



SCRUTINY COMMISSION – 9 MARCH 2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose of the Report

1. The appended report sets out the conclusions and recommendations arising from the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group on the Council's Corporate Ways of Working Programme.

Scope of the review

2. In September 2021 the Scrutiny Commissioners requested that a short, informal Task and Finish Group be established to provide some outside challenge to how the Council's Ways of Working Programme would be delivered to ensure the identified benefits of the Programme are realised. It was also to consider the potential impacts, risks and barriers to its success.
3. The business case and supporting delivery plan for the Programme had been agreed by Chief Officers as an operational function. However, given the scale of the Programme and its implications for how the Council will operate in the future, it was considered that some Member challenge to its planned delivery would be beneficial. The Council had established a cross party Members' Working Party during the height of the pandemic in 2020 which looked at some of the changes imposed during that time as part of the Council's response to the local and national lockdowns. The aim of the Group was to build on that critical friend challenge by now providing a member perspective to the Council's planned long-term approach to hybrid working.

Report Recommendations

4. The recommendations of the Task and Finish Group are located within the body of the appended report. For ease of reference, they are also set out below:
 - (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.

- (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:
 - (i) ongoing support available around Organisation Development, Leadership and culture to support them and their teams to identify the best way of working;
 - (ii) training on how to best utilise technology and workplaces to drive the best outcomes for staff and customers.
- (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 rolled out, including sharing lessons learnt across the organisation and from other organisations that have been hybrid working for some time.
- (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.
- (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.
- (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.
- (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.
- (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.
- (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.

- (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.
- (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.
- (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.

Recommendation

- 5. That the Scrutiny Commission support the findings of the Task and Finish Group and refer the recommended actions to the Cabinet Lead Member for Ways of Working and the Director of Corporate Resources for consideration.

Resource Implications

- 6. Details of the resources required to deliver the programme are detailed in the report of the Task and Finish Group appended. A more detailed report specifically on the delivery of financial savings is to be considered elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alerts Procedure

None.

Background Papers

File containing the reports submitted to the Scrutiny Review Panel on Flooding.

Appendix

Final Report of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group on the Council's Corporate Ways of Working Programme.

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