



## **EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE: 2 DECEMBER 2021**

### **WAYS OF WORKING UPDATE**

#### **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE RESOURCES**

##### **Purpose of report**

1. The purpose of this report is to update the Employment Committee on progress, decisions, and upcoming milestones of the corporate ways of working programme.

##### **Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

2. The ways of ways of working programme is a key aspect of the Council's Strategic Change Portfolio governed by Transformation Delivery Board. Key elements of the current People Strategy 2020-2024 also form part of this programme of work – these include smarter working, wellbeing, leadership, and performance management.

##### **Background**

3. In October 2019, Chief Officers gave their support to a proposal for investment to progress with the "Workplace Programme" – its aims and objectives were to drive efficiency and productivity by promoting a culture of flexible/smarter working – enabled by rollout of new technology. This would also lead to a rationalisation of the Council's property estate resulting in a reduction in costs.
4. This programme was entering delivery and wider launch into the organisation in March 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. The programme was, therefore paused - with the focus during 2020 being on response and recovery to the pandemic.
5. The COVID-19 pandemic saw a huge shift in organisational culture, with many working from home for the first time. This led to a wholesale rethink of how departments and teams needed to operate moving forward, retaining a higher degree of flexibility, and more remote working than previously thought possible.
6. This has now been reshaped into the "Ways of Working programme" which includes
  - The previous workplace programme scope and agreed investment.
  - Changing scope and requirements for the organisation in relation to flexible and smarter working, impact on our property portfolio, and newly emerging opportunities for investment and savings.
  - Key elements of the People Strategy for 2020-2024.

##### **Projected future ways of working**

7. In early summer 2021, all services and teams across the authority conducted a planning exercise around future ways of working in which they were asked to describe how their services could be delivered in the most efficiency and productive way, whilst maximising the use of smarter and remote working.

The below table outlines the expected future levels of remote working across the authority

	Average % Time Working Remotely
<b>Corporate Resources</b>	69%
<b>Chief Execs</b>	70%
<b>Adults &amp; Communities</b>	63%
<b>Children &amp; Families</b>	73%
<b>Public Health</b>	82%
<b>Environment &amp; Transport</b>	62%
<b>LCC</b>	70%

This of course opens many possibilities for future use of the Council's offices but requires the right working environment and culture to enable this to happen.

### **Scope and Key Deliverables**

8. The scope of the programme is very broad. However, it can be summarised by the below key deliverable and workstreams.
9. Technology Workstream – Focussed on the rollout of appropriate technology equipment to all staff based on their role, with a centralised funding model to support ongoing refresh of equipment – ensuring staff can always work productively and remotely.
10. People and Culture - Transforming the culture of the organisation to drive modern, effective, and productive ways of working through a programme of support comprising of training, Organisational Development support and engagement with services. Embedding smarter working as “business as usual” – supporting managers and teams through communications, engagement, and tools
11. Workplaces - Assessing the future space requirements for staff and translating this into a strategy for the property estate (namely offices) – including exploiting opportunities for income generation and cost reduction. Delivering future office model solutions, technology and layouts that maximise performance, productivity, and support staff wellbeing.

### **A new office model**

12. It must be recognised, that to fully support the intended new ways of working, the Council's offices and workplaces need to be altered in ways to allow this to happen – this is likely to include
- Different workspaces – booths, pods, collaboration areas

- Standardised desk setup – to allow for efficient use of laptops and 2in1 devices in the workplaces
  - Technology – to allow for hybrid meetings to take place and well as investing in future office technology solutions such as booking systems
13. A pilot is intended to be delivered in room 700 of County Hall which has been provisional scoped and designed to support this business case. Once findings are understood, it is then proposed to roll this model out across our main offices and workplaces to fully drive and embed hybrid working as the model.

### **Benefits**

14. As outlined in section 6, changing ways of working, and adopting a more hybrid approach to working has significant financial benefits to unlock for the Council. There are however many wider non-financial benefits to the authority that will be supported or directly brought about by new ways of working:
- ✓ Improved collaboration
  - ✓ Improved productivity
  - ✓ Reduced travel
  - ✓ Reduced environmental impact
  - ✓ Reduced absence
  - ✓ Improved recruitment and retention
  - ✓ Better work-life balance for individuals
  - ✓ Reduced stress, improve health and wellbeing
  - ✓ Opportunities to work in a variety of ways and places.

### **Scrutiny Task and Finish Group**

14. Given the scale of the Programme and its implications for how the Council will operate in the future, the Scrutiny Commissioners have agreed to form a small task and finish group that can provide some outside challenge to the business case with particular focus on the delivery of the benefits, both financial and non-financial. The group is expected to finish its work in December, after which a summary of its comments and feedback will be submitted to the Director of Corporate Resources and the Lead Member for Covid 19 Recovery and Ways of Working, Mr Peter Bedford CC, for consideration. A final report will also be presented to the Scrutiny Commission.

### **Next steps**

15. There are several crucial areas of focus for the coming 6 months to drive forward the programme. These include
- Interim support and setup of offices to allow staff to return in greater numbers if service need dictates (*Oct-Dec 2021*)
  - Exit from Parkside offices (*Dec 2021*)
  - Removal of VDI infrastructure (*Dec 2021*)
  - Development, engagement, and delivery of a future office model pilot (*Jan-Jun 2022*)
  - Focus on culture, technology and hybrid working on an organisational level to support changing ways of working (*Jan- Jun 2022 and ongoing*)
  - A detailed project focussed on quantifying and assuring performance and productivity (*Jan-2022 onwards*).

16. The above will be supported by a robust communications and engagement plan to take staff and managers on the journey.

### **Resource Implications**

17. The net cost of the project implementation is projected to be £4 million over 9 years which includes investment in resources from property, people services and IT. Over the same time frame the do nothing option would have cost £10.90m. Implementation of the business case therefore represents a net saving of £6.9m over 9 years increasing to between £12.4m and £17.9m when savings associated with reduction in business mileage are considered.

Further savings (yet to be quantified) are anticipated from photocopying as a result of the Ways of Working Strategy encouraging a more paperless office environment.

### **Conclusions**

18. Hybrid working has the capacity to deliver significant benefits to Leicestershire County Council – both financial and non-financial. These benefits will only be fully realised through significant investment in culture change, and office infrastructure to drive more modern and effective ways of working.

### **Recommendations**

19. The Committee is asked to note both the contents of this report with a focus on the next steps which are aimed to drive improvements to the Council's ways of working and deliver on the benefits outlined above.

### **Background papers**

20. None.

### **Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

21. None.

### **Equality and Human Rights Implications**

22. An EHRIA has been completed both for the original workplace programme, as well as a refreshed version during 2020 as staff were working at home during the pandemic. A full EHRIA has been completed for current office exits/change to staff base locations across two offices to date as part of the programme – Pennine and Parkside.
23. It is the intention to undertake a full EHRIA in line with changes made to each of our main workplace/office location.

### **Officers to Contact**

David Scott  
Transformation Change Lead  
Tel: 0116 305 0178  
Email: [David.Scott@leics.gov.uk](mailto:David.Scott@leics.gov.uk)

Mark Foote  
HR/OD Business Partner  
Tel: 0116 3056447  
Email: [mark.foote@leics.gov.uk](mailto:mark.foote@leics.gov.uk)

This page is intentionally left blank