

Corporate Ways of Working Task and Finish Group Challenges, risks and recommendations

Challenges / Risks	Assurance provided	Recommendations
A whole Council approach		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being mindful that flexibility might not be suitable for all jobs. The Council employs more than 6200 people in a variety of jobs, undertaking a wide range of duties, providing services to residents, communities and elected members. Clearly communicating to all staff about what hybrid means and how it may apply differently to different jobs, and how it may not apply to some at all will be essential. • The Authority has many staff who are not, and were not pre-Covid, office based and there is a risk through its delivery that the Programme becomes too County Hall focused. Whilst it is accepted those who are currently office based, largely at County Hall, might be most affected, it should not be forgotten that the Programme will affect all staff to some degree or another, even those working in the localities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planned roll out of new ways of working, including hybrid working, across all office bases, including locality offices. • Supporting communication and culture change work will be in place. • Ways of Working action plans at service level undertaken to capture individual and team requirements in relation to new ways of working. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) That all communications relating to the Programme be sense checked to ensure they are not unfairly and unnecessarily addressed to those that are predominantly office based, unnecessarily referencing County Hall. (b) That additional communications be provided to those staff that already work remotely, in the localities or on the front line, to ensure they too are adequately accounted for and understand how the Programme might affect them.

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Service outcome prioritisation		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing choice and flexibility will need to be accompanied by clear parameters or principles that will enable staff to understand how this will apply to them and their teams. • Providing flexibility whilst ensuring access to services is not reduced could be a difficult balance for managers to strike. • A move away from 9 to 5 working should not be at the expense of service accessibility during those times. • Flexible arrangements need to be mutually acceptable within teams (e.g. a manager may work late, but an officer may not feel comfortable or may not be able to contact them past 6pm). • A move away from a 9 to 5, Monday to Friday approach, may impact back office services. For example, will IT support be made available to staff choosing to work outside those traditional office hours. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Programme clearly sets out that service needs remain the first priority and should form the foundation for any new flexible arrangements agreed by managers. • By way of the action planning exercise all managers have begun to discuss and identify with their teams what their service needs are, when an officer presence (whether at home or in an office) will be required, and how they might shape their flexible working arrangements around that. • Clear guidance and policies in place. • New IT service delivery commitment and revised SLAs to be launching in early 2022 that will ensure all staff and managers are aware of the fastest route to achieve IT support in the future – including chatbot function, and faster solutions for replacement devices/repairs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (c) That Service Heads be requested to review their action plans as their teams' working arrangements evolve, to ensure that core requirements (service to the customer) are captured and met. (d) That communications be provided to managers to emphasise the need to access: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) ongoing support available around Organisation Development, Leadership and culture to support them and their teams to identify the best way of working; (j) training on how to best utilise technology and workplaces to drive the best outcomes for staff and customers.
Communication and collaboration		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating the right working cultures to support good collaboration, communication, and connections between staff both within individual teams and across the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology has and will continue to be rolled out to staff which supports new and alternative approaches to collaboration and communication. The Programme continues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (e) That information be regularly shared with all staff around new and creative ways to come together either in person, utilising the new office model to its full potential, or digitally using any new technology

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<p>organisation, in all the different places and ways they might now work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring informal conversations held in corridors, outside of meetings are not lost, as the soft information shared in this way is critical to the smooth operation of the Council. • Building staff knowledge and confidence on how they might use new forms of technology to communicate and collaborate effectively. • Ensuring officers feel comfortable with the new workplace arrangements so they are used to their full potential as a place where collaboration and communication can thrive. Confidence coming back into an office environment will likely be affected post Covid, particularly as this will look and feel very different. 	<p>to invest in IT skills training – in particular Microsoft teams, SharePoint, and new workplace technology to allow hybrid meetings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pulse surveys to be considered which could capture views on what’s working in terms of collaboration etc. • The Council’s offices and workplaces will be altered in ways that will support the new ways of working and this will include technology to allow for hybrid meetings to take place. • Specific collaboration workspaces will be created through the ‘property’ workstream such as booths, pods, collaboration areas. These will be trialled as part of a pilot to be run in Room 700 of County Hall in early 2022. • The pilot will ensure staff have a better understanding of the new office model and are able to input and contribute into that process (as different offices are changed there will be engagement with staff that occupy and use that space). Once the findings from this pilot are understood, it is then proposed that this model will be rolled out across the organisation for the benefit 	<p>rolled out, including sharing lessons learnt across the organisation and from other organisations that have been hybrid working for some time.</p> <p>(f) That communications be developed to go out to all staff to alert them to the planned pilot to be run in room 700, with regular updates across the pilot period.</p>

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	of all service areas, subject to any lessons learnt from the pilot.	
Team cohesion and support		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal, unplanned, social and work-related interactions within a team can be hard to replicate digitally and there is a risk that this can negatively affect team relationships. • Support networks can be lost reducing morale and motivation and increasing stress. • Staff health and wellbeing issues could be more difficult to spot when connecting remotely by both managers and peers and so risk going unnoticed. • Teams working in different locations, perhaps with different flexible hours, could become disjointed and therefore operate less effectively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A key part of the 'people' workstream will be to help officers and managers reshape why and how they come together to collaborate. Teams will seek out solutions that work for whole teams or services for a range of reasons, whether this be teambuilding, team meetings, collaboration, problem solving or general networking / wellbeing. This might involve meeting in a workplace, council building, external sites where appropriate, and of course virtually. • As detailed above, specific workspaces will be created to support alternatives ways for people to communicate and come together through the 'property' workstream. 	(g) That the use of the APR process and one to ones be extended to ask softer questions around the adequacy of peer support and connectivity and around health and wellbeing matters.
Learning and development of new officers		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It can be difficult for new staff to build relationships with their team and managers remotely. • There is a risk of missing out on 'on the job learning' within an office environment - new officers often learnt from observing their 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning and development and induction processes had been developed and expanded to support smarter and remote working options. • Managers will consider the optimum ways of recruiting and inducting new staff – the 	(h) That managers be alerted to the need, as part of the refreshed induction process, to induct new staff into their base location and ways of working.

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<p>peers and listening in to conversations and discussions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring new staff develop a sense of the organisation they work for, its ethos and values and build relationships with peers, both within their team and more widely across the organisation. 	<p>latter often being best conducted face to face.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate and local induction programmes are being reviewed. Refresh of the managers charter to ensure staff wellbeing and new starters communication is robust 	
Staff Wellbeing		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During 2020 staff proved they are highly adaptable and able to continue to perform well working remotely despite the difficult circumstances. However, this has given rise to wellbeing and physical, mental and emotional health issues. Home/work boundaries can become blurred, new team members might feel inadequately supported, the loss of personal social interaction and support from colleagues can all add to feelings of stress and pressure. Poor workforce health and wellbeing can threaten business continuity and impact organisational stability and performance. How can managers ensure staff 'switch off' by taking regular breaks and finishing work at reasonable times when they are less visible in an office environment? How can managers ensure staff take adequate time off when ill? There might be the temptation to continue working from 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff bulletins had been circulated regularly during the height of the pandemic with information and practical advice on what staff could do to support their health and wellbeing and limit stress. This signposted staff to the Council's wellbeing service where further support could also be obtained. Managers already undertake discussions with staff around illness and any sickness absence or adjustments required to their work as a result. Those discussions will continue and vary according to individual circumstances. The attendance management policy reflects the opportunity to consider home working if someone is well enough to do this 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) That health and wellbeing bulletins for staff be refreshed and reenergised as part of the roll out of the Programme. (j) That advice be developed for managers on how to raise and question issues about health, wellbeing and stress through regular one to ones and the APR process.

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<p>home but perhaps in a less productive way and this might not be appropriate for the service or beneficial to the employee.</p>		
<p>Wider staff impacts</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoiding staff feeling pressured to work from home as the Programme is rolled out. • There is a risk that staff may feel like they are out of pocket working from home e.g. due to increased heating costs, increased broadband costs, installation of blinds or changes to lighting, increased wear and tear on flooring caused by office chairs. • There is a risk that working from home could impact not only the health and wellbeing of officers themselves but also their family and domestic life. There might be a risk that the Council's responsibility as a corporate employer begins to encompass some negative impacts on an individual's domestic residence caused by them working from home. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The position imposed on officers to work from home as a result of Covid was <i>not</i> flexible. However, the Programme was not seeking to replicate how the Council operated during the pandemic and did not require people to work from home. • No contracts were being changed to designate anyone as a 'home worker' as it was accepted that this would not encourage the new ways of working and flexibility the Programme aimed to achieve. • Officers were being advised, through discussions with their managers as part of the action planning process that the intention would be to provide flexibility that best suited the needs of the team and the individual (having regard first and foremost to service needs). If an officer preferred to work in an office base, had to for health and wellbeing reasons, or because their home environment was not suitable, this would always be accommodated. • During 2020 officers had received an (up to) £200 allowance which enabled them to purchase equipment necessary to work safely from home. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (k) That, whilst addressed through the action planning process, it be reiterated by managers and via communications at a corporate level that the Programme does not impose an expectation that the position under Covid will continue – remote working will not be imposed. (l) That communications, guidance and support be provided to staff on how to claim any tax benefit related to working from home from HMRC.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The tax benefit of homeworking could be reclaimed from HMRC. • Like all employers, the Council's responsibility is to its employees and it therefore has to ensure its staff are risk assessed and provided with appropriate PPE to enable them to undertake their jobs safely. Such arrangements were not affected by Covid or the Programme and would continue as business as usual. 	
The critical role of managers		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managers will be responsible for embedding the hybrid approach and ensuring their team flourish under the new flexible arrangements which will require new people management skills and a new attitude to performance and productivity management. • A manager's role will likely be more complex as they will need to manage different working patterns and practices, and geographically dispersed teams. • Supporting a hybrid working team (both practically and emotionally) will likely be more time-consuming and therefore increase a manager's own, already heavy, workload. • There is a need to monitor and measure the fundamental role of managers delivery of the Programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managers themselves will all undertake an APR and have regular one to one meetings with their own manager, through which performance in delivery of the programme within their teams will be discussed, as will any specific work pressures arising from this. • Managerial support is being actively addressed through the new Managers Charter and performance management framework. • Significant guidance has been and will continue to be issued and made available which are aimed to help managers develop the new skills required to manage a remote/hybrid workforce. • Balanced scorecards, customer service metrics, and staff survey results will 	<p>(m) That communications be provide to managers to emphasise the need to access and take advantage of the support, guidance and training available to support culture change and skills in managing hybrid and remote teams.</p>

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	continue to be used to measure effective implementation.	
Confidentiality		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring confidentiality is maintained, both in terms of overhearing meetings and telephone conversations, the use of display screens and the storage of documents will be difficult for managers to monitor remotely, particularly if staff choose to work in public places access public Wi-Fi. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance around how to maintain confidentiality has already been provided to managers and all staff. Assurance had been provided by the Council's ICT services that use of public Wi-Fi did not raise security issues if people chose to work in a public location for a period, e.g. a library or coffee shop. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (n) That storage solutions and guidance be reviewed for remote working. (o) That managers and staff be reminded to continue to follow information governance and keeping data safe mandatory training.
Health and Safety		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring staff are working safely at home and undertake, for example, their display screen equipment (DSE) assessments for the different places and ways they will be working. How will managers and health and safety teams satisfy themselves that individual officers' remote working environments are safe and appropriate, particularly for those with disabilities. This will inevitably be more difficult to determine when they are working from home and therefore their arrangements are less visible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information had been made available to advise and guide managers and staff on Health and Safety matters. The Health and Safety Team provide an online DSE assessment. Alerts are sent to staff and managers when this becomes due. It is incumbent on staff to undertake this both for their home and office workstation. The results of the assessment are referred to managers when action is required. Health and safety policies around electrical and fire safety, and display screen equipment have been refreshed to address remote working options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (p) That further reassurance be sought that the Council's approach is considered sufficient in the face of potential legal action if an employee is injured whilst working from home and whether the Council's insurance might be affected. (q) That further and ongoing reassurance/visibility of health and safety at home be provided through communications and engagement with staff and managers – with particular focus on relevant worker groups e.g. Disabled Workers Group.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refreshed “keeping safe when working from home” guidance produced to support managers and staff with ongoing health and safety. 	
Equality		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring inclusion and fairness was not negatively impacted and that groups with protected characteristics who might already be affected by being less visible within the organisation (i.e. parttime workers who are predominantly female, BAME employees) are not disadvantaged. Ensuring access to learning and career progression opportunities, for example, are not be made worse for such officers through remote working. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As the Programme is rolled out there will be a push to move away from a culture of presenteeism to performance management and so implementation of the Programme should provide benefits in this regard. Equality impact assessments will form an intrinsic part of the delivery of the Programme. 	
Productivity and Performance Management		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moving to a different type of performance management culture with less emphasis on presenteeism and time spent working, and more focussed on effort contributed and outcomes achieved. Where staff are working from home, it can be challenging for managers to ensure that domestic expectations (e.g. dependents at home) do not impact an officer’s work and productivity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work around performance management and measuring productivity and outcomes will begin in 2022. Working from home will not be a requirement imposed on any officers and therefore where such circumstances arose the officer could still choose (or the manager could request if it was impacting performance) to come into the office. 	(r) That an update be provided to members of the Group on the outcome of work undertaken to introduce new performance management arrangements and measures.