



**Report of the Head of HR and Service Centre
Organisational Transformation Corporate Delivery Committee –**

22 November 2022

Agile Working

Purpose:	To inform the Committee of the Council's current agile working approach
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For Information	

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Agile working has been in place for some years with a combination of building and people related projects across some areas of the Council to test the effectiveness of the approach. Government guidance to work from home where possible during the height of the Covid pandemic helped push the ability to work in an agile way forward considerably and many Council services have operated entirely remotely since that time.
- 1.2 The future of agile working is being developed by service areas as part of their assessment of a post pandemic working model. Principles adopted by Cabinet in October 2022 will guide services in determining the most appropriate operating model, whether that be through remote working, hybrid working or from fixed locations.
- 1.3 The Council's approach toward agile working is detailed on Staffnet and the following policies:
 - Agile Working Policy
 - Homeworking Policy

2. Why support an agile working approach?

2.1 As a Council we want to be adaptable, efficient and modern - it will help us remain sustainable in a fast-changing world. Agile working will help us adapt to the demands of a competitive labour market where low unemployment has led to an increase of job vacancies. This type of approach will allow us to make the best use of our assets - offices and other sites; we will make increasingly effective use of new technology.

2.2 Agile working is the ability to work in a place and at a time most appropriate for the task in hand, providing a working environment that allows choice and flexibility. Though the nature of some of the roles within the Council cannot be classed as totally flexible, there is considerable scope in many cases for some form of agile working, evidence of which can be seen through the successful continuation of service delivery during several periods of lockdown during the Covid pandemic.

The different ways in which agile working can be undertaken is dependent on the demands and needs of the role and the service, the employee's individual circumstances and the type of work undertaken. It is possible with careful planning and a degree of best practice evaluation, for many employees to carry out their duties from a variety of different locations and environments. However, the Council will require some employees to undertake their duties in a specific Council location to meet service delivery needs.

2.3 The benefits of an agile working approach for the Council can include:

- employee retention
- increased productivity
- Reduced costs of accommodation and other overheads
- work life balance opportunities
- flexible working
- improved work environments and productivity
- greater collaboration within and between Directorates
- reduced travel and associated costs
- reduced carbon footprint
- reduced absenteeism and its related costs
- enhanced business continuity

The benefits of agile working for the employee can include:

- better work life balance
- more autonomy on work productivity
- ability to up-skill
- establish increased trust between manager and employee
- less commuting
- location independence
- save on travel costs when working from home

- customisable workspace
- flexible working times

3. Building considerations

- 3.1 Identifying agile working conventions for our key buildings has been undertaken and a set of consistent guidelines is available for employees to understand the concept around office design and accommodation allocation. Office space in the Civic Centre and Guildhall is being modernised to accommodate new technology, desks and meeting spaces to allow staff to work in a more modern, flexible way. All agile areas have been 'zoned' and are clearly marked on each floor thus easily identifying what departments work in each area.
- 3.2 Desks were initially allocated on an average of 7:10 ratio, i.e. there were seven desks for every ten members of staff, but this is now reducing to an aspiration of a 1:2 ratio. Desks are not allocated to individuals and are not to be personalised nor are they to be 'owned' by any staff member. Staff are allocated personal locker space for belonging and storage space for work related items. To support the concept of shared spaces, a clear desk policy and cleaning regime is in place to enable greater flexibility of space sharing between colleagues.
- 3.3 IT kit is provided to agile workers and guidance issued on care of such kit, along with a financial contribution provided for additional products needed as a result of DSE assessments e.g. laptop risers, keyboards, monitors. Staffnet contains a range of guidance available to employees working in an agile way from hints and tips on using Microsoft Office 365 and accessing Council wifi.

4. People considerations

- 4.1 The personal safety of staff is a top priority for the Council and it is vitally important that as employees we are vigilant at all times. It is paramount that we put personal safety first and ensure we plan ahead to better protect the workforce.

Whilst the principles apply to all staff, those working in an agile way and who may be working alone at locations are provided with advice and guidance on how to best look after their personal safety. This advice and guidance includes planning journeys, being aware of surroundings, letting others know where they are, personal safety alarms and using car parks.

- 4.2 Health and safety support is required in terms of staff undertaking DSE assessments into their working environment, the promotion of eye sight testing and an understanding of the Council's Musculoskeletal Disorder Policy. All of this information is available on Staffnet.
- 4.3 Staff working in an agile way are advised to protect themselves, protect data and protect equipment. There is always the risk of data being seen by

people who have no right to see it. Theft and loss of data should always be a primary concern as we all have data protection responsibilities - if data falls into the wrong hands it can do untold damage to the data subjects, the Council and the employee who facilitated the breach.

- 4.4 HR policies on agile working (Appendix 1) and home working (Appendix 2) have been in place since before the Covid pandemic but have been reviewed in 2021 to ensure they are up to date and appropriately meet the needs of remote workers.

There are clearly defined roles and responsibilities contained within the policies in order to have set expectations from the outset around performance, communication, working patterns and health and safety obligations.

- 4.5 To support the ongoing requirement for staff to maintain their knowledge and skills, engaging in learning and development activity is essential whilst working in an agile way. To support this, L&D activity is predominantly accessed remotely, particularly with the use of e-learning modules that can be completed. Mandatory courses such as safeguarding of young people and vulnerable adults are all available to complete online to complement essential face to face training.

5. Future considerations

- 5.1 Welsh Government are supporting the creation of shared remote working hubs, and the number of venues continues to grow as remote working becomes more commonplace as a long-term operational model. In addition to shared spaces for all, there are likely to be dedicated public sector remote working hubs to complement the existing shared provision.

In addition to the new City Centre Community Hub currently being developed, there are three sites in the Swansea locality:

- Canolfan y Bont, Pontarddulais
- Drop in centre, Blaen-y-maes
- Indycube

The growth of shared workspace will require appropriate guidance to employees looking to use such spaces for work purposes, with emphasis on the importance of data protection and confidentiality as these become more commonplace to access as an alternative to home or other public locations.

- 5.2 The post pandemic working model principles approved by Cabinet set out the expectation for each service area to identify which posts in their services are able to be delivered in an agile way, the implications of this, mitigation against any barriers and how performance will be monitored. This

work is currently underway and is expected to be completed by the end of the calendar year.

- 5.3 The way in which performance management is approached will be an important consideration in the long-term plans for agile working. A mixed range of systems and processes is evident across the Council and design work has been completed in creating a new purpose-built online performance management tool for objective setting, monthly check ins on progress and the annual appraisal. This functionality is part of the Council's Oracle Fusion suite and will go-live in April 2023. Training is currently being written and a communication strategy is being developed to inform the roll out of the product. This will give assurance that performance is not negatively impacted by agile working and identify any areas of concern at the earliest possible stage so that quick resolution can be achieved.

6. Integrated Assessment Implications

- 6.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs

- 6.2 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

- 6.3 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

- 6.4 There are no integrated assessment implications associated with this report. There is no impact identified on people and/or communities when

considering all the impacts identified in the screening. This is a for information report and does not require any decision making which could impact on others.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 There are no financial implications directly associated with this report.

8. Legal Implications

8.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

Background Papers:

None

Appendices:

Appendix A: Agile Working Policy

Appendix B: Home Working Policy

Appendix C: IIA