

INTERNAL SERVICE REVIEW
WDA/22/20

Recommendation

That:

1. The new Agile Working Policy is agreed in principle, subject to final consultation.
2. The Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairperson, be authorised to conclude and finalise the Agile Working Policy, following consultations with staff and Trade Unions.
3. The move to a revised Performance Management System be noted.
4. The flexitime system is withdrawn and staff previously on flexitime be compensated with an additional 2 days annual leave entitlement.
5. Staff and trade unions are consulted on the Agile Working Policy, any subsequent changes to HR policies and changes to any Contracts of Employment.
6. Consultation and negotiation take place with the Landlord as to the office space requirements, the lease and the car parking arrangements.

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INTERNAL SERVICE REVIEW**WDA/22/20****Report of the Chief Executive****1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 This report sets out the results of an internal service review which takes into account the Coronavirus pandemic response, new agile working arrangements and the service needs going forward. The report discusses the key issues and recommends some changes to internal organisation.

2. Background

- 2.1 We have mitigated the impact of coronavirus as best we can, changing service provision during lockdown and emerging from lockdown by reopening sites employing social distancing, traffic management and, in some cases, booking systems.
- 2.2 A Functional Analysis was carried out to examine how functions were being carried out and broadly how much time staff were spending performing those functions.
- 2.3 Managers then carried out a service needs assessment, looking at the optimum staffing and organisational arrangement to deliver the service most efficiently, effectively and economically.
- 2.4 The overall assessment identified where there is more and less pressure of work and where resources are currently deployed.
- 2.5 It is apparent from the analysis that the pressure of work has shifted to different areas, with some functions under pressure and others where there is substantially less pressure of work.
- 2.6 In short, with new normal ways of working and shifting priorities, there are some service areas where there is a mismatch between where and how people are currently employed and the needs of the service.
- 2.7 We need to press the 'reset' button and move forward with a more productive and more flexible organisation.

- 2.8 In adapting the service offering, it is important to note that our corporate aims and objectives have not changed, and the strategy of accelerating to more sustainable and zero waste strategies remains. The authority has an important role to play in the green recovery/build back better agenda.

The review covers:

- 2.9 The introduction of an Agile Working Policy.
- 2.10 A move to new agile working arrangements, including changes to job descriptions to make roles more flexible, discontinuation of the flexi time clocking system and revision of the Performance Management System.
- 2.11 The review of associated HR policies, e.g. Sickness Absence Procedure, Capability Procedure to ensure they are aligned to agile working arrangements. Any changes to HR policies will be the subject of further reports to Members.
- 2.12 The review of Office space and car parking.

3. Agile Working

- 3.1 The coronavirus pandemic meant that many staff were able to work from home almost instantly, with the appropriate ICT set up. This helped protect staff and reduce the risk of the spread of coronavirus.
- 3.2 Staff safety has been paramount and we have carried out work on the office space to make it as safe as possible for staff who need to work from the office. We have erected glass screens between all desks, placed floor marking at 2m distance and deployed numerous hand sanitisers all around the office. Masks and gloves are also made available to staff.
- 3.3 Perhaps the biggest risk reduction has been achieved by limiting the number of staff in the office at any one time. The nature of our work has meant that almost everyone does not need to be present in the office all the time and can operate from home effectively, with the appropriate home workplace/VDU assessments and the provision of ICT equipment. Home workspace assessments have been completed for all staff and appropriate ICT and seating provided. In addition, staff have received advice on looking after their mental health through our regular Health and Wellbeing Programme to assist them in coping with the move to more agile working.

- 3.4 It is clear that, for the majority of functions, this more agile way of working is now possible, with the advancements in ICT, on a more permanent basis.
- 3.5 Staff will be required to undertake duties which may be different from their existing ones, in order to direct staff resources to where they are needed most. A good example of this has been the rota for covering the car and van booking lines for some HWRC sites. This kind of flexibility will be the new 'norm'.
- 3.6 It is therefore proposed to include a more expansive section about flexibility within job descriptions, whereby being deployed to other tasks and duties, commensurate with the grade and levels of responsibility, will be more usual and expected of staff to move resources to wherever they are most needed. It is not proposed to alter any staff grades at this point.
- 3.7 It is proposed that the Authority agree a new Agile Working Policy (attached at Appendix 1) and move to new agile working arrangements under that policy. This means that staff may work from home some of the time, from the office sometimes or from other workstations, such as a community centre or library – or even a mix of these. Work will become more about what you do, not where you do it from.
- 3.8 As part of the agile working arrangements, it is also proposed to revise the Performance Management System of the Authority, to account for the management of people working from remote locations. A new 'outputs and outcomes-based' Performance Management System will be introduced. The system does not include any performance related pay elements.
- 3.9 There are some positives for staff working from home more, including reduced costs from commuting and freeing up more time. However, it is recognised that some staff may find semi-permanent home working difficult and they may need to be supported to find arrangements that are better suited to them, such as regular periods in the office or the use of alternative agreed work spaces.
- 3.10 The flexitime system is currently suspended. It is proposed to end the use of the flexitime system, with most people working from home, etc. under agile working arrangements.

- 3.11 The removal of the requirement to 'clock' 4 times per day and be available during 'core office hours' is one less thing for staff to worry about.
- 3.12 Where there is a legitimate requirement to work additional hours, then these hours can be claimed, and subsequently taken as overtime, either paid, or as 'time in lieu'.
- 3.13 This should be on a planned basis and agreed with the manager beforehand, where additional hours are on a project-based approach, or to complete specific workload demands. The previous arrangements, whereby staff were able to accrue flexi-leave have, to all intent and purposes, largely been replaced by the homeworking arrangements that have provided staff with a greater flexibility and liberalised attendance hours.
- 3.14 The removal of flexitime precludes staff from working extra time to produce flexi days leave. In order to compensate staff for the loss of the opportunity to do this, it is proposed to allow all staff an extra 2 days annual leave per year. All staff previously on flexitime will benefit.
- 3.15 The response to homeworking arrangements and the general feedback about different ways of working has been positive from staff and managers alike.
- 3.16 The current annual leave arrangements will still apply, which allow a very high degree of flexibility whereby most staff requests for specific leave dates can be met, subject to the needs of the service.
- 3.17 Staff and trade unions will be consulted on the introduction of the new Agile Working Policy and any changes to Contracts of Employment.

4. Office Space and Car Parking

- 4.1 The current office space is likely to be too large for our needs as we move to more agile working. As a result of mixed home working and office working becoming the norm for the vast majority of staff, it is estimated that the use of staff office rotas, shared spaces (hot desking) and home working, could mean that the office accommodation requirement in future can potentially be reduced.
- 4.2 In addition, the Authority has a number of car parking spaces in the Mann Island Car Park. It is proposed to negotiate with the landlord to reduce this to a smaller number of reserved parking spaces.

- 4.3 Discussions with the Landlord will need to take place to determine the issues and potential costs of reducing the leased office space and car parking at No.1 Mann Island.

5. HR Implications

- 5.1 The HR implications are set out in the report.

6. Environmental Implications

- 6.1 The reduction in car journeys commuting to and from the office workplace will reduce levels of emissions associated with the provision of the service.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 If the recommendations are agreed, there are no initial financial implications for the Authority as there are no adjustments to pay and grading proposed at this stage.
- 7.2 In the event that office accommodation discussions are successfully concluded, there are likely to be financial impacts. If the office accommodation is reduced in size, there may be a commensurate reduction in the amounts of rent and service charges that the Authority currently pays to the Combined Authority. The terms of the current lease run until December 2022 before there is an agreed break clause. Reviewing the lease before this date will carry a penalty payable for early changes. The details of any lease changes and the potential costs and benefits of the changes will be subject to a further report to Members. The estimated cost of office accommodation for 2021-22 is £113k.
- 7.3 In terms of the review of the car parking spaces currently used by the Authority staff, there are currently 14 car parking spaces that are allocated for the Authority to use. It is likely that not all of these car park spaces will be used all the time, and so it will be possible to reduce the number of spaces and therefore reduce the cost to the Authority. The estimated cost of the car park spaces for 2021-22 is £27k.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 This report proposes a move to more agile working to meet the demands of the service going forward.

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The background documents to this report are open to inspection in accordance with Section 100D of The Local Government Act 1972 - Nil.