Appeals Committee. Such considerations will include – working patterns, work location, flexible working.

5.2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

5.2.1 Staff return to the building – model as per pre March 2020. Given the positive benefits of working from home that some staff have experienced over the past 18 months, this would be considered detrimental and a retrospective step. It would also go against the Council's commitment to climate change and reducing our carbon footprint (see additional information at section 11).

5.2.2 All staff to work from home – similarly, this would not be conducive to employee wellbeing as not all staff are able to work from home. Whilst this would release office estate and provide cost savings, this needs to be considered as part of the Council's wider agenda about service delivery, customer access, accommodation strategy.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are currently no costs associated with this model. As we move forward, any adaptions or recommendations that have a financial impact will be considered with full assessment of potential costs.

7 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 There are currently no further legal and governance considerations at this stage.

8 DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 A Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA) has not been completed at this stage because there are risks/issues to the rights and freedoms of natural persons.

9 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has not been completed at this stage as there is no differentiation across the staff group. Where adaptions are required to support an employee, these will be fully explored and met where practicable. An EqIA will be completed should we move to other models and ways of operating.

- 9.2 All employees have undertaken a Display Screen Equipment assessment.

9.3 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.4 There are no community safety issues arising from this report.

10 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Based on staff feedback, it is considered the Hybrid model provides staff with improved health and wellbeing. In addition, where this model is not conducive to an employee's way of work, they are able to work from their normal workplace.

11 ORGANISATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Environmental implications – the Council's is committed to meeting the challenge of climate change and has identified key strategic objectives within the Corporate Plan. A hybrid working model would mean staff are undertaking less travel between home and work and therefore contribute to the Council's zero carbon footprint agenda. For example:

An employee commuting 5750km per year
Based on 25km per day, 46 weeks of the year.

Distance	C02	Trees
5750km	1564kg	These emissions correspond to the yearly absorption of approximately 53 trees.

(The values given are estimates based on averages, for information purposes, and not a precise measure of actual emissions which can depend on other factors. CO2 offsetting by planting trees is not, in and of itself, sufficient in the fight against climate change. Emissions also need to be reduced.)

**12 CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE
RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 12.1 The Council is now moving to a Hybrid model on a trial basis to determine if a continued element of working at home can continue to support service delivery and meet employee's work and personal needs. This report provides members with an update of our progress to date.

13 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 13.1 There are no background papers.

14 APPENDICES

- 14.1 There are no appendices.

A Large Print or Braille Version of this Report is available upon request – Contact 01572 722577.