

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Staffing Committee – 22 September 2021

Report Title

Hybrid Working

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

None

Report Summary

This report provides background changes to employee working arrangements and the introduction of a Hybrid Working policy.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

1. Approve the introduction of the Hybrid Working policy (Appendix 1).

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Hybrid Working Policy

Background Papers

[Year Ahead Plan](#)

[Chartered Institute of Personnel Development \(CIPD\) Planning for Hybrid Working](#)

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Hybrid Working

1. Background

- 1.1 Since March 2020, approximately half of the Council workforce has been working from home using technology to access information remotely to deliver services.
- 1.2 The Year Ahead Plan outlines further steps to support staff and improve services for residents, which includes supporting staff to work more flexibly by building on recent experiences of home working.
- 1.3 Any decisions to adopt hybrid working within services will be dependent on maintaining the best possible service for residents, service users and customers.
- 1.4 The Council has benefited from increased productivity, through reduced sickness absence in these services, increased employee engagement, and a lowering of emissions within the borough due to reduced travel.
 - Assistant Chief Executive's sickness reduced from 9.39 to 3.57 days and Finance & Customer Services from 10.14 to 7.06 days per FTE
 - Increase in uptake for engagement sessions and feedback from focus groups
 - As at the 6 June 2021 R&E traffic flow monitoring showed travel in the borough was 20% less than that at pre-pandemic levels.
- 1.5 Nationally a wide range of research, including a YouGov survey and CIPD research, indicate that after the pandemic the majority of workers would like to continue to work from home at least some of the time, presenting new opportunities for organisations to establish new ways of working.
- 1.6 Employee feedback on new ways of working has been positive, with employee surveys showing two thirds of employees enjoying the greater flexibility in managing their working day and improving their work life balance.
- 1.7 To develop modern working practices to enable employees to maximise their performance and productivity to deliver the Council Plan, a Workforce Recovery Cell has been charged with delivering four key outcomes:
 - A revised approach to flexible working is implemented that enables delivery of Council services, supports new ways of working and recognises the importance of sustaining the health and wellbeing of the workforce
 - That staff are able to safely transition to new working arrangements, based on service need and in line with government guidance
 - That new ways of working are facilitated through IT infrastructure and asset management proposals
 - The whole workforce feels supported in improving their health and wellbeing

1.8 A range of flexible working practices are currently afforded to employees to allow them to achieve a better balance between work and home life. Wherever it is practicable managers try to accommodate requests to work flexibly but access to schemes is dependent on the nature of the work undertaken.

- Flexi-time scheme - The scheme is available to many office-based jobs and operates within the hours of 7am-7pm. Within the rules of the scheme up to one flexi-day per month can be taken subject to approval
- Part-time working - Depending on the job role, this can be worked in a variety of patterns including part day, part week and part year
- Job share - The duties and responsibilities of one full-time job are divided (normally between two people). This arrangement is open to many jobs
- Compressed weeks or fortnights - Contracted hours are worked over 4 days instead of 5 or 9 days instead of 10
- Term-time working - This enables parents to spend time at home during school holidays
- Averaged / annualised hours - This allows employees to vary their working hours over a year enabling them to match their working hours to personal commitments
- Staggered hours - This enables a team to work a variety of start and end times covering a specific period
- Occasional home working - This allows employees to be more flexible with their workplace providing the opportunity to work from home on an 'as and when' basis
- Permanent home working – An employee works solely from home

1.9 Flexible working arrangements have always existed, but their prevalence has increased because of the pandemic and subsequent advances in remote working technology. At the core of this approach, is an arrangement in which an individual or team can work part of their time at the office and part remotely, based on customer and service need. It does not just cover working hours, locations, and workstyles, it provides responsiveness and adaptivity to service needs and utilises advancements in technology.

2. Key Issues

2.1 The significant interest at both a national and local level in more flexible hybrid forms of working, has shifted employee expectations, which could potentially impact on attraction and retention of employees. Organisations who do not support flexible hybrid forms of working risk increased employee turnover, reduced employee engagement and limitations on the ability to attract talent in the future (CIPD Planning for Hybrid Working).

2.2 Despite the many complexities and challenges of living and working through the global pandemic, many benefits have been identified from working from home, for both employees and organisations. These benefits include a better work–life balance, greater ability to focus with fewer distractions, more time for family and friends, saved commuting time and costs, IT upskilling and higher levels of motivation. For the Council, directorates with higher proportions of

home workers have seen significant reductions in sickness absence rates, increasing productivity.

- 2.3 Hybrid working provides other benefits including higher levels of employee job satisfaction, enabling employee wellbeing, supporting diversity and inclusion and reduced absence rates (CIPD Planning for Hybrid Working).
- 2.4 Introduction of hybrid working also provides an opportunity to review wider flexible working policies and procedures to determine if they are fit for purpose in other areas.
- 2.5 Decisions on how hybrid working is adopted within services will be dependent on the nature of the work being delivered. Adopting hybrid working must ensure the best possible service is maintained for residents and service users, both now and in the future

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 The introduction of an overarching hybrid working policy supports:

- a phased return to office working
- employee expectations
- increased employee engagement
- the introduction of new ways of working
- increased productivity
- improved recruitment and retention
- potential savings from a review of the Council's operational office estate
- the Council Climate Change strategy, through reduced emissions from reduced commuting in the borough

3.2 It is therefore recommended that the hybrid working policy (appendix 1) is introduced.

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 Consultation has taken place with recognised Trade Unions who are supportive of the policy introduction.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 A phased implementation of the policy will commence from October 2021, with mitigating measures such as continued two metre social distancing and the wearing of masks when away from desks, to be retained in the medium term.

5.2 Plans will be led by Assistant Directors, with relevant Heads of Service, to assess how hybrid may be supported across their services, subject to service user needs and impact on delivery. Strategic Directors will be accountable for

monitoring the implementation across their services and ensuring the best possible service is maintained for service users and customers.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications (to be written by the relevant Head of Finance and the Head of Procurement on behalf of s151 Officer)

6.1 There are no direct procurement implications associated with the recommendations in this report.

6.2 The financial implications of introducing the Hybrid Working Policy cannot be fully assessed until all teams across the Council have had time to consider more fully how they will implement the Hybrid Working Policy. Whilst there will potentially be savings to be generated through a reduction in the Council's Assets due to a reduced need for office space, there needs to be consideration of any potential impact of increased costs in equipment to support homeworking, though decisions will need to be assessed on a case by case basis and based on insight from home working and DSE risk assessments.

7. Legal Advice and Implications (to be written by Legal Officer on behalf of Assistant Director Legal Services)

7.1 Legal Services were engaged early in respect of the drafting of the policy and advised specifically in respect of the impact upon reasonable adjustments. Legal Services now have no issue with respect to both the report and the policy at Appendix 1.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 The HR implications are in the main body of the report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 Implementation of the hybrid working arrangements are expected to have a positive impact on service delivery, increasing staff engagement and with benefits for productivity.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 In making any decision the Council is required to have due regard to its equalities duties and in particular with respect to the Equality Act 2010, section 149, part 11 of the public sector duty:

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and eliminate any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act,
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who are a protected characteristics and persons who do not share it and to
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

10.2 The recommendation before the Council will not have any adverse impact on anyone with one or more protected characteristics, namely age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

11. Implications for Partners

11.1 Engagement through the Rotherham Place Chief Executive Group is planned for September. At service specific level, managers will also be required to consult partner organisations on the impact of any agreed hybrid working arrangements involving delivery of services with partner organisations, subject to maintain the best possible service for residents.

12. Risks and Mitigation

12.1 If the policy is not implemented there is a risk the Council will suffer recruitment and retention issues as people may choose to work for organisations who do offer the increased flexibility afforded by hybrid working.

13. Accountable Officer(s)

Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive

Approvals obtained on behalf of:-

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp	14/09/21
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	09/07/21
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Stuart Fletcher	01/07/21
Assistant Director of Human Resources (if appropriate)	Lee Mann	30/06/21
Head of Human Resources (if appropriate)		Click here to enter a date.

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