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**Home & Agile Working Arrangements - Post Covid-19 Opportunities**

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**Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide Members with the context for a policy development briefing on the Council's working arrangements, and opportunities for change to address future challenges following the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Structure of the Papers**

2. To facilitate the scrutiny the Chair has requested an officer briefing paper, attached to this report as **Appendix A**, titled:

***Post Covid-19 Opportunities: Working Arrangements.***

**Scope of the Scrutiny**

3. Members will have an opportunity to consider the Council's approach to workforce arrangements, specifically examining the Council's response to delivering services during the pandemic, gain a better understanding of the multiple elements of working arrangements that need to be reviewed, and also to identify opportunities for informal Committee task and finish work that could feed into the evolving approach to workforce planning.

**Background & Context**

4. In June 2020 a Cabinet report *Restart, Recover Renew* addressed the immediate strategic issues facing the Council as it re-introduced council services. It set out a three-stage approach to leading Cardiff's response to the easing of lockdown and to the ongoing Covid-19 crisis. The three elements were outlined as:

**Restart:** Restarting and adapting a wide range of council services in the context of extended stringent social distancing requirements, in tandem with the evolution of national advice.

**Recover:** Implementing a strategic response to help the city recover from the immediate crisis while adapting to an extended period of social distancing.

**Renew:** Working closely with city partners, staff and citizens to set out the future we want for Cardiff post-crisis and how, together, we will make it happen.

5. Following scrutiny of this report by the Covid-19 Scrutiny Panel the Chair of the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee requested a written update from officers on the broader issue of remote working. It was considered that the home working introduced to deliver services during the pandemic could be seen as an opportunity to be explored further, with a view to some services continuing to working from home beyond the restart date.
6. In response, at the request of the Chief Executive, officers provided the summary attached at **Appendix A**.
7. In addition to the Council's own strategic focus on workforce arrangements following the pandemic, Audit Wales (formerly the Wales Audit Office) is currently undertaking a 'Modernisation of Workforce' review linking to the Council's estate, digital and post Covid-19 plans for delivering future services, and aims to report its findings in autumn 2020.
8. Throughout this policy briefing Members may wish to reflect on the scope for informal task and finish committee research on the subject of remote working, particularly from an employee stakeholder perspective, as a part of the committee's 2020/21 work programme.

## **Issues**

9. The briefing note attached at **Appendix A** captures the work currently underway to reinforce the shift to homeworking made to address the requirements of lockdown during the first wave of the pandemic.

10. It outlines the current position and practical arrangements introduced to ensure successful social distancing of employees at Council core offices, and introduces the programme of work currently ongoing to review and assess how home and agile working can be continued, with a focus on improving service delivery, enhancing staff well-being, locking in productivity improvements and releasing potential efficiency savings.
11. Homeworking has significant implications for the Council in the following areas:
  - Digital Infrastructure, ICT equipment and virtual processes
  - Property and Assets
  - Staff Terms and Conditions;
  - Staff Wellbeing (Physical and Wellbeing);
  - Management Support and Performance Management Arrangements.
12. The briefing indicates it is the Council's intention is to lock in the progress made under lockdown and carefully assess the position in autumn 2020. This will include a permanent shift to working from home as the default mode of operation for many staff. However the office will remain an important component of workforce development, collaboration and interaction. The opportunity for new working practices are clear, affording greater flexibility to many staff whilst delivering productivity gains, efficiency savings and service improvements.

### **Staff Survey – June 2020**

13. In June 2020 all staff working at home as a result of the pandemic were surveyed. A total of 1,881 responses to the survey were received, with 95.9% of staff indicating that they wished to continue working from home, 44.7% indicating all of the time and 51.2% some of the time.
14. The survey results revealed the following challenges were experienced by the staff surveyed when working remotely:

- 79.8% of staff stated they missed contact with team members.
- 49.7% of staff stated they missed having everything to hand.
- 43.1% of staff stated they missed time away from home.
- 41.8% of staff stated they missed access to support & equipment.
- 41.8% of staff stated they missed contact with their manager.
- 38.6% of staff stated they missed “usual routine”.
- 20% of staff felt their wellbeing has been impacted negatively by working from home.

## **Way Forward**

15. The scrutiny will be supported by Councillor Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member, Finance, Modernisation and Performance and Paul Orders, Chief Executive. Also available for this item will be: Chris Lee, Corporate Director Resources; Isabelle Bignall, Chief Digital Officer; Tracey Thomas, Acting Head of Human Resources; and Donna Jones, Operational Manager, Health & Safety. Members will hear a full verbal update of how workforce challenges have been addressed during the pandemic and the plans in place to tackle future workforce challenges. The witness panel will take questions from Members.

## **Legal Implications**

16. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers of behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the

Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

## **Financial Implications**

17. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

18. The Committee is recommended to:

- a. Note work underway to respond to post Covid-19 working arrangements.
- b. Consider whether it wishes to convey any comments, observations or concerns to the Cabinet Member or officers to inform the programme of reviews underway.
- c. Consider whether there is an opportunity for the Committee to undertake informal task and finish research on remote working from an employee perspective as part of its 2020/21 work programme.

**DAVINA FIORE**

Director, Governance & Legal Services

7 October 2020