

# DRAFT AGENDA

ID	2224
Committee	Pwyllgor Craffu Trosolwg Corfforaethol
Date	16/04/2021
Attendees	<p>Cynghorwyr Stewart Healy (Cadeirydd)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Martin Cook (Is-gadeirydd)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Peter Baldwin (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Garth Collier (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Malcolm Cross (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Gareth A. Davies (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr D. Lyn Elias (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr John Hill (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Julie Holt (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Hedley McCarthy (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Clive Meredith (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorydd John P. Morgan (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Greg Paulsen (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Tommy Smith (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Stephen Thomas (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Michelle Morris (Swyddog)</p> <p>Damien McCann (Swyddog)</p> <p>Richard Crook (Swyddog)</p> <p>Rhian Hayden (Swyddog)</p> <p>Lynn Phillips (Swyddog)</p> <p>Clive Rogers (Swyddog)</p> <p>Bernadette Elias (Swyddog)</p> <p>Andrew Parker (Swyddog)</p> <p>Gemma Wasley (Swyddog)</p> <p>Liz Thomas (Swyddog)</p> <p>Gwasanaethau Democraidaidd (Notify)</p> <p>Leeann Turner (Secretary)</p> <p>Pob Cynghorydd (Notify)</p> <p>Louise Bishop (Notify)</p> <p>Sean Scannell (Notify)</p> <p>Steve Berry (Swyddog)</p> <p>Andrea Jones (Swyddog)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Wayne Hodgins (Notify)</p>

Item ID	4631
Item Title	Cyfieithu ar y Pryd
Summary	Mae croeso i chi ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg yn y cyfarfod, mae angen o leiaf 3 diwrnod gwaith o hysbysiad ymlaen llaw os dymunwch wneud hynny. Darperir gwasanaeth cyfieithu ar y pryd os gwneir cais.

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Item ID	4632
Item Title	Ymddiheuriadau
Summary	Derbyn ymddiheuriadau.

Item ID	4633
Item Title	Datganiadau Buddiant a Goddefebau
Summary	Ystyried unrhyw ddatganiadau buddiant a goddefebau a wnaed.

Item ID	4634
Item Title	Cofnodion Pwyllgor Craffu Trosolwg Corfforaethol
Summary	Derbyn cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Craffu Trosolwg Corfforaethol a gynhaliwyd ar 5 Mawrth 2021.  (Dylid nodi y cyflwynir y cofnodion er pwyntiau cywirdeb yn unig).

Item ID	4667
Item Title	Dalen Weithredu – 5 Mawrth 2021
Summary	Derbyn y Ddalen Weithredu.

Item ID	4668
Item Title	Strategaeth Cyfathrebu Corfforaethol – Diweddariad Chwarterol
Summary	Ystyried adroddiad y Prif Swyddog Interim Masnachol.

Item ID	4669
Item Title	Monitro Perfformiad Chwarterol Strategaeth Fasnachol
Summary	Ystyried adroddiad y Prif Swyddog Interim Masnachol.

Item ID	4670
Item Title	Gwasanaeth Profi Olrhain a Diogelu
Summary	Ystyried adroddiad y Prif Swyddog Interim Masnachol a'r Rheolwr Gwasanaeth Profiad Cwsmeriaid a Thrawsnewid.

Item ID	4689
Item Title	Polisi Arfaethedig ar Weithio Ystwyth
Summary	Ystyried adroddiad y Pennaeth Datblygu Sefydliadol

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**COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT**

**REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**SUBJECT: CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 5<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 2021**

**REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER**

**PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S. HEALY (CHAIR)**

Councillors: M. Cook  
 P. Baldwin  
 G.A. Davies  
 L. Elias  
 J. Hill  
 H. McCarthy  
 C. Meredith  
 G. Paulsen  
 T. Smith  
 B. Summers (substituting for Cllr J. Holt)  
 S. Thomas

**AND:** Corporate Director of Social Services  
 Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services  
 Corporate Director of Education  
 Interim Chief Officer - Commercial  
 Chief Officer - Resources  
 Head of Community Services  
 Service Manager, Policy & Partnerships  
 Professional Lead – Community Safety  
 Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<p><b><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></b></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	

No. 2	<p><b><u>APOLOGIES</u></b></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G. Collier and J. Holt.</p>	
No. 3	<p><b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
No. 4	<p><b><u>CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></b></p> <p>The Minutes of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> January, 2021 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><b><u>TREASURY MANAGEMENT – TREASURY STRATEGY STATEMENT, INVESTMENT STRATEGY &amp; MRP POLICY STATEMENT 2021/2022 (INCLUDING PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS)</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources which was presented to give Members the opportunity to scrutinise the Treasury Strategy, Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy (including prudential indicators) to be adopted for the 2021/2022 financial year, prior to formal recommendation to Council.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>The Leader of the Labour Group referred to page 45 on Appendix A, regarding the MRP and capital receipts and commented that in 2018 a decision was made to stop retrospective straight line MRP, which was essentially to stop councils banking up debt for the future. However, the Council now finds itself in a position that for 2022/23 it would need to find a substantial sum. He raised concerns that the Welsh Government had now undertaken to put in place a peer review of Performance Management systems and moving forward this could lead to searching questions regarding how local authorities manage their finances. He felt that work needed to be undertaken ahead of the peer</p>	

	<p>reviews and a separate fund was needed to take away some of the impending debt from 2022/23 onwards.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources noted the Members comment.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the Annual Treasury Strategy Statement &amp; Annual Investment Strategy &amp; MRP Policy Statement for 2021/2022 financial year and the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators contained therein (Appendix A) be recommended for formal approval at Council.</p>	
<p><b>No. 6</b></p>	<p><b><u>CAPITAL STRATEGY 2021/2022</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources which was presented to give Members the opportunity to consider the Capital Strategy (attached at Appendix 1) following the annual review, to be adopted for the financial year 2021/2022.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein and advised Members that this report was closely linked to the Treasury Management Strategy report that was previously considered.</p> <p>A Member referred to the table at paragraph 4.2.3 on page 60 regarding the financing of the forecast capital expenditure and the large increase from 2020/21 to 2021/22. The Chief Officer Resources explained that the expenditure that was forecast in each of the financial years reflected the current capital programme. The increase was mainly due to the significant investment on the Council's 21<sup>st</sup> Century schools programme, Band B investments, there was an expectation that the capital programme levels would increase for those years, but Welsh Government funding received for those projects would also increase.</p> <p>With regard to the WG Tech Valleys investment of £100m over a 10 year period, a Member enquired how Members could scrutinise and monitor this investment. The Chief Officer Resources said that any allocation of the £100m made to the Council would be reported via the Council's Capital Programme and Capital Monitoring reports that</p>	

were presented on a quarterly basis to the Joint Budget Scrutiny Committee. She suggested that the Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services could offer further information on this and also the Tech Valleys Board was also involved with the Welsh Government in an advisory capacity on how best to invest that money within Blaenau Gwent.

The Member felt it was important to monitor the investment to see what projects it was used for. The Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services said that progress on Tech Valleys projects was reported to the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee, some projects would then appear in the Capital programme such as Lime Avenue Business Park, which would not necessarily have Tech Valleys funding as a headline attached to them.

The Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services would provide the Member with more detailed information regarding any allocations outside of the meeting.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Capital Strategy for the 2021/22 financial year (attached as appendix 1) be recommended for adoption at Council.

**No. 7**

**PUBLIC SPACE CCTV SYSTEM**  
**ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2020**

Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources (SIRO CCTV), Head of Community Services and the Interim Chief Officer Commercial which was to present the Council's draft Public Space CCTV Annual Monitoring Report 2020 covering the period 1 September 2019 – 31 December 2020.

The Chief Officer Resources spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein, the Interim Chief Officer Commercial and the Head of Community Services would supplement and respond to questions where necessary.

A Member raised concerns with regards to proportionality, stating that there were no cameras in Nantyglo and he felt



that cameras needed to be more equally distributed. The 2020/21 revenue budget set aside for CCTV was £84,000 and he felt this was insufficient. The Member also raised concerns in relation to confidentiality and Health & Safety issues with officers homeworking and dealing with CCTV enquiries. The Member knew of other Members with similar concerns and proposed that a cross party group be established to review these issues in more detail and to increase the CCTV budget as he felt the current system was not fit for purpose.

The Interim Chief Officer Commercial said that in relation to homeworking, under the current regulations Officers needed to work from home wherever possible. Appropriate arrangements had been put in place and only those officers who had undertaken the relevant training were allowed to view the CCTV footage. She assured Members that the arrangements put in place during the pandemic had followed the proper protocol. In relation to evidence gathering and location of cameras, current locations were based upon police statistics, however, during recent Member engagement, Members had commented on wider look evidence to give a richer picture and as part of the Forward Work Programme for CCTV could look at how to bring in wider evidence gathering. With regard to the CCTV budget the Officer acknowledged that previous budget setting processes had reduced the CCTV budget.

The Member asked for clarification regarding Officers operating the CCTV system from home. The Interim Chief Officer Commercial clarified that the system was not located in an Officer's home, the system was in a Council building with restricted access and only the appropriate Officers who had undertaken the relevant training had clearance to view the CCTV footage. However, during the pandemic, there were some cases where Officers had to use laptops and on occasion may have to attend the Council building to download extra footage, this was all undertaken within current protocol arrangements.

The Member referred to damaged vehicles in his Ward and reiterated that all areas of the Borough should have coverage. He felt it should be a monitored 24 hour system to help police catch offenders in the act. The Interim Chief Officer Commercial said that the move to this system had

been in partnership with police colleagues, this was a live recording system but not 24/7 monitoring. Regarding the wider evidence base, work with Members could be undertaken to get that wider evidence base outside of the police crime statistics.

The Member reiterated his concerns and felt it was important that Members, Officers and external agencies get together to review the CCTV system to make it fit for purpose.

In response to a Member's question regarding deployable cameras, the Head of Community Services said that four deployable cameras were purchased as part of the capital expenditure, two were currently deployed and two were available for deployment. There were rules and regulations around the use of deployable cameras and these policies and processes were covered in the report.

The Member referred to Appendix J - Proposed Forward Work Programme 2021/22 and proposed that timelines should be included in the document so Members could scrutinise progress. He felt this would help in the roll out of deployable cameras and ensure they were located in the areas of most need. The Head of Community Services explained that the regulations around deployable cameras was a complex process, there were covert cameras and overt cameras each followed a different process, overt cameras needed to be visible and covert cameras did not, there was the further issue of technical placement, deployable cameras needed to have an energy supply and be in locations that allow Wi-Fi or other means of transmission. As well as the regulatory processes that needed to be followed regarding hard evidence there may also be potential technical constraints where cameras could be deployed.

The Interim Chief Officer Commercial said that in relation to the Member's comments around timelines, work could be carried out to add key milestones via the Forward Work Programme for Members to monitor progress.

The Leader of the Labour Group commented that this was a service for all partners including the Police, Council and others, the reality was that the Police did not have funding

for the service and due to reduced budgets and the SLA, the new system had been introduced in 2018. He felt that the service could only improve and move forward if additional investment was made. In a recent budget meeting the Member had requested an additional £300,000 be invested in the CCTV system to maintain and enhance the service which was not supported, and expressed his disappointment at the missed opportunity.

Another Member commented that the current arrangements were not adequate to combat anti-social behaviour and criminal damage, he and other colleagues had met with the Police Inspector for Blaenau Gwent and felt that the system was not fit for purpose. He felt that moving towards a Cloud system should be considered so the Police could access the system remotely. Alternatively, operate on a 24/7 monitored basis as other local authorities.

A Member said that when the new system was introduced in 2018 two cameras for the Rassau Ward had been promised and were still awaited. The Member enquired if the deployable cameras were overt or covert. The Head of Community Services explained that the four deployable cameras were overt, predominately used in town centres and needed to be visible with appropriate signage as per the regulations, covert cameras were predominately used by public health for fly tipping etc. in remote areas and were smaller and not visible to the public.

The Officer would provide information regarding the number of covert cameras used by public health and other areas of the Council via the action sheet.

Head of  
Community  
Services

With regard to the CCTV system a Member said he had been made aware that some of the camera positions had blind spots, they recorded 24/7 but there was no access to live situations. The Police were unable to fund additional cameras for town centres, however, they had indicated there may be the possibility of funding for a Cloud system so that the Police could have access to live images of incidents as they occurred. He believed that other local authorities were already using the Cloud system with live situations and felt that additional money was needed to review and improve the service.

The Interim Chief Officer Commercial thanked the Member for his comments and said that she would pursue the possibility of funding from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) to see where they could invest and support some aspects of the service. She offered to speak with Members outside of the meeting to progress this matter.

Another Member referred to the equality of provision across the county borough and raised the issue of additional funding needed to improve the CCTV system going forward.

In response to a Member's question regarding technical difficulties referred to in paragraphs 5.1.1 to 5.1.4 of the report, the Head of Community Services explained that cameras were checked every week to ensure they were receiving power and were recording. Faults were reported immediately to the contractor for investigation and could include supplier power network failure or water ingress which could cause power drops. The Officer felt that most of the technical challenges had been overcome, however, there were some ongoing issues such as connectivity of the network and the connectivity from the server in the Civic Centre to homeworking at the moment. Connectivity and Wi-Fi transmission in certain areas and power drops would always be outside the control of the system.

It was noted that a Member of the Scrutiny Committee was also a member of the Crime and Police Panel and he would feedback any issues raised on this item to the Panel to be addressed and requested that he be invited to any meetings taking place in relation to this item.

The Leader of the Labour Group proposed that the Executive Committee investigate possibilities of extra funding in liaison with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and a paper be prepared to review the equality of provision across the borough.

The Service Manager Policy & Partnerships pointed out that in relation to the equality of provision any changes to the camera system had to be in line with the regulations set out in the Surveillance Commissioner's Code of Practice. Changes needed to be evidenced based and in line with

	<p>due process based around the Surveillance Commissioner's recommendations.</p> <p>The Leader of the Labour Group commented that this was an important issue for Members and most Members had agreed that the current CCTV system was not adequate and repeated his proposal that the Executive Committee investigate possibilities of extra funding in liaison with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and a paper be prepared, to include all the relevant legislation, to review the equality of provision. This proposal was seconded.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the Annual Monitoring Report (including its supporting appendices) be recommended for approval at Executive Committee, following which the report be published and sent to the Surveillance Camera Commissioner, and further recommend that the Executive Committee investigate the possibilities of extra funding for the system in liaison with the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and a paper be brought back to the Scrutiny Committee to review the equality of provision across the County Borough.</p>	
<p><b>No. 8</b></p>	<p><b><u>USE OF CONSULTANTS</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources which was presented to provide Members with the information requested, relating to expenditure incurred during 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 on the use of consultants to support, supplement and complement the work of Officers across the Council.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>The Chair advised Members that a report on the Use of Consultants for 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 had been presented and accepted at each Scrutiny Committee and recommended that the report be accepted at this Committee.</p>	

The Leader of the Labour Group requested further information regarding AMEO Professional Services Ltd. The Chief Officer Resources said that AMEO were consultants brought in for support during the initial review of third party payments. The consultants had helped to develop a structure and framework to review contracts that were already in place and identify those contracts that could be renegotiated to potentially achieve savings or better value for money. As a result of the work undertaken, this had helped to achieve targets on third party spend as part of the Bridging the Gap proposals.

The Leader of the Labour Group referred to software upgrades by Northgate Public Services. The Chief Officer Resources explained that Northgate was one of the Council's primary providers of financial software packages, one of those software packages was used to administer the Revenues and Benefits service which periodically needed software upgrades. If the software developed any issues they had the expertise to correct those issues and ensure that the software was operating as effectively as possible. Occasionally it was necessary for companies to undertake general maintenance, monitoring and upgrades to the systems.

A Member referred to Midland Software Limited and enquired if this was linked to the iTrent system. The Chief Officer Resources confirmed that it was linked to the Organisational Development's iTrent system and any upgrades or developments to the system would need to be undertaken by the consultants.

A Member commented that the report on the Use of Consultants had been considered by all portfolios and this report provided a good example of how the use of consultants could lead to saving money. He felt there were several instances where the use of consultants could be beneficial.

The Leader of the Labour group agreed with the Member's comments and added that the previous administration had used PriceWaterhouse Coopers consultants to look at the whole Authority, which had led to significant savings towards some difficult budget settings. He felt this was the right and proper way to use consultants.

	<p>The Chair commented that there were occasions when the use of consultants was beneficial due to their expertise and this report highlighted the savings that could be achieved by the Authority.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the report on the Use of Consultants be noted.</p>	
<p><b>No. 9</b></p>	<p><b><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME: 16TH APRIL 2021</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee which presented to Members the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the meeting on 16th April 2021 for discussion and agreement.</p> <p>The Leader of the Labour Group expressed his disappointment that a report that was due to be presented to Council in March on the new organisational ways of working was not included on the agenda for today.</p> <p>It was noted that the Interim Chief Officer Commercial had advised Members that the Workforce Strategy report was currently going through a consultation process with professional networks and may be delayed to a future meeting.</p> <p>A Member requested a report be prepared on the Track, Trace and Protect system to include the numbers of people involved and results of cases to show progress made. The Interim Chief Officer Commercial would prepare the report for a future meeting.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Forward Work Programme for the meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup> April, 2021 be agreed and a report on the Track, Trace and Protect system to include the numbers of people involved and results of cases to show progress made be prepared for a future meeting.</p>	

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**Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council**

**Action Sheet**

**Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee – Friday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Action to be Taken</b>	<b>By Whom</b>	<b>Action Taken</b>
7	<p><b><u>Public Space CCTV System Annual Monitoring Report 2020</u></b></p> <p>Information to be provided on how many covert cameras are in operation within the County Borough.</p> <p>A paper to be presented to a future meeting to review the equality of provision of CCTV across the County Borough.</p>	<p>Clive Rogers</p> <p>Rhian Hayden / Clive Rogers / Bernadette Elias</p>	<p>Public protection does not currently have any covert cameras on active deployment in the County Borough. Staff resources have been deployed to Covid 19 infection control and business regulation work over the last year and, therefore, the ability to divert staff to proactive and often resource intensive covert CCTV deployments has been limited.</p> <p>Report to be scheduled into the Forward Work Programme for 2021/22.</p>
9	<p><b><u>Forward Work Programme</u></b></p> <p>A report to be presented to committee on Track, Trace and Protect to report on the arrangements and performance.</p>	<p>Bernadette Elias</p>	<p>Report to be included on the Forward Work Programme for the meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2021.</p>

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# Agenda Item 6

*Executive Committee and Council only*

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **16<sup>th</sup> April 2021**

Report Subject: **Corporate Communications Strategy - Quarterly Update**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Nigel Daniels, Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Services**

Report Submitted by: **Bernadette Elias, Interim Chief Officer Commercial**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
w/c 22/3/21	25/3/21	01.04.21			17/3/21	FWP 2021/22		

## 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To consider the quarter 4 update (January to March 2021) against the Corporate Communications Strategy.

## 2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The Corporate Communications Strategy was approved by Council in September 2020.
- 2.2 There are 6 themes which drive the communications delivery:
- Build and maintain a strong reputation;
  - Residents know how we are delivering council priorities;
  - Informed and engaged staff;
  - Ensure marketing campaigns are well planned, targeted and provide value for money;
  - Promote the use of digital communications channels and encourage self-service where appropriate;
  - Make sure residents are informed in advance of and at times of emergency.
- 2.3 The response to the Covid-19 pandemic which started in March 2020 and continues, has meant that the delivery of the strategy has almost entirely focused on the theme relating to communication at times of emergency. During this time of unprecedented challenge, the importance of digital and social media has become even more significant.
- 2.4 As previously reported to committee, the Corporate Communications Team is a key member of the Gwent Local Resilience Forum Warning and Informing Group. This group is responsible for aligning communications and

communicating key information to the residents of Gwent during the Covid-19 pandemic, ensuring a consistent approach between local partners, PHW and Welsh Government. The content has been a mixture of partner material (Welsh Government, Public Health Wales, Health Board) and content created by the team maximising their creative skills.

- 2.5 The dynamic and fast moving nature of the Pandemic has required an almost constant flow of information and content being produced by the Communications Team, with the aim to produce clear and effective communication, coordinated between all sectors.
- 2.6 The aims of the Communication Plan for the Covid-19 response are:
- To provide strategic direction for organisations involved in communicating a major incident or a situation where a multi-agency response is required;
  - To ensure that the Gwent public, stakeholders, the media are informed in a timely manner about an outbreak and what they need to do to reduce transmission and to keep Wales safe;
  - To ensure consistent use of terminology;
  - To ensure that there is clear leadership and coordination of all communications activities, and that all communications activities are aligned with and supportive of each other – in line with the Gwent Warning and Informing Plan and the All Wales Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales (Welsh Government, 2020a);
  - To ensure that communications activity and messaging around an outbreak in Wales is carried out in line with the overall Welsh approach to dealing with the pandemic;
  - To effectively communicate and share information with the communities and individuals directly affected to maintain confidence and compliance with guidance / expectations;
  - To align with existing Keep Wales Safe Communications campaigns.
- 2.7 As the National picture moves between response and recovery, so will the focus of the communication activity.

### 3. **Options for Recommendation**

- 3.1 **Option 1:** That Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee considers the quarter 4 (January to March 2021) update against the Communication Strategy prior to it being presented to the Executive Committee
- 3.2 **Option 2:** That Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee considers the quarter 4 (January to March 2021) update against the Communication Strategy and provides specific comment prior to it being presented to the Executive Committee.

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

4.1 The Communication Strategy supports the Corporate Plan and the Well Being plan as part of the governance framework.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

There is no direct impact on budgets.

The majority of Council communications uses digital channels. Much of the material used in the first half of 2020 was created by partners like Welsh Government and Public Health Wales to manage the Covid-19 pandemic. Individual marketing campaigns are often externally funded by partners (eg WRAP).

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

The Corporate Communications Team will work with colleagues and partners to ensure communications plans are delivered in a timely manner.

5.3 ***Legal***

All internal and external communications activities will take account of any legal issues that may arise from publications and potential challenge.

Communication activities reflect the decision making of the Council and any exempt items will be treated in confidence. Communications relating to individuals will also protect their privacy rights.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

There are no human resource implications.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

Key activity for the quarter is outlined in Appendix 1. This includes:

- Trace, track and protect key information communicated;
- Lockdown information and promoting the required response from the public under the restrictions in Wales;
- Schools and learners remote learning arrangements communicated;
- Vaccine programme key information;
- Internal communication channels continued including the MD message, briefing for Elected Members and staff information;
- 197,000 visitors to the Council website;
- 4,900 social media posts – an average of 400 per week; and
- Working with service areas to promote key information.

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

The focus in late 2020 and early 2021 has been on managing crisis communications and the response to Covid-19. The main objective has been regular and timely information for the public to keep them informed in a rapidly changing environment.

Communications regarding the delivery of essential public services, changes to services and introduction of brand new services has been a feature. Improving access to relevant information delivered in a timely manner utilising multiple channels.

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

Research will be carried out with residents on a regular basis to check the impact of our external communications activities. Internal communication will also be measured for impact through regular staff engagement activities.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

The role of the Council in building the reputation of the area and shaping Blaenau Gwent the place is significant. The Communication Strategy articulates the approach the Council will take to ensure the longer term objectives of the Corporate Plan and The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 are represented and the impact of the Council's work is promoted positively.

This remains our long term objective but the response to Covid-19 and its unprecedented challenges has meant short term focus on this.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

It is anticipated that effective and proactive communications will contribute to education and information campaigns designed to influence behaviour. Campaigns relating to littering, recycling and fly tipping and fostering are examples of this, however, across the life of the Communications Strategy there will be many other areas of behavioural change that will be significant.

This remains our long term objective but the response to Covid-19 and its unprecedented challenges has meant short term focus on this.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

The Council works with other local authorities, partners and Welsh Government on a regular basis to deliver local, regional and national campaigns

6.7 ***Integration*** (across service areas)

Opportunities for promoting cross cutting service impact will be identified as part of the communication campaigns and particularly in relation to integrated marketing. Developing our reputation as a trusted brand will include demonstrating how our services collectively impact in positive ways for our households and businesses.

6.8 ***EqIA***

Material is produced in different formats and improving website accessibility remains a priority.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 Quarterly progress reporting against the Communications Strategy is part of the forward work programme of Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee and the Executive Committee.

**Background Documents /Electronic Links**

- Appendix 1 – Summary of key activity for the quarter

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# Facebook

**2,775**  
**POSTS**



**15,000**

**FACEBOOK**  
**FOLLOWERS**

**2,300**  
**INTERACTIONS**

**5.19**  
**MILLION**  
**REACH ON**  
**FACEBOOK**

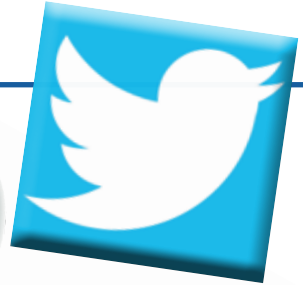


# Twitter



**11,980**

**TWITTER**  
**FOLLOWERS**



**26.35**

**MILLION**  
**REACH ON**  
**TWITTER**

**2,119**  
**TWITTER**  
**POSTS**

# Website

**197,000**  
**VISITORS**

**1.5M**  
**PAGE**  
**VIEWS**

**75%**  
**RETURNING**  
**VISITORS**



**Top 7**  
**most**  
**popular**  
**pages**

- 1 HOME PAGE**
- 2 WASTE & RECYCLING**
- 3 MY SERVICES**
- 4 COVID-19**
- 5 SEARCH RESULTS**
- 6 JOBS**
- 7 PLANNING**

# Appendix 1 Internal Communications



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol

**Blaenau Gwent**

County Borough Council

## MD Message

**Managing Director Message  
Coronavirus (Covid-19 Update)**  
Blaenau Gwent  
Date: Friday 13 March 2021

The situation in Blaenau Gwent and Wales continues to improve and the latest update from Public Health Wales shows that the number of confirmed cases in Blaenau Gwent is now at 37 per 100,000 population - the lowest level since early last Autumn.

The vaccination programme is also working very well and is spreading up the next few weeks as more doses, in particular of the Oxford Astra Zeneca vaccine become available. A new clinic also opened this week in Bedwellty House operated by Tredegar Health Centre which will extend our capacity and support the existing operation in the General Offices, Ebbw Vale.

I would like to thank everyone for their hard work and compliance with the strict measures which have been in place since early December. I appreciate that this has been really difficult but your compliance has helped drive the case numbers down.

**Welsh Government announces some important changes to lockdown**

The latest review of restrictions announced by Welsh Government today will see a number of measures eased in the next few weeks.

**From Saturday 13 March**

- 'Stay at home' becomes 'stay local'. The rule of thumb is that you should think local as a five-mile radius from where you live but there is flexibility to extend this in rural parts of Wales.
- Four people from two different households can meet up outdoors to socialise, including in gardens - children are excluded from the number.

**Managing Director Message  
Coronavirus (Covid-19 Update)**  
Blaenau Gwent  
Date: Friday 8 January 2021

As we move into 2021 things are still moving very quickly as we continue to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic. First, I would like to recognise and thank all the staff who worked over the holiday period across all services, dealing with the response to Covid 19. We are expecting the next few months to remain challenging. The case incidence in Blaenau Gwent has fallen over the last 10 days and is showing signs of stabilising. However, as testing picks up and the impact of the holiday break becomes clear, we expect cases to increase again. At this stage we just don't know what impact the lockdown will have and how the new more infectious variant of the virus identified in officials is that the new variant will become more dominant in Wales and that the spread of the pandemic will increase, as will the R Number.

There is some light at the end of the tunnel as the second vaccine developed by Oxford University and AstraZeneca was approved for use in the UK on 30 December 2020. This is really welcome news because it is much easier to store and transport than the Pfizer vaccine and can therefore be rolled-out to a wider population more quickly.

The vaccination programme is in its early stages and it will take some time before it is widely available to more people. It is important that we all follow the rules to protect ourselves and others and you should continue with regular handwashing, social distancing and wearing a mask when required. The requirement to work from home where possible is still firmly in place and plenty of advice and guidance has been previously sent out to staff.

## Weekly staff Guidance

**COVID-19 GUIDANCE**  
**Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance**  
Blaenau Gwent  
County Borough Council

**Contents**

- Compliance with health and safety requirements ..... 3
- Face masks / Face coverings ..... 3
- National Covid measures ..... 4
- Christmas bubbles ..... 4
- Covid-19 Vaccination programme ..... 5
- Contact Details for Employees/Communication ..... 5
- Important Covid-19 information/advice for employers and employees ..... 6
- Self-isolation rules ..... 6
- Self-isolation Support Schemes and Covid-19 SSP Enhancement Scheme ..... 7
- Action for managers in the event of a positive covid case and guidance regarding who might constitute a close contact ..... 7
- Test, Trace and Protect ..... 7
- Mask Testing ..... 8
- Keeping records of staff, customers and visitors: test, trace, protect - Action for all managers and buildings responsible persons ..... 9
- Testing and contact tracing in educational settings ..... 10
- Operational guidance for schools and settings from the autumn term ..... 10
- Extremely Vulnerable, Vulnerable Groups & Living with Vulnerable Individuals ..... 10
- Covid-19 Individual Risk Assessment ..... 11
- Workers who have Multiple Roles ..... 11
- Prepared Workers ..... 12
- Health and Social Care Professionals ..... 12
- Social Distancing within the Workplace ..... 12
- Minimising risk of coronavirus in workplaces and public premises ..... 13
- Managing the risk of Covid-19 in the Workplace ..... 13

1 Issued 17.12.2020

**COVID-19: GUIDANCE**

**Guidance**

All employees have a duty to look after their own health, safety and welfare, and that of their colleagues, which includes following and keeping up to date with the advice in operating with the Council to ensure a safe workplace. Employees must seek official advice that may be easily accessible, rather than taking up resources unnecessarily. This guidance is not intended to provide advice to cover all scenarios. Case by case advice may need to be sought from the appropriate internal officers and external agencies.

**Compliance with health and safety requirements**

The legislation and guidance around social distancing and other health and safety measures are designed to keep us all safe and it is your responsibility to follow these. For staff not working in front line services homeworking should be undertaken wherever possible. However, if possible, staff must observe social distancing rules by virtue of their role should apply strict hygiene rules to their environment and must wear appropriate PPE (e.g. face masks) at all times when unable to apply the 2 metre rule.

These measures are critical to the health and safety of all staff and non-compliance can adversely impact the individuals responsible but also those around them. Accordingly, failure to comply with health and safety requirements such as social distancing (in roles where this is possible) and the wearing of appropriate PPE may result in disciplinary action.

**Face masks / Face coverings**

From 27<sup>th</sup> July 2020, face coverings have been mandatory on public transport. Guidance regarding when and where to wear a face covering is available: [here](#). From 1<sup>st</sup> September, face coverings became mandatory in indoor public places across Wales. Guidance on measures to be taken by employees and managers of settings in offices if social distancing can be maintained, if the public visit any public building, however, then they should wear face coverings.

any limited cases, some employees have felt unable to wear face masks or face coverings. The links at the end of this section provide detailed information regarding reasons as follows:

If either PPE (face masks) or face coverings are required by a covid-19 related risk assessment (e.g. if general health and safety at work

3 Issued 10.12.2020

## Regular members team briefings

**Elected Member Update**  
Blaenau Gwent  
14 DECEMBER 2020

**Dear Member**

I am writing to update you on the latest position in relation to schools in Blaenau Gwent and our plans for the remainder of this term.

I know that many of you have expressed concerns about the self-isolation status of pupils in our schools, and the potential that this could occur over the Christmas period which many will have planned to spend with their loved ones. As the Executive Member for Education, I share these concerns. I can now inform you that a decision has been made that will see all our schools make a move to remote learning for pupils from Thursday, 10<sup>th</sup> December 2020, with sites closing on Wednesday, 9<sup>th</sup> December. This decision has been made in full consultation with our Headteachers, who were unanimously supportive of the move.

You will know that schools have developed robust home learning plans over the course of this year and, whilst sites will be physically closed, they will continue to provide high quality teaching and learning via the digital platforms which parents and carers will already be familiar with. Teaching staff will continue to work to deliver teaching and learning remotely until the end of term on Friday, 18<sup>th</sup> December and to support families with any remote learning requirements they may have. Headteachers are clear that this approach will ensure that learning can continue and indeed be enhanced until the end of this term. Devices remain with those previously digitally excluded learners so no pupil should be disadvantaged in that way as a result of this decision.

We will support those families eligible for Free School Meals through the direct payments system.

This decision has been made in the best interests of our schools, in recognition that cases of COVID-19 in Blaenau Gwent remain amongst the highest in Wales, and is supported by health professionals working on the Covid response in the borough.

Our fantastic teaching and school support staff have worked so hard to support learners throughout this very difficult year, and we are thankful for their hard work and dedication to our children and young people.

Kind regards,  
Councillor Joanne Collins  
Executive Member for Education

**Member Brief  
Estyn update**  
Blaenau Gwent  
19 FEBRUARY 2021

**Dear Member,**

Last year, Welsh Government asked Estyn to review the work of local authorities in Wales in relation to how they have supported Schools and Education during the COVID-19 pandemic. The period reviewed was from March 2020 to October 2020, and placed the emphasis on how we worked in re-open schools and how we supported our most vulnerable pupils here in Blaenau Gwent.

I have worked positively with our schools and education settings on the challenge of supporting children and young people to continue learning through the Coronavirus Pandemic, and will be pleased to share the findings of the Estyn report.

Estyn recently received formal written feedback from Estyn in relation to their findings. I am pleased to let you that overall this was positive about the work that has taken place with schools and young people in Blaenau Gwent.

Estyn recognises four areas of notable practice, covering:

- Strong collaboration across the Local Authority;
- Beneficial support for vulnerable pupils by the Educational Psychology service;
- The work of the local authority youth service; and
- Effective sharing of ICT resources.

I am proud that we approached our response to the COVID-19 emergency through a joined-up approach, and that the joint working between corporate colleagues from across several services has been effective in supporting children and young people, their families and the community.

# Appendix 1 COVID-19 Response

## Schools

Gweithio gyda'n hysgolion i gadw Blaenau Gwent yn ddiogel ac yn dysgu



#DiogelCymru #CadwCymru

Working with our schools to keep Blaenau Gwent safe and learning



#KeepWalesSafe #KeepWalesLearning #reassurance

We're working with our schools to keep Blaenau Gwent safe & learning. More learners have returned to the classroom. Schools have all the necessary COVID-19 safety measures in place, but parents and carers can help to Keep Education Safe, too.

Schools have all the necessary COVID-19 safety measures in place, but you can help us too by:

- Not lingering at or around the school grounds and mixing with other parents
- Wearing a face covering at pick up and drop off times
- Keeping a 2metre distance from everyone else
- Sticking to any staggered start/finish times and one way systems.
- Not attending at the school for any other reason apart from picking up or dropping off your child, there are other ways to contact and speak with your child's teachers.

Thank you  
Together, let's #KeepWalesSafe

Exam results

Are you receiving your GCSE results this week? If so we'd love to see some photos of you celebrating!

Please post them on our Facebook page @BlaenauGwent or tag us in your Tweets @BlaenauGwent so we can share your amazing achievements across the county borough



## Track, Trace, Protect

THE GWENT TEST, TRACE AND PROTECT SERVICE IS CONTACTING OVER 89% OF ALL COVID-19 POSITIVE CASES AND THEIR CLOSE CONTACTS WITHIN 24 HRS.

YOU WILL ONLY GET A CALL FROM 02921 961133

PLEASE ANSWER ALL CALLS FROM THIS NUMBER. YOU MUST ISOLATE IF YOU GET A CALL OR AN ALERT FROM THE NHS COVID-19 APP

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A CASE NUMBER AND COULD BE ENTITLED TO £500.

ISOLATING PROTECTS YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY AND SAVES LIVES

For further information visit [www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)

Get a test if you have symptoms



Contact tracing is not about enforcement or surveillance.

It is to protect your health and the health of your friends, family, colleagues, and community.

Together we'll keep Wales safe.



Temporary mobile testing unit available for another week in Nantyglo



If a contact tracer calls, self-isolate immediately

They'll usually call from 029 2196 1133

## Lockdown

Exercise locally

Together we'll keep Wales safe [gov.wales/coronavirus](http://gov.wales/coronavirus)



Stay home

Together we'll keep Wales safe [gov.wales/coronavirus](http://gov.wales/coronavirus)



There is a new strain of coronavirus in Wales. It spreads faster and more easily

It's more important than ever to follow the rules

- Stay home. Limit contact with others
- Wash hands, keep your distance and wear a face mask when needed
- Work from home whenever you can

Together we'll keep Wales safe [gov.wales/coronavirus](http://gov.wales/coronavirus)

ALERT FOR BLAENAU GWENT

Due to a sharp increase in coronavirus cases in this area, new restrictions are in place to protect people's health and prevent further spread.

For more information and to keep informed visit [gov.wales/local-lockdown](http://gov.wales/local-lockdown)

## Vaccines

Mae Brechu yn achub bywyddau  
Vaccination saves lives

End Jan	Mid Feb	Spring	Autumn
All care home residents and staff	Frontline health and social care staff, all over 70s and all clinically extremely vulnerable	All over 50s and everyone in line with JCVI guidance because of underlying health conditions	All other eligible adults, in line with JCVI guidance

Vaccination follows the JCVI priority lists (Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation)

Together we'll keep Wales safe [gov.wales/coronavirus](http://gov.wales/coronavirus)

CORONAVIRUS

Coronavirus vaccinations are free of charge. The NHS will never:

- ask for your bank account or card details
- ask for your PIN or banking passwords
- arrive unannounced at your home to administer the vaccine
- ask for documentation to prove your identity, such as a passport or utility bills

Coronavirus vaccine scams

Mae Brechu yn achub bywyddau  
Vaccination saves lives

The vaccine has been proven as safe and effective by the MHRA.



GIG CYMRU NHS WALES / Iechyd Cyhoeddus Cymru Public Health Wales

Mae Brechu yn achub bywyddau  
Vaccination saves lives

NHS professionals make sure that having a vaccine is the right thing for you

- Safe
- Effective
- There to protect you



# Agenda Item 7

*Executive Committee and Council only*

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **16<sup>th</sup> April 2021**

Report Subject: **Commercial Strategy Quarterly Performance Monitoring**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Nigel Daniels, Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Services**

Report Submitted by: **Bernadette Elias, interim Chief Officer Commercial**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
w/c 22/3/21	25/3/21	01.04.21			16/4/21	FWP 21/22		

## 1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 To provide the quarter 4 (January- March 2021) progress update against the Commercial Strategy.

## 2. Scope and Background

2.1 The Commercial Strategy, approved by Council in September 2020, sets out key themes which support a commercially minded organisation:

- A focus on the residents' experience of existing and new services;
- An understanding of our investments including return on investment (benefits), profits and losses;
- Developing our brand, trusted to deliver quality services;
- Spend control;
- Using data, technology and insights wisely;
- Having an agile workforce aligned to opportunities

2.2 Our commercial activities are driven by the ambitions within the strategy:

- Excellence in Commissioning and Procurement;
- Creation of an investment Portfolio;
- Managing commercial activities through profit and loss accounting;
- Creation of a Commercial and Entrepreneurial Culture;
- Excellence in Contract and Supplier Management.

2.3 These are delivered through the Commercial Services Team but clearly involve all services, suppliers and partners. The response to Covid-19 pandemic has, and continues to have, an impact on the delivery of the strategy. Despite this, substantial progress has been made in quarter 4, with the key activity summarised in section 6.

3. **Options for Recommendation**  
That the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee
  - 3.1 **Option 1:** Considers the quarter 4 progress update against the Commercial Strategy prior to the report being presented to Executive Committee.
  - 3.2 **Option 2:** Considers the quarter 4 progress update against the Commercial Strategy and provides specific comment prior to the report being presented to Executive Committee.
4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**
  - 4.1 The Commercial Strategy is a critical organisational strategy for the future sustainability of the organisation. It supports the Corporate Plan and the priority to be '*An ambitious and innovative council delivering the quality services we know matter to our communities*'.
  - 4.2 It is aligned to the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Bridging the Gap programme and it also supports delivery against the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
5. **Implications Against Each Option**
  - 5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***  
  
A number of the digital projects have attracted Welsh Government funding and this is being used to support our digital ambitions aligned to the commercial strategy.  
  
It is intended that this strategy complements and supports the Medium Term Financial Strategy and key aspects of its delivery are included in the Bridging the Gap Programme.
  - 5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***  
The risks associated with underperformance against the strategy will be mitigated through a whole Council adoption of the ways of working.
  - 5.3 ***Legal***  
The Head of Legal and Compliance is a member of the Strategic Commercial and Commissioning Board. Where alternative delivery models are explored due diligence will be undertaken before any decisions are made.
  - 5.4 ***Human Resources***  
Where changes in service delivery or role are identified normal human resources processes and policies will be applied including consultation with the Trade Unions.

## 6. Supporting Evidence

### 6.1 *Performance Information and Data*

Key activity undertaken in Q4 (January to March 2021) under the following themes and ambitions in the Commercial strategy:

#### 6.1.1 Excellence in Commissioning and Procurement

##### **Strategic Commissioning and Commercial Board (SCCB)**

- Agreed terms of reference for the Strategic Commissioning and Commercial Board (SCCB) are in place. The Board has a revised schedule of meetings and a forward work programme which reflects the ambitions set out in the commercial strategy. This includes early consideration of potential commercial activity to test ideas, with the Board taking the leading role for this Bridging the Gap review.
- A robust monitoring and reporting process for the Bridging the Gap programme is being finalised and will be a standing agenda item for the Board, enabling appropriate check and challenge. This process will also support the reporting of the Bridging the Gap programme through the democratic arrangements.
- A review of the Terms of Reference of the Transactional Procurement Group is being undertaken including to define their role in the check and challenge of contracts and procurement plans, ensuring effective support for the SCCB in this work.
- A process to enable effective 'check and challenge' of third party contracts and commercial opportunities has been established.
- A bespoke baseline financial assessment (profit & loss) to quantify and challenge trading operations is under development by Resources colleagues. This will support the bridging the Gap review by providing a clear financial picture of commercial activity.

##### **Procurement plans**

- Collation of departmental procurement plans to inform the 2021/22 procurement work programme has been undertaken. This supports better organisational oversight and provides the basis for the check and challenge process.
- Continued interrogation of the Council's 3<sup>rd</sup> party expenditure to ensure value for money opportunities will be built into the check and challenge and supports the Bridging the Gap programme.
- Contract management meetings are undertaken to ensure current contracts remain fit for purpose and realise the intended social, environmental and economical outcomes.

### 6.1.2 **Customer Focused – A focus on the residents’ experience of existing and new services**

#### **Contact Centre**

Following feedback an action plan was developed focussing on areas within the Contact Centre including:

- A review of the answerphone message to ensure more streamlined easier and efficient way of contacting the Local Authority;
- Looking at options in relation to a locally based service provision of the out of hours’ service;
- Working with colleagues within Community Services identifying opportunities to improve the customer experience;
- Focussed on the training requirements for the staff, undertaking skill set analysis and training needs assessments and developing training plans.

#### **Locality Response Team**

- 200 residents supported throughout the quarter with a wide range of assistance given from food shopping to supporting residents to apply for grants
- 49 Discretionary Assistance fund applications submitted for emergency payments
- 30 Citizens Advice referrals
- 47 food vouchers allocated to residents

It is anticipated the Locality Response Service will link into the Community hubs approach as a natural progression, supporting a face to face delivery for our residents where required.

### 6.1.3 **Using data insights and technology wisely**

#### **Digital programme**

Working with the Centre for Digital Public Services (CDPS Wales) to deliver better public services for Wales, funding has been secured to explore more user focussed and efficient ways of service delivery:

- Participation in collaborative Adult Social Care project with Neath Port Talbot and Torfaen local authorities, looking at unavoidable contact at the front door;
- Participation in a collaborative ‘Making LAs an easier place to pay’ project with Neath Port Talbot and Torfaen local authorities, which will also link to the Bridging the Gap income recovery work stream. The project is moving into ‘alpha’ testing phase looking to work with an identified service area, which is currently being scoped.



- Commencement of a Tech Valleys funded project focusing on website and back room functionality and the interaction for residents, with focus on waste and recycling services. This project also includes the establishment of a Digital apprentice position which is currently being scoped.
- The recent application to the Welsh Government Digital Democracy fund was successful. The main focus of this project is on user research with 16-25 year olds, to gain a better understanding of how young people would wish to access the democracy and their experiences if they do so currently.
- Expression of Interest submitted to Local Government Digital Transformation fund to build the Digital, Data and Technology skills of our staff. This will enable user research to inform future service delivery and support our residents to find, understand and interact with our services in a common and accessible way.
- Setting out a 12-month digital programme that includes digital projects, corporate activity linked to the ICT investment roadmap and development of a leadership and training programme for both officers and Members raising awareness and understanding of the scope and opportunities of our digital ambitions and activity.

### **Data and intelligence hub**

- The establishment of an internal hub of officers from all Directorates has progressed, led by the corporate policy and performance teams. This work supports the enabling Bridging the Gap review of using data and behavioural insight. The use of data in a more insightful way was one of the key learning points from the organisational reflection on the response to the Pandemic. The intelligence hub looks to build on this ambition, gaining a better understanding of what our data tells us and how that impacts on services for our communities.
- User research, which forms a key part of our digital projects and approach, will also be supported by the hub.

#### **6.2 *Expected outcome for the public***

Through the delivery of the strategy the Council will become more effective in the deployment of its resources to ensure value for money is achieved and investments are made in activities that deliver the best outcomes for the public. This strategy will also contribute to the financial resilience and sustainability of the organisation, therefore protecting front line services.

#### **6.3 *Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

As a key part of the commissioning cycle to ensure service specifications take account of the needs of service users. Any changes to service delivery models will be consulted on in the usual way.

#### **6.4 *Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

This strategy is at the heart of the medium and long term planning for Blaenau Gwent and recognises not only where the Council needs to seek

new income streams but also where it needs to review how it deploys its current expenditure.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

The Commercial Strategy is designed to support the needs of the Council now and in the future, including supporting financial resilience.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

There are opportunities through this strategy to consider commercially advantageous ways of working across local authorities and the Public Service Board. This strategy seeks to identify commercial opportunities to work with suppliers across public sector organisations and to spend the Blaenau Gwent pound wisely.

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

The strategy takes a whole council approach. It promotes transparency across the organisation, building best practice outside of directorate silos and promotes the maximising and sharing of skills and learning.

6.8 ***EqlA***

Screening for impact on protected characteristics will be undertaken as per usual procedures. In addition, individual procurements consider the ability to realise social, environmental and economic benefits through the inclusion of Community Benefits and Social Value contractual clauses.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

- 7.1 Quarterly progress is reported through the democratic process. The strategic commercial and commissioning board monitors activity set out within its terms of reference. Grant funded projects specify monitoring arrangements which will be complied with.

**Background Documents /Electronic Links**

N/A

# Agenda Item 8

*Executive Committee and Council only*

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **16<sup>th</sup> April 2021**

Report Subject: **Test Trace and Protect Service**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Nigel Daniels, Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Services**

Report Submitted by: **Bernadette Elias, interim Chief Officer Commercial  
Leanne Roberts, Service Manager Customer Experience and Transformation**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
w/c 22/3/21	25/3/21	01.04.21			16/4/21			

## 1. Purpose of the Report

### 1.1 To provide a progress update on the Test, Trace and Protect (TTP) Service.

The TTP Service main aims and objectives are to enhance health surveillance in the community, undertake effective and extensive contact tracing, and support people to self-isolate where required to do so.

## 2. Background

### 2.1 Welsh Government set out its Strategy for leading Wales out of the coronavirus pandemic in May 2020 based on 3 pillars:

- The measures and evidence by which current infection levels will be judged upon and transmission rates for coronavirus in Wales;
- The principles by which proposed measures will be examined to ease the current restrictions;
- Enhancing public health surveillance and response system to enable prevention of infection and track the virus as restrictions are eased.

### 2.2 Contact Tracing within the TTP service has been, and is being used in countries around the world to limit the spread of the virus in the community by breaking the link in transmission.

### 2.3 Contact tracing starts with self-reporting of symptoms, followed by testing suspected cases, tracing the contacts of those who have tested positive and then protecting families, friends and communities through self-isolation.

### 2.4 In Wales we have a robust public health system delivered by local health boards. As local authorities have significant expertise in contact tracing the TTP services are being run from within local authorities unlike England.

2.5 Blaenau Gwent TTP Service is a regional approach with four other local authorities across Gwent (Caerphilly, Newport, Monmouth and Torfaen) all working in partnership with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and Public Health Wales.

### 3. **Current Position**

3.1 TTP service is in operation 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm, operating across bank holidays and currently deals with:

- New cases for tracing by Tracers, where contacts are identified;
- Contacts of positive cases identified are contacted by Advisors who carry out daily check ins over the period of isolation. The Advisors will look out for symptoms, give advice around self-isolation making sure this is maintained through the isolation period. Also link into the Locality Response Teams and Benefits Teams for the Self Isolation payment scheme;
- Backward tracing of cases;
- Heavily involved in the variant tracing;
- Recent commencement of Lateral Flow Testing, (to note 10 received to date with all PCR tests being taken within 24 hours of Lateral Flow Test).

### 4. **Options for Recommendation**

That the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee:

#### 4.1 **Option 1:**

Considers and accepts the progress update.

#### 4.2 **Option 2:**

Considers the progress update and provides specific comment on the report.

### 5. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

5.1 The TTP service is a critical part of the organisational strategy for fighting the pandemic and supports the statutory responsibilities of the organisation.

5.2 It supports Welsh Government's strategy and its framework for recovery and leading Wales out of the coronavirus pandemic.

### 6. **Implications Against Each Option**

#### 6.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

There is no direct impact on budgets.

The TTP Service is fully funded by Welsh Government.

## 6.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

The risks associated with underperformance against the strategy will be mitigated through a whole Council approach.

## 6.3 ***Legal***

Where alternative delivery models are explored due diligence will be undertaken before any decisions are made.

## 6.4 ***Human Resources***

6.4.1 Blaenau Gwent set up the TTP service within the Commercial Services directorate in June 2020 with the first positive case being traced on June 9<sup>th</sup> 2020.

6.4.2 The initial service was set up utilising redeployed staff from within the Local Authority, staff who were unable to carry out their substantive roles due to the COVID19 pandemic.

6.4.3 The team consisted of around 10 members of staff and also included 3 members of staff from Tai Calon Housing.

6.4.4 In July 2020 an extensive recruitment campaign was undertaken to appoint staff into the service to replace the redeployed staff who were looking to return to their substantive roles in September 2020.

6.4.5 The recruitment campaign resulted in a high volume of applications being received and the first phase of recruitment was completed by September 2020.

6.4.6 Due to high volumes of positive cases across the borough a second phase of recruitment was undertaken in November to increase capacity to deal with the high numbers, this was concluded by middle of December and a bolstered team was in place to cover the Christmas period.

6.4.7 The current TTP service employs 90 members of staff, in a mixture of Tracer, Advisor and Shift Supervisor positions.

## 7. ***Supporting Evidence***

### 7.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

Key activity undertaken in Blaenau Gwent TTP service since its inception in June 2020 to March 20<sup>th</sup> 2021:

- 6,206 new positive cases have been identified and passed to the team for tracing, of which;
- 5,497 have been eligible for tracing by the team (some are not eligible as have been in hospital, passed away);
- 13,000 contacts have been identified by the team from the new positive cases;

- 100% of new eligible cases were successfully followed up;
- 94% of new contacts were successfully followed up;

Performance of Gwent TTP service overall as a region is in top quartile. Performance data for the period June 2020 to March 20<sup>th</sup> 2021

- 41,113 new positive cases identified and passed to the teams for tracing, of which;
- 37,000 have been eligible for tracing and passed to the teams;
- 68,000 contacts have been identified from new positive cases;
- 100% of new eligible cases were successfully followed up;
- 97% of new contacts were successfully followed up across the region.

## 7.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

The Test, Trace, Protect Service main aims and objectives are to enhance health surveillance in the community, undertake effective and extensive contact tracing, and support people to self-isolate where required to do so.

## 7.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

As a key part of the commissioning cycle to ensure service specifications take account of the needs of service users. Any changes to service delivery models will be consulted on in the usual way.

## 7.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

The strategy is at the heart of the medium and long term planning for Blaenau Gwent and recognises not only where the Council needs to seek new income streams but also where it needs to review how it deploys its current expenditure.

## 7.5 ***Preventative focus***

The TTP Strategy is designed to prevent future spread of COVID19 and supports future delivery models.

## 7.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

There are opportunities through this strategy to further consider advantageous ways of working across local authorities and the Public Service Board.

## 7.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

The strategy takes a whole council approach. It promotes transparency across the organisation, building best practice outside of directorate silos and promotes the maximising and sharing of skills and learning.

7.8 ***EqIA***

Screening for impact on protected characteristics will be undertaken as per usual procedures. In addition, individual procurements consider the ability to realise social, environmental and economic benefits through the inclusion of Community Benefits and Social Value contractual clauses

**Monitoring Arrangements**

Progress is monitored and reported internally.

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# Agenda Item 9

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A  
Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **Corporate Overview Scrutiny**  
Date of meeting: **16th April 2021**  
Report Subject: **Proposed Agile Working Policy**  
Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Nigel Daniels, Leader / Executive Member Corporate Services**  
Report Submitted by: **Andrea J. Prosser – Head of Organisational Development**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
x	x	12.04.21			16.04.21		x	

## 1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to give the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to scrutinise, challenge and make suggestions on the proposed Agile Working Policy for the Council’s workforce (“the policy”) (attached as Appendix 1).

## 2. Scope and Background

2.1 Further to the report that was considered and approved at Council on the 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021 on the New Council Operating Model & Working Arrangements (attached as appendix 2) - the introduction of a new model of working across the Council, incorporating modern working practices, will seek to enhance employees’ working experience, maximise performance and productivity and deliver the greatest value to the organisation, in terms of improving service delivery, as well as realising financial gains. The Agile Working Policy is a key enabler in delivering the future working model. It also links to the Council’s vision for sustainable development including sustainable economic growth, de-carbonisation and the health and well-being of both staff and the community.

2.2 The policy will cover all Council employees excluding school based staff appointed by governing bodies.

2.3 The policy clearly sets out Corporate, management and employee responsibilities and includes:

- Designation of roles into one of three **workstyles**, defined as; Homeworker, Agile Worker, Service/Community Worker
- Assessment of permanent roles as at January 2021 determined 369 Homeworkers, 386 Agile Workers, 958 Service/Community Workers – these figures are at a point in time and subject to change (figures exclude temporary and fixed term roles)
- Proposes payments to support homeworking for the Homeworker (£26 per month tax free) and Agile Worker (£12 per month tax free)
- Details the standard **equipment** which the Council will provide to home/agile workers. Reasonable adjustments may necessitate additional equipment
- Focuses on **health, safety and welfare** including employee/employer responsibilities

- Outlines **data protection, security and confidentiality** requirements
- Demonstrates commitment to **equal opportunities/reasonable adjustments** and to treat staff in a fair, equitable and consistent manner and to comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010
- Provides guidance on the **individual consultation process on application of the policy to the current workforce** - the Council will support the current workforce with adjustment as appropriate.

### 3. Working with Trade Unions

3.1 The trade unions Unison, GMB and Unite have been engaged in the development of the New Council Operating Model and the draft Agile Working Policy over the past few months. The draft policy was sent to Unison, GMB and Unite for formal consultation on the 29<sup>th</sup> March asking for written feedback by the 7<sup>th</sup> of April 2021. The following requests have been received from Unison for the Corporate Overview Committee to consider in terms of the policy:

- Unison would like to see a £16 allowance for Agile workers not £12, as currently stated. The Corporate Leadership Team discussed this proposal and support a figure of £15.60 to recommend to Members for their consideration (pro rata figure which would be fair to all workers)
- All current employees that are designated as home or agile workers be able to utilise an allowance of up to £200 to cover the cost of a chair and desk that will be able to fit in within the home environment. The allowance will be used with an approved council supplier/s. The Corporate Leadership Team support the choice for the workforce from approved suppliers/including recycled equipment. Unison also requested that any future workforce be given the option of the allowance if they are paid scale 6 or below.

### 4. Options for Recommendation

4.1 **Option 1:** That Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee support the attached proposed Agile Working Policy to progress to Council for decision making.

4.2 **Option 2: (*preferred option*)** Consider the formal representations of the trade union and suggest amendments to the policy prior to presentation at Council.

4.3 **Option 3:** Make further suggestions for amendment of the policy prior to presentation at Council.

### 5. Evidence of how this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan

#### 5.1 Corporate Plan Priorities

The policy, through reduced travel, reduced emissions and consequent lowering of our carbon footprint as well as less time spent commuting/travelling promotes the following corporate plan priorities:

- Strong and Environmentally Smart Communities;
- Efficient Council.

5.2 Services need to reflect on the New Council Operating Model and Future Working Arrangements in terms of focussing service design around the customer and delivering Council priorities.

5.3 **Statutory Responsibilities**

The policy has been drafted in accordance with, and to comply with, the Equality Act 2010, the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, the Working Time Regulations 1998, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).

5.4 **Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

The policy, through improving work/life balance; promoting employee well-being; and reduced travel promotes the following aspects of the Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan:

- To look after and protect the environment;
- To encourage and enable people to make healthy lifestyle choices in the places that they live, learn, work and play.

6. **Implications Against Each Option**

6.1 **Impact on Budget**

This policy, in promoting home/agile working, where possible, should result in substantial savings and allow the Council to focus money spent on services as opposed to buildings.

**Option 1**

The cost of implementing the proposed Agile Working Policy is detailed in the report presented to Council on the 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021 (attached at Appendix 2) and summarised below.

Table 1 – As per the Business Case

	<b>No. of Staff (@ January 2021)</b>	<b>Monthly Allowance</b>	<b>Total Per Annum £</b>
Permanent Homeworker	369	£26	115,128
Permanent Agile Worker	386	£12	55,584
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>170,712</b>

**Option 2**

- Increasing the allowance for Agile Workers to £15.60 would cost an additional £12,058 – this would be within the funding available within the business case.
- The business case has accounted for no more than £200 (one off allowance) for a desk and chair for the current workforce.
- Any proposal for an allowance for a desk and chair for the future workforce would need to be found from within Directorate budgets.

The financial business case has been based on permanent workers and application of the policy to temporary and fixed term staff will be an additional cost to the business case. It is not anticipated that the furniture allowance would be paid to fixed term or temporary staff.

## 6.2 **Risk**

Failure to implement this policy and to embrace home/agile working (where possible) could result in a lost opportunity to improve employee well-being; save costs; and promote the de-carbonisation agenda of the Council and WG. Further, many employees have embraced home/agile working during the COVID-19 pandemic and for those who wish to continue working in this way, job satisfaction/productivity could be reduced if this were prevented.

## 6.3 **Legal**

Please see 4.2 above.

## 6.4 **Human Resources**

This policy, by enabling BGCBC to embrace home/agile working, could: improve employee well-being, engagement and performance; aid employee recruitment and retention; and reduce absences.

## 7. **Supporting Evidence**

### 7.1 **Performance Information and Data**

The recent staff survey undertaken indicates that: the majority rate their productivity as the same or better compared since homeworking; the majority feel appropriately supported; the majority feel they have a healthy work/life balance; and the vast majority rate their wellbeing as fair, good or very good. These all contribute to performance. It is, however, recognised that the staff survey was undertaken at a certain point in time and in response to a pandemic although there is no apparent reason why productivity, support provided etc. should change post the pandemic.

### 7.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

Members of the public may be attracted to an employer, which promotes home/agile working, thereby improving employee well-being and lowering our carbon footprint etc. This may contribute positively to the Council's reputation among members of the public. Services need to reflect on the New Council Operating Model and Future Working Arrangements (appendix 2) in terms of focussing service design around the customer and delivering Council priorities.

### 7.3 **Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)**

Consultation, engagement and participation regarding the policy has been internal to the Council, together with the Trade Unions, who are supportive of the policy.

### 7.4 **Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)**

The clear aim and aspiration of the policy is that, long-term (and short-term), it will enhance employees' working experience, promote well-being by improving work/life balance, realise financial benefits for the Council and support sustainable development.

7.5 **Preventative focus**

The policy will reduce travel/emissions and assist in lowering the Council's carbon footprint, in line with WG's aspiration of increased remote working.

7.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**

A collaborative approach is proposed, with each individual member of staff discussing, with their manager, their designated workstyle and any adjustments to reach agreement.

7.7 **Integration (across service areas)**

The policy aims to boost productivity, improve services and reduce absences (sickness absence has reduced since March 2020, leaving aside COVID-19 sickness absence) and, in this way, positively impact on all service areas.

7.8 **EqIA (screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)**

The policy promotes equal opportunity; reasonable adjustments will always be considered for any individuals who are disabled pursuant to the Equality Act 2010.

8. **Monitoring Arrangements**

It is proposed to formally review the policy after one year. Furthermore, regular discussions will take place between managers and direct reports in regular 1 to 1 sessions and performance coaching, which should highlight any operational/practical issues.

**Background Documents /Electronic Links**

*Appendix 1 – Agile Working Policy*

*Appendix 2 - New Council Operating Model & Working Arrangements report to Council March 2021*

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# Agile Working Policy

‘work is an activity we do, rather than a place we go’

## Version Control

This document is intended for:

- Council staff only     School-based staff only     Council & School-based staff

Version	Key Changes	Approved By

This document may be reviewed and amended at any time and without consultation in response to legal requirements, in line with best practice or in response to an organisational requirement and where the changes do not affect the spirit or intent of the document.

## Contents

1. Introduction .....	3
2. The Potential Benefits .....	3
3. Scope .....	4
4. Agile Working .....	4
5. Reporting and other requirements.....	6
6. Illness or injury .....	6
7. Payment of Allowances .....	6
8. Allocation of Equipment.....	6
9. Responsibilities .....	9
10. Health and Safety.....	10
11. Data Protection, Security and Confidentiality .....	11
12. Equal Opportunities/Reasonable Adjustments .....	12

13. Insurance, Mortgage/Tenancy Arrangements ..... 13

14. Temporary arrangements..... 13

15. Domestic abuse/violence ..... 14

16. Review and Revision Arrangements ..... 14

Appendix A: Guidance on application of policy for current workforce ..... 14

Appendix B: Individual Assessment Role Designation..... 16

Appendix C: Homeworking Agreement..... 18

Appendix D: Working from Home Self-Assessment.....20

Appendix E: Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Workstation Checklist .....23

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# 1. Introduction

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- 1.1 Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (the “Council”) recognises the need to develop modern working practices to enhance employees’ working experience and to maximise performance and productivity and deliver the greatest value to the organisation. This policy will focus on employee well-being by promoting a good work life balance. In addition, new technologies are making it easy to access information remotely and work from a variety of locations within the community, whilst promoting a more joined up service.
- 1.2 The introduction of a new modern model of working across the Council will improve service delivery as well as realising financial benefits for the organisation. It also links to the Council’s vision for sustainable development; placing emphasis on the importance of sustainable economic growth, de-carbonisation and the health and well-being of both staff and the community. The benefits of improved work life balance, employee engagement and reduced travel make a direct contribution to this strategic priority.
- 1.3 Home/agile working supports the modernisation of our working practices and is part of the continuous change management process. Welsh Government (“WG”) has detailed its clear ambition to see around 30% of the workforce working from home or working remotely. In accordance with WG’s aspiration, this policy promotes a shift towards home/agile working wherever possible.
- 1.4 The new workforce model will designate roles in one of three categories:
  - Homeworker
  - Agile Worker
  - Service/Community Worker

Although the nature of most 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. The different ways in which agile working can be undertaken is dependent on the demands and needs of the role and the service within which the role is based.

## 2. The Potential Benefits

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- 2.1 It is anticipated that the implementation of home/agile working will offer benefits to our employees, customers and the Council.

For employees, home/agile working can:

- provide an opportunity to manage their working day more efficiently;
- increase engagement as a result of autonomy and trust at work;
- improve work life balance;
- enable them to work more effectively on a particular piece of work, where concentration is important, by avoiding the interruptions that are part of the office environment;
- reduce travelling time and related costs; and
- increase their wellbeing, health and happiness through a better sense of control.

2.2 The key benefits for the Council are as follows:

- allows the Council to provide improved services to our customers;
- allows the Council to focus time and money spent on services not buildings to ensure delivering services takes priority over occupying buildings;
- reduces unnecessary travel time, which increases productivity and reduces cost;
- creates an environment which allows employees to achieve an improved work life balance, greater job satisfaction, motivation, morale and productivity;
- results in reduced costs through reduced travel and expense claims;
- lowers our carbon footprint, through reduced emissions from reduced travel;
- improves the recruitment and retention of employees via the Council becoming an employer of choice; and
- reduced absenteeism and related costs.

### 3. Scope

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3.1 The Policy applies to all Council employees working at any level within the organisation but will exclude school based staff under the delegated powers of the Governing Body. The nature and extent of home/agile working will depend upon the role undertaken and considerations will include the impact on the ability to meet customer demand (internal and external) and employee welfare.

3.2 The policy will enable both managers and staff to gain a better understanding of home/agile working and understand the basic principles, which can then be considered and applied to specific roles.

### 4. Agile Working

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4.1 The image below defines the three workstyles for Council staff:

Homeworker	Agile Worker	Service/Community Worker
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ Home is the base – defined as the permanent residence as recorded with the Council</li><li>❖ All work can be carried out from home</li><li>❖ Appropriate workstation and tools to do the job at home</li><li>❖ No need to access an alternative base to work on a frequent basis</li><li>❖ Occasional attendance at an alternative base for e.g. team meetings/training</li><li>❖ Council will make a payment of £26 per month</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ Home is the base – defined as the permanent residence as recorded with the Council</li><li>❖ Work time split between homeworking and alternative Council locations/community</li><li>❖ Work is carried out at home and an alternative base – requiring desk space (e.g. using a booking system)</li><li>❖ Appropriate workstation and tools to do the job at home</li><li>❖ Could be required to attend meetings in an alternative base</li><li>❖ Council will make a payment of £12 per month</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ Work is carried out 100% from a base in a building or 100% community working</li><li>❖ Some roles would require desk space – no fixed work station</li><li>❖ Roles/worker not possible to work from home</li><li>❖ No allowance will be paid by the Council</li></ul>

- 4.2 A workstyle will be designated to each post based on service needs (“the proposed designation”). Reasonable adjustments must be considered, where necessary. Review of the workstyle designation will be carried out in line with any service review, redesign or change.
- 4.3 Managers should consider the best practical and operational arrangements for working in accordance with the workstyle designation including:
- Clear and realistic objectives and expected work outputs for the employee, should be agreed between the employee and their manager and employees will be expected to deliver the agreed outcomes.
  - Regular performance coaching and 1 to 1 discussions.
  - Methods of, and arrangements for, communication and support need to be agreed. Regular communication is imperative to promote employee well-being and to ensure that employees do not feel isolated, lonely or frustrated, using a combination of face to face conversations, emails, telephone and team meetings/briefing, etc.
- 4.4 Home/agile workers will not have fixed hours (unless the role dictates this) and will be able to perform their work at times convenient to them in line with the flexible working hours scheme, however employees must be available for online meetings and to respond to calls and emails etc. in line with business needs. In particular:
- Employees should ensure that their electronic diaries are up to date so that others are aware of their availability. It is imperative that wherever individuals are working, others e.g. the manager, the team and other colleagues, know how to contact them.
  - When individuals are not working, laptops and phones should be switched off to enable individuals to have a right to privacy out of hours and be able to separate their working and home lives.
- 4.5 Home/agile working must not affect the provision of services and therefore managers must ensure that they have systems in place to maintain the correct compliment of staff, as required, and to monitor the level of available front line staff working at any one time.
- 4.6 Employees must note that during active work, time at home is not a substitute for childcare or similar carer responsibilities. It is the employee’s responsibility to ensure adequate provision is in place although there are other policies, which offer options and support to staff in such circumstances.
- 4.7 All staff must ensure that adequate breaks are taken, whichever workstyle is adopted with a minimum of 30 minutes taken for lunch. Those working at desks should take a short break from the desk/screen and move around often, ideally at least every hour. In addition, as a minimum, all staff must comply with the requirements of the Working Time Regulations 1998. Managers should discuss health, safety and well-being at every 121 session.
- 4.8 For administrative purposes, including the claiming of travel expenses, all employees will retain a designated contractual work base, as per 4.1. The agile working hub arrangements will include the General Offices (at which the new democratic facility will also be based), Anvil Court, the Depot, ViTCC and other appropriate Council buildings.

## 5. Reporting and other requirements

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- 5.1 The Council's normal workplace rules, code of conduct and procedures apply to all employees, whichever workstyle is adopted. The contractual obligations, duties and responsibilities (apart from place of work) remain unchanged and the Council's workplace policies continue to apply including, but not limited to, GDPR compliance, as detailed in clause 11 of this policy.
- 5.2 All employees are expected to report to their manager in accordance with an agreement reached. Each employee must also comply with any formal reporting procedures set out in their contract.
- 5.3 All managers must keep in regular contact with their staff, via phone, email, meetings or Microsoft teams conferencing.

## 6. Illness or injury

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- 6.1 If an employee cannot work on a day on which it has been agreed that they will work from home because they are ill or injured, they must follow the procedure set out in the Council's Attendance Management Policy to report their absence.

## 7. Payment of Allowances

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- 7.1 An employee who is a home/agile worker will be provided with the necessary ICT equipment and technology to work in this way. The employee should use the Council's equipment whilst home/agile working and will not be eligible to claim expenses for use of personal equipment such as home phone lines.
- 7.2 The Council will make the following payments:
  - Homeworkers - £26 per month per employee (which is the maximum amount payable in line with [HMRC guidance](#)).
  - Agile workers - £12 per month per employee.

Employees will not have to pay tax and national insurance contributions on these payments. As these payments are intended to contribute towards home-related expenses, these payments will not be paid to service/community based workers.

- 7.3 The payment of these allowances should be reviewed during any periods of sustained absence, normally at the end of three months continued absence.

## 8. Allocation of Equipment

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- 8.1 The Council will be responsible for determining and providing the equipment and technical requirements for the employee undertaking a home/agile working arrangement.
- 8.2 The Council will provide anyone working from home (whether fully or partially) with all equipment reasonably required to work from home. This provision does not extend

to the installation of or subscription for the home broadband connection, which is the responsibility of the employee. All equipment provided will remain the Council's property at all times. Only equipment which the Council has provided to employees, or which the Council has authorised employees to use, may be used for homeworking. Equipment which may be provided to homeworkers includes:

- Desk,
- Chair,
- Computer and pulse fob,
- Monitor,
- Softphone or mobile,
- Mouse,
- Riser,
- Headphones (if required).

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- 8.3 Employees can use their own equipment e.g. desks, chairs, provided that such equipment is compliant with the requirements of the Council's risk assessments ([Appendix D](#) and [Appendix E](#)).
- 8.4 Additional equipment may be provided for staff who require reasonable adjustments as determined by occupational health. Where equipment is issued to support home-working it is essential that managers keep a log using: [this link](#).
- 8.5 Personally adapted equipment will be provided to an individual should a workstation assessment deem this necessary; however, this equipment will be provided at the place where they predominantly work and not across multiple sites. Therefore, the individual will be responsible for ensuring that this equipment is available for their use wherever they work. If, as a result of a risk assessment, other equipment is identified as necessary, this will also be provided, subject to the agreement of the employee.
- 8.6 Where the Council has provided equipment, employees must:
- 8.6.1 take reasonable care of it;
  - 8.6.2 use it only for the purposes for which it was provided;
  - 8.6.3 make it available to the Council for inspection at any time if requested, and for collection if homeworking arrangements cease, if applicable, or on leaving employment;
  - 8.6.4 not remove it from their home without the prior permission of their manager; and
  - 8.6.5 promptly report any damage to or malfunctioning of any item to their manager.
- 8.7 The Council will maintain the equipment but employees will be responsible for any damage to the equipment that goes beyond reasonable wear and tear.
- 8.8 If an IT issue or other equipment problem prevents an employee from working effectively from home, employees should contact their manager as soon as possible and agree what needs to happen.

## 9. Responsibilities

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### 9.1 Corporate responsibilities

- The Managing Director, on behalf of the Council, carries overall responsibility for ensuring that the Council has the appropriate processes in place, which adequately and appropriately support its employees, regardless of what working pattern or arrangement they have.
- The OD Service is responsible for providing advice and guidance on this policy and is responsible for reviewing, updating and amending this policy to reflect changes in legislation or employment practice in conjunction with trade unions.
- Corporate Leadership Team is responsible for establishing their own arrangements to ensure:
  - Effective implementation of the policy
  - Continued service delivery; and
  - Consultation with their employees on these arrangements.

### 9.2 Management Responsibilities

Managers are responsible for:

- Ensuring flexibility, openness and constructiveness in relation to discussions and agreements about home/agile working with employees within their area of responsibility, whilst remaining focused on the needs of the service.
- Ensuring good communication with employees and agreeing clear communication lines and methods, including arrangements for employees to report sickness absence. Making arrangements for both regular individual and team meetings, ensuring regular communication is maintained between themselves and team members, providing support for employees and implementing ways of measuring and monitoring work output that have been mutually agreed.
- Setting and monitoring defined performance measures in line with the Council's performance coaching and regular 1 to 1 meetings.
- Allowing employees who are using their homes to work from to have a right to privacy out of working hours and the ability to separate their working and home lives.
- Meeting their duties in relation to health and safety and welfare by undertaking appropriate risk assessments and acting on any areas of concern for employees who they are responsible for, as outlined in section 10 of the policy.
- Any recruitment going forward based on the designation of the role.
- Undertaking a regular review of the home/agile working arrangements. If it is not working, every effort will be made to resolve any issues.

### 9.3 Employee Responsibilities

Employees are responsible for:

- Complying with this policy in a reasonable, constructive and appropriate manner.
- Being flexible, open and constructive in discussing and agreeing home/agile working arrangements, whilst remaining focused on the needs of service.
- Maintaining regular contact with their manager.
- Working as agreed (appropriate work area for working at home etc.) and abiding by all the Council Policies (available on the intranet) whilst working in this way.
- Optimising meetings to minimise the amount of travel time.
- Complying with Health and Safety policy and procedures by participating in and undertaking risk assessments; carrying out any necessary actions to minimise risk; maintaining a safe working environment and taking reasonable care of their own safety, as outlined in section 10 of the policy.
- Complying with confidentiality, data protection and information security policies.
- Ensuring that all reasonable care is taken of all Council supplied ICT equipment.
- Reporting immediately once known, any loss, theft or damage to Council IT equipment or the loss of confidential information.
- Consulting with any necessary parties, such as landlords, insurance or mortgage companies, regarding home working.
- Ensuring that any personally adapted equipment (e.g. left-hand orientation or widescreen laptop), required in order to undertake their duties, is available for their use wherever they are working under this arrangement.

## 10. Health and Safety

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- 10.1 In addition to the employer, employees have a responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of themselves and others while they are carrying out work activities, regardless of the work location. Homeworkers/agile workers have the same health and safety duties as other workers and will be required to take reasonable care of their own health and safety whilst working from home. All employees must comply with all health and safety instructions issued by the Council.
- 10.2 Where employees use Council locations to work they should familiarise themselves with the local arrangements for managing health and safety. They should ensure that they are aware of fire safety arrangements to ensure they are fully conversant with the actions to be taken in the event of discovering a fire or on hearing the fire alarm signal and ensure they adhere to the local signing in and out arrangements.
- 10.3 Due consideration to lone working arrangements should be explored fully between the line manager and employee to ensure safe working arrangements are in place.
- 10.4 The Council retains the right to check all homeworking areas for health, safety and welfare purposes, including carrying out risk assessments, to consider, for example, work equipment, in cases where reasonable adjustments may be necessary, and display screen equipment. All access requirements will be discussed prior to the visit, and appropriate notice given. A Working from Home Self-Assessment ([Appendix D](#)) and Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Workstation Checklist ([Appendix E](#)) will be carried out if any part of an employee's working style requires them to work from home. This will need to be carried out again if any substantial changes are made to the working environment or arrangements. Employees must fully participate in completing the necessary risk assessment paperwork and review this with their manager.



- 10.5 When working from home, even if only partially, the employee has a responsibility to ensure they have an appropriate workspace with adequate security, storage and screening from activities and noise in the rest of the home. There must also be adequate ventilation and lighting.
- 10.6 Homeworkers who need to attend site meetings should be aware that the Council has a Corporate Employee Protection Register (“CEPR”), which holds details of any violent individuals/dangerous incidents against Council employees. Any employee whose role involves personal contact with members of the public should initiate a search of the database prior to any visits/interviews in order to make an informed assessment of any potential risk. Employees should also comply with the [Lone Working Policy](#) and departmental procedures.
- 10.7 Employees must not, under any circumstances, give details of their home address or telephone number to clients/customers or third parties. No formal or informal work related meetings of any kind are to be held in any employee’s home (save that employees may, of course, attend meetings virtually from their own home).
- 10.8 Employees must report any accident at home to their manager, in line with current arrangements.
- 10.9 Employees should report any health and safety concerns to their manager, as soon as possible.
- 10.10 Managers should focus on, and prioritise, employee well-being. Employees should contact their manager if they have any concerns regarding well-being. The employee assistance helpline, [Care First](#), is also available.
- 10.11 Employees working from home should ensure that the general fabric of the home and its fixtures and fittings, including in any area in which they work, is/are maintained in a safe and functional state for performance of work there e.g. electrical sockets. Staff should ensure that no equipment is left to charge unattended and that the correct charging device is used in relation to each item of equipment.
- 10.12 Staff working from home will be required to bring equipment into a specified Council building for PAT testing, when requested to do so.
- 10.13 Managers should seek advice regarding any specific concerns around health and safety issues as all health and safety requirements must be appropriately addressed if full or partial homeworking is to occur.
- 10.14 Copies of completed Appendices [D](#) and [E](#) should be submitted to the Organisational Development Service.

## **11. Data Protection, Security and Confidentiality**

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11.1 The Council provides employees with access to the personal and confidential information they need to do their job. The Council’s Information Security and Information Governance Policies including, but not limited to, the [Information Security Policy](#) and the [Acceptable Use Policy](#), apply at all times regardless of the working location. It is particularly important to ensure that non-authorised personnel cannot gain access to confidential or personal information. This includes, but is not limited to, the requirement to prevent unauthorised personnel from:

- seeing and/or accessing, electronic and/or paper files;

- being able to overhear telephone/Microsoft Teams conversations etc.
- 11.2 When working in a mobile manner, the employee is responsible for the security of equipment, files and any other information in their possession, including the transportation of such items whenever outside Council premises.
- 11.3 Employees working from home, whether fully or partially, will be responsible for ensuring the security of all Council equipment, documents and information and must take all necessary steps to ensure that private and confidential information is kept secure at all times. Wherever possible, this equipment should be locked away. At a minimum, all equipment should be stored out of sight of windows and doors to deter equipment from being stolen.
- 11.4 In particular, every employee must:
- 11.4.1 screen lock their computer whenever it is left unattended;
  - 11.4.2 store confidential papers securely when not in use;
  - 11.4.3 ensure the secure disposal of confidential materials by returning items to Council premises for disposal using the contracted confidential waste arrangements. Where this is not feasible, employees should contact their line manager or the Data Protection Officer to make alternative arrangements;
  - 11.4.4 report any data security breach to their manager immediately.
- 11.5 No work related emails or sensitive data should be sent to the employee's home email addresses. No work related files should be stored on an employee's personal computer.
- 11.6 All employees should make every effort to minimise the amount of paper records which they use, carry or transfer and should consider using more secure electronic methods wherever possible. Not only is this better for the environment, but it reduces costs for the Council and is more secure.
- 11.7 Where employees do need to print documents and send in the post, the Council's hybrid mail system must be utilised to do this and staff should not print and send documents on home equipment using standard public postal arrangements. Staff are reminded that the Council's Information Security Policy includes the requirement that staff should not connect their own unapproved hardware (e.g. a printer) to their Council devices.

## **12. Equal Opportunities/Reasonable Adjustments**

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- 12.1 The Council will ensure that all staff are treated in a fair, equitable and consistent manner. It undertakes to comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and will identify appropriate reasonable adjustments and options for those employees who may require specific support in planning and undertaking any homeworking arrangements.
- 12.2 Particular reference should be made to the provisions of the Act to ensure that appropriate communication and monitoring is in place to support an employee with any matters arising from the protected characteristics and requirements of the Act.
- 12.3 The employee is responsible for ensuring that they inform their line manager of any issues that may need to be addressed under the Act. This is particularly pertinent to homeworkers where equalities matters may be undetected for a prolonged period.

- 12.4 Where an individual has been assessed as requiring a specific workstation set-up as part of reasonable adjustments made following an Occupational Health referral under the Equality Act they will, should these not be able to be accommodated at home, be provided with a desk allocation at a hub and be expected to consider this their base.

## 13. Insurance, Mortgage/Tenancy Arrangements

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- 13.1 In general, working from home should not give rise to any special difficulties from an insurance point of view. The guiding principle is that good practice should reduce or eliminate the possibility of injury or loss to employees. Insurance by itself does not prevent injury or loss and good risk management techniques are required.
- 13.2 It is vital that employees and managers adhere to this Agile Working policy and associated guidelines, in order to maintain the validity of the insurance provision.
- 13.3 Employees' own insurance policies are unlikely to be affected by working from home. However, employees are **strongly advised** to inform their insurers of working at home arrangements. If in doubt, employees should let their insurance company know to ensure there is no risk of non-disclosure invalidating a policy. No formal or informal work related meetings are to be held in any employee's home as this would affect the employee's home insurance policy.
- 13.4 Liability insurance protects the Council and its employees jointly for accidental death, injury and loss of property where the Council has been negligent. This insurance will operate in respect of employees who are working at home with the knowledge and consent of their manager, subject to the appropriate risk, health and safety assessments and training and support being in place. Employees must comply with Section 10 (Health and Safety) of the Agile Working Policy and any accidents must be reported immediately in accordance with the Council's health and safety guidelines.
- 13.5 Computers provided by the Council as part of the home/agile working arrangement will be covered by the Council's insurance policy. Employees must not do, cause or permit any act or omission which will avoid coverage under the Council insurance policy and reasonable care must be taken to avoid loss or damage to the equipment. If in doubt as to whether particular acts or omissions will have this effect, employees should consult their manager immediately. It is essential that any loss, theft or damage to Council IT equipment is reported immediately. Computer equipment should not be left in an unattended vehicle.
- 13.6 There is no formal insurance cover for work equipment provided aside from a computer however, employees must report promptly any damage to or malfunction of any work equipment to their manager for consideration to enable the Council to ensure that a safe working environment is maintained.

## 14. Temporary arrangements

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- 14.1 If there is the need to temporarily cover a post, if leave is taken (other than sickness absence leave) which lasts for over 1 month, including, but not limited to, maternity leave, parental leave, adoption leave, employees who have been provided with Council equipment, should return equipment provided (with the exception of the desk and chair) to a Council location, which will be stipulated by the line manager prior to the commencement of their leave.

## 15. Domestic abuse/violence

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- 15.1 Any individuals who are experiencing domestic abuse/violence, who do not wish to work within the home, will be accommodated in Council locations and are referred to the Council's [Domestic Abuse, Violence and Sexual Violence Policy](#), which offers further support.

## 16. Review and Revision Arrangements

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- 16.1 This policy will be reviewed in line with HR processes and a formal review will take place after one year.
- 16.2 Employees should familiarise themselves with other Council policies to include:
- [Flexible Working Scheme](#)
  - [Information Security Policies](#)
  - [Display Screen Equipment \(DSE\) Policy](#)
  - [Lone Working Policy](#)



### Designation of workstyle

As per clause 4.2, a workstyle will be designated to each post based on service needs ("the proposed designation").

### Individual discussions with current staff

Managers should then consider the proposed designation during a one to one consultation with each directly reporting employee. Managers should discuss, with each employee, the designation of their role, considering any individual/reasonable adjustments where necessary.

Criteria which could justify an adjustment being made to the proposed workstyle include but are not limited to:

- Health and well-being (e.g. mental health);
- Inability to work safely and effectively from home (e.g. insufficient space for necessary equipment);
- A reasonable adjustment due to disability;
- Domestic violence.

## **For all staff whose proposed designation involves full or partial homeworking**

### **Appendix B**

[Appendix B](#) (Individual Assessment Role Designation) must be completed for all employees in roles designated as home/agile working. Managers cannot impose a workstyle on employees. The workstyle needs to be mutually agreed.

### **Where the proposed designation is varied based on individual/reasonable adjustments**

If the manager and/or the employee consider that the employee is unable to work in line with the proposed designation, consideration must be given to varying the proposed designation based on individual/reasonable adjustments, in line with the above criteria. Any adjustments should be detailed in the box in section 2 of [Appendix B](#) and managers should please tick the agreed workstyle which is being adopted based on the agreed adjustments. In relation to any employees for whom the proposed designation is varied to service/community based worker, an allocated base must be identified on [Appendix B](#) for mileage purposes. Both employee and manager should then sign and date the form.

## Where the proposed designation is not varied

Where the designation proposed is mutually agreed and there is therefore no change to the designation, both the manager and employee should simply go from section 1 to section 3, sign and date [Appendix B](#) and the manager should please forward a copy to Organisational Development.

## Appendix C

All homeworkers and agile workers must also complete and sign [Appendix C](#) (Homeworking Agreement) and managers should please forward a copy to Organisational Development.

The Homeworking Agreement will be the agreement from the individual to vary their contract.

**If any homeworking is proposed, can the employee work safely and effectively from home?**

## Appendices D & E

If home or agile working is being considered as an agreed designation, [Appendix D](#) (Working from home self-assessment) and [Appendix E](#) (DSE) must be completed prior to the proposed designation being agreed. Appendices [D](#) and [E](#) should already have been completed for any staff who have been homeworking (fully or partially) due to the coronavirus pandemic but must, in any event, be completed again as part of this consultation exercise to check that these risk assessments are up to date and accurate. Only if an employee can work safely and effectively from home pursuant to these risk assessments, will any kind of homeworking be permitted pursuant to this Agile Working Policy. Managers must please forward the completed, signed copies of Appendices [D](#) and [E](#) to Organisational Development.



Further to the designation of roles in line with the Agile Working Policy this form should be used for ALL employees in roles designated as Home/Agile Working. Managers should complete this form when undertaking individual consultation on the proposed role designation.

### Section 1 - Employee/Role Details

Employee Name:	<input type="text"/>		
Position Title:	<input type="text"/>		
Contract Type:	<input type="checkbox"/> Permanent	<input type="checkbox"/> Fixed Term	<input type="checkbox"/> Temporary
Position Ref:	<input type="text"/>	Contact Phone Number:	<input type="text"/>
Work Base (Pre COVID):	<input type="text"/>		
Service:	<input type="text"/>	Manager:	<input type="text"/>

Role Designation:  Home Worker  Agile Worker

**Section 2 - Individual/Reasonable Adjustments**

The role designation set out above must be discussed with the employee and where consideration is being given to vary this based on individual/reasonable adjustments these should be set out below. In relation to all roles for which any homeworking (whether full or partial) is being considered, Appendices D & E must be completed and must evidence that homeworking can be carried out safely and effectively.

Where there is no change to the designation detailed above please simply go to Section 3 and sign.

Please outline the change in workstyle being adopted based on the agreed adjustments  
 Home Worker  Agile Worker  Service/Community Worker\*

Please specify the designated base for the Service/Community Worker:

\*Those unable to work from home based on individual/reasonable adjustments should be included in the Service/Community Worker category and a designated base must be detailed.

**Section 3 - Agreement & Authorisation**

Employee Signature:

Date:

Manager Signature:

Date:

**Designated Home/Agile Workers must complete a Homeworking Agreement**

**Please forward a copy of this document to Organisational Development**

# Homeworking Agreement



Employee Name:

Position Title:  Position Ref:

Service:  Manager:

It has been agreed that from the [Insert Date ] you will be designated a Home/Agile Worker as defined in the Agile Working Policy, you are therefore required to complete this Homeworking Agreement.

**Employee:**

- I agree to provide an appropriate safe workspace in my home to enable me to work effectively.
- I am aware of my responsibility to inform as appropriate my landlord/mortgage/Insurance company in writing of my intention to work at home.
- I understand the requirement for me to continue to comply with all Council policies, practices and procedures whilst working from home including all Health and Safety requirements.
- I will maintain regular contact with my manager and inform them of changes to my home or personal circumstances, which could affect my ability to undertake my work effectively including health and safety.
- I understand that I have a duty to ensure, insofar as is reasonably practicable, that I work in a safe manner and follow all health and safety requirements of the Council including participating in and undertaking risk assessments; carrying out any necessary actions to minimise risk; maintaining a safe working environment and taking reasonable care of my own safety.
- I am aware and understand the requirement to report any work-related accidents whilst working at home or other locations.
- I agree to provide reasonable access to my home by an employee of the Council, or their representative to support home working arrangements (but not for meeting purposes). All access requirements will be discussed prior to the visit, and appropriate notice given.
- I am aware of the information security measures required and the sensitive nature of data with which I work. I agree at all times to protect access, maintain and store the data securely and confidentially in line with the Data Protection Acts and Council requirements.
- I understand that I am responsible for the proper care of Council equipment and that the computer and other equipment must be used for work purposes only and will not be used by anyone other than myself.
- Reporting immediately, once known, any loss, theft or damage to Council IT equipment or the loss of confidential information.



- I understand that I may be required to attend an alternative hub (location to be confirmed as appropriate) from time to time for specified communications/meetings/training as defined by my manager.
- I am aware and understand the requirements to notify my manager when I am unable to work or absent from work due to sickness or any other reason. I will also continue to use the My Options flexible working to record my times whilst working at home or otherwise in line with relevant Policy, including taking adequate rest breaks.
- In the event of home or agile working ceasing or leaving the employment of the Council, I will co-operate with the Council in arranging a time for any equipment to be collected or I will return the equipment to the Council within 5 working days of home working ceasing.

**Employer:**

- The Council has a range of policies and guidance to support employees working from home including the Agile Working Policy.
- Under health and safety legislation the Council is obliged to ensure the health and safety of homeworkers in the same way as for office-based staff.
- The manager will ensure that the appropriate risk/DSE assessments are carried out in respect of the work that you carry out.
- Reasonable adjustments will be considered and put in place where necessary.
- The standard equipment required to work from home as set out in the Agile Working Policy will be provided by the Council and any relevant testing of equipment will be facilitated by the Council.
- An allowance as set out in the Agile Working Policy will be paid by the Council with the employees' monthly salary.
- Regular performance coaching/supervision/reviews will continue to be conducted in line with Council Policy.

**Employee Declaration**

Please sign to confirm that you have read, understood and agree to the conditions relating to home working in line with the Council's Agile Working Policy and that you agree to the varying of your contract of employment.

Employee Signature:  Date:

The Agile Working Policy can be accessed on the intranet or from your Manager.

**Please forward a copy of this document to Organisational Development**



# Working from Home Self-Assessment

**Please complete this self-assessment form for discussion with your Manager and it will assist them in ensuring that your working conditions comply with current best practice whilst working at home.**

Name:

Date of Completion:

Directorate:

Service:

Fire	Yes	No	Comments
Is your work area tidy?			
Are waste materials regularly disposed of?			
Are your exit routes clear?			
Do you have an escape plan?			<i>i.e. know exactly what to do in an emergency</i>
Is a smoke alarm fitted?			<i>Alarms should be tested regularly &amp; batteries changed as required</i>

Electrical Equipment (either the Council's or your own but used for Council work).	Yes	No	Comments
Any apparent damage?			<i>Cracked casing, missing screws, etc.</i>
Any evidence of overheating?			<i>Look for discolouration</i>
Any obvious damage to leads or plugs?			
Are the cables secure in all plugs?			

Slips, Trips & Falls (Work areas)	Yes	No	Comments
Floor coverings sound, and without defects?			
Are walkways clear of tripping hazards e.g. trailing cables?			

<b>Ventilation/Noise/Lighting</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Does your workspace provide adequate ventilation?			
Can noise be kept to an acceptable level whilst working?			
Does the lighting around you workstation provide adequate light for working?			<i>Consider prevention of eyestrain from bright or low level lighting</i>

<b>Manual Handling</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Do you carry out any abnormal Manual Handling activities?			<i>If yes, complete a separate Manual Handling risk assessment</i>
Do you carry a lot of equipment?			<i>Consider bags with wheels, do not overload yourself and only take the files/equipment you require</i>

<b>Display Screen Equipment</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Do you use DSE for more than an hour a day on a regular basis?			<i>If yes, complete a separate DSE Risk Assessment Checklist. Use the principles set out to assist you in setting your workstation up properly.</i>
When seated at your desk, can you move your legs & upper body together without twisting?			

<b>Lone Working</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Have you discussed the need for a 'call in' procedure with your manager?			<i>Ensure you follow the controls your Manager has implemented for working from home, this could be the use of Skype, Logging in and out system, etc.</i>

<b>Accidents/First Aid</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Do you know the procedure for reporting any accidents or work related illness?			<i>All work related accidents (including those that take place in your home whilst working) must be reported as quickly as possible via the Accident/ Incident on-line system and directly to your Manager</i>
Do you know where the nearest hospital/contact point is?			

Well being	Yes	No	Comments
Do you suffer any discomfort or ill health that you believe has resulted from your work?			<i>If yes, report to your line manager and/or Occupational Health</i>

Security	Yes	No	Comments
Are external doors adequately secured?			<i>e.g. mortised security bolts</i>
Do key operated window locks secure all accessible windows?			
Are laptop and confidential files locked away when not in use?			

Council Supplied Equipment (Please list below)	Serial No.	Inspection Dates		

Any other comments you have regarding your working environment, please list here:

	Yes	No
Have any relevant risk assessments been completed?		

Signature (Homeworker):  Date:

Signature (Line Manager):  Date:

# Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Workstation Checklist



Workstation location and number:

User:

Checklist completed by:

Assessment checked by:

Any further action needed?  Yes  No Follow-up action completed on:

The following checklist can be used to help you complete a risk assessment and comply with the Schedule to the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 as amended by the Health and Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2002.

The questions and 'Things to consider' in the checklist cover the requirements of the Schedule. If you can answer 'Yes' in the second column against all the questions, having taken account of the 'Things to consider', you are complying. You will not be able to address some of the questions and 'Things to consider', e.g. on reflections on the screen, or the user's comfort, until the workstation has been installed. These will be covered in the risk assessment you do once the workstation is installed.


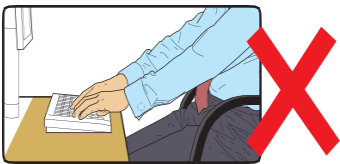


Work through the checklist, ticking either the 'Yes' or 'No' column against each risk factor:



- 'Yes' answers require no further action.
- 'No' answers will require investigation and/or remedial action by the workstation assessor.

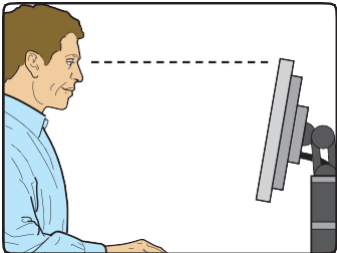
They should record their decisions in the 'Action to take' column.

Managers/Assessors should check later that actions have been taken and have resolved the problem. Remember, the checklist only covers the workstation and work environment. You also need to make sure that risks from other aspects of the work are avoided, e.g. by giving users health and safety training, and providing for breaks or changes of activity.



Watch this short video: [Temporary Working at Home - Workstation Setup - YouTube](#)




Risk Factors	Yes	No	Things to consider	Action to take
<b>Keyboards</b>				
Is the keyboard separate from the screen?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	This is a requirement, unless the task makes it impracticable (e.g. where there is a need to use a portable).	
Does the keyboard tilt?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tilt need not be built in.	
Is it possible to find a comfortable keying position?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Try pushing the display screen further back to create more room for the keyboard, hands and wrists. Users of thick, raised keyboards may need a wrist rest.	
   				
Does the user have good keyboard technique?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Training can be used to prevent: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hands bent up at the wrist;</li> <li>• hitting the keys too hard;</li> <li>• overstretching the fingers.</li> </ul>	
Are the characters clear and readable?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Keyboards should be kept clean. If characters still can't be read, the keyboard may need modifying or replacing. Use a keyboard with a matt finish to reduce glare and/or reflection.	
<b>Mouse, trackball, etc.</b>				
Is the device suitable for the tasks it is used for?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	If the user is having problems, try a different device. The mouse and trackball are general-purpose devices suitable for many tasks, and available in a variety of shapes and sizes. Alternative devices such as touch screens may be better for some tasks (but can be worse for others).	

Risk Factors	Yes	No	Things to consider	Action to take
Is the device positioned close to the user?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Most devices are best placed as close as possible, e.g. right beside the keyboard.</p> <p>Training may be needed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• prevent arm overreaching;</li> <li>• encourage users not to leave their hand on the device when it is not being used;</li> <li>• encourage a relaxed arm and straight wrist.</li> </ul>	
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div data-bbox="103 660 518 884">  </div> <div data-bbox="821 649 1236 873">  </div> </div>				
Is there support for the device user's wrist and forearm?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Support can be gained from, for example, the desk surface or arm of a chair. If not, a separate supporting device may help. The user should be able to find a comfortable working position with the device.	
Does the device work smoothly at a speed that suits the user?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>See if cleaning is required (e.g. of mouse ball and rollers).</p> <p>Check the work surface is suitable. A mouse mat may be needed.</p>	
Can the user easily adjust software settings for speed and accuracy of pointer?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Users may need training in how to adjust device settings.	
<b>Display Screens</b>				
Are the characters clear and readable?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Make sure the screen is clean and cleaning materials are available.</p> <p>Check that the text and background colours work well together.</p>	

Risk Factors	Yes	No	Things to consider	Action to take
Is the text size comfortable to read?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Software settings may need adjusting to change text size.	
Is the image stable, i.e. free of flicker and jitter?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Try using different screen colours to reduce flicker. If there are still problems, get the set-up checked, e.g. by the equipment supplier.	
Is the screen's specification suitable for its intended use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	For example, intensive graphic work or work requiring fine attention to small details may require large display screens.	
Are the brightness and/or contrast adjustable?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Separate adjustment controls are not essential, provided the user can read the screen easily at all times.	
Does the screen swivel and tilt? 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Swivel and tilt need not be built in; you can add a swivel and tilt mechanism. However, you may need to replace the screen if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• swivel/tilt is absent or unsatisfactory;</li> <li>• work is intensive; and/or</li> <li>• the user has problems getting the screen to a comfortable position.</li> </ul>	
Is the screen free from glare and reflections?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Use a mirror placed in front of the screen to check where reflections are coming from. You might need to move the screen or even the desk and/or shield the screen from the source of the reflections. Screens that use dark characters on a light background are less prone to glare and reflections.	
Are adjustable window coverings provided and in adequate condition?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check that blinds work. Blinds with vertical slats can be more suitable than horizontal ones. If these measures do not work, consider anti-glare screen filters as a last resort and seek specialist help.	



Risk Factors	Yes	No	Things to consider	Action to take
<b>Software</b>				
Is the software suitable for the task?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Software should help the user carry out the task, minimise stress and be user-friendly. Check users have had appropriate training in using the software. Software should respond quickly and clearly to user input, with adequate feedback, such as clear help messages.	
<b>Furniture</b>				
Is the work surface large enough for all the necessary equipment, papers, etc.?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Create more room by moving printers, reference materials, etc. elsewhere. If necessary, consider providing new power and telecoms sockets, so equipment can be moved. There should be some scope for flexible rearrangement.	
				
Can the user comfortably reach all the equipment and papers they need to use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rearrange equipment, papers etc. to bring frequently used things within easy reach. A document holder may be needed, positioned to minimise uncomfortable head and eye movements.	
Are surfaces free from glare and reflection?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consider mats or blotters to reduce reflections and glare.	
Is the chair suitable? Is the chair stable? Does the chair have a working:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The chair may need repairing or replacing if the user is uncomfortable, or cannot use the adjustment mechanisms.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• seat back height and tilt adjustment?</li> <li>• seat height adjustment?</li> <li>• castors or glides?</li> </ul>				

Risk Factors	Yes	No	Things to consider	Action to take
<b>Software</b>				
Is the chair adjusted correctly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The user should be able to carry out their work sitting comfortably. Consider training the user in how to adopt suitable postures while working. The arms of chairs can stop the user getting close enough to use the equipment comfortably. Move any obstructions from under the desk.	
				
Is the small of the back supported by the chair's backrest?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The user should have a straight back, supported by the chair, with relaxed shoulders.	
Are forearms horizontal and eyes at roughly the same height as the DSE top?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Adjust the chair height to get the user's arms in the right position, and then adjust the DSE height, if necessary.	
Are feet flat on the floor, without too much pressure from the seat on the backs of the legs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	If not, a footrest may be needed.	
<b>Environment</b>				
Is there enough room to change position and vary movement?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Space is needed to move, stretch and fidget. Consider reorganising the office layout and check for obstructions. Cables should be tidy and not a trip or snag hazard.	
Is the lighting suitable, e.g. not too bright or too dim to work comfortably?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Users should be able to control light levels, e.g. by adjusting window blinds or light switches. Consider shading or repositioning light sources or providing local lighting, e.g. desk lamps (but make sure lights don't cause glare by reflecting off walls or other surfaces).	

Risk Factors	Yes	No	Things to consider	Action to take
Does the air feel comfortable?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	DSE and other equipment may dry the air. Circulate fresh air if possible. Plants may help. Consider a humidifier if discomfort is severe.	
Are levels of heat comfortable?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Can heating be better controlled? More ventilation or air conditioning may be required if there is a lot of electronic equipment in the room. Or, can users be moved away from the heat source?	
Are levels of noise comfortable?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consider moving sources of noise, e.g. printers, away from the user. If not, consider soundproofing.	

### Final questions to users

- Has the checklist covered all the problems that exist when working with DSE?
- Have there been any discomfort or other symptoms which can be attributed to working with DSE?
- Are you aware that you can ask for spectacles to wear when working with DSE?
- Regular breaks from using DSE should be taken. Does the user take regular breaks working away from DSE? Take short breaks often, rather than longer ones less often. For example 5 to 10 minutes every hour is better than 20 minutes every 2 hours. Ideally, users should be able to choose when to take breaks. In most jobs it is possible to stop DSE work to do other tasks, such as going to meetings or making phone calls. Breaks or changes of activity should allow users to get up from their workstations and move around, or at least stretch and change posture. See the link below for some ideas about moving:

[Posturite\\_A4-Advice-Sheet\\_Agile-Working-timings\\_241016.pdf](#)

## DSE Arrangement



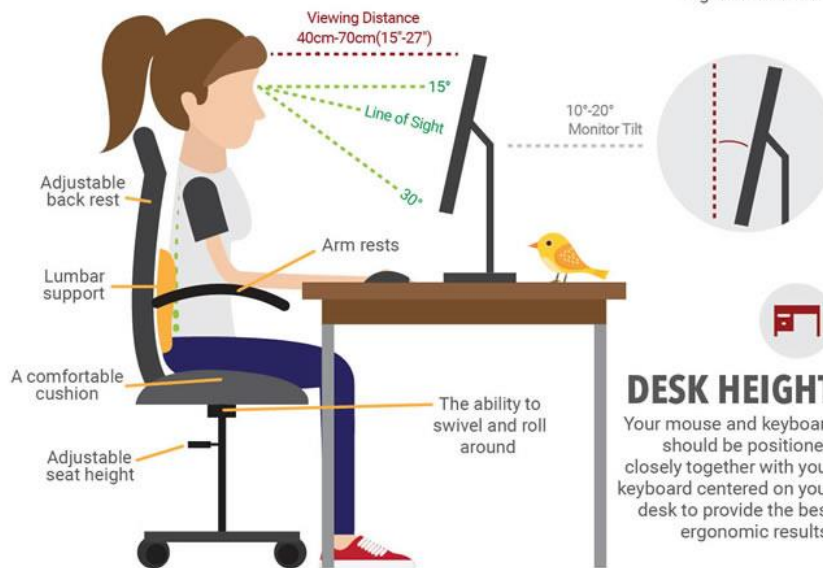
### Monitor

Viewing distance 40cm–70cm (15"–27"), line of sight 15°–30°, and monitor tilt 10°–20° is a visually comfortable range for a majority of sitting users.



### DESK

Your mouse and keyboard should be positioned closely together with your keyboard centered on your desk to provide the best ergonomic results.



### DESK HEIGHT

Your mouse and keyboard should be positioned closely together with your keyboard centered on your desk to provide the best ergonomic results.

Write down the details of any problems here:

**APPENDIX 2**

Committee: **Council**  
 Date of Meeting: **25<sup>th</sup> March, 2021**  
 Report Subject: **New Council Operating Model & Working Arrangements**  
 Portfolio Holder: **Councillor N. Daniels – Leader/ Executive Member - Corporate Services**  
 Report Submitted by: **Managing Director Michelle Morris, Gina Taylor, Andrea Prosser & Gemma Wasley.**  
 Report Authors: **Wasley.**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	12.03.21						25.03.21	

**1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 This report proposes and seeks approval for a new Operating Model and Working Arrangements for the Council which will support the achievement of the decision made to permanently vacate the Civic Centre; create a new Democratic Hub, at the General Offices, and a network of Community Hubs co-located with libraries.

**2. Scope and Background**

- 2.1 Since March 2020 the Council has been operating under emergency arrangements introduced across the UK as a result of the Coronavirus Pandemic. During this extended period the advice from Government has been that, where staff can, they must work from home in order to prevent workplace and community transmission of the virus. This has meant that office based staff and Elected Members have been working remotely for the last 12 months and the organisation has had to shift to new working arrangements based on digital platforms, with offices closed and staff only attending offices where it is necessary – for example to access equipment or files, or in response to difficulties working from a home base for an extended period of time.
- 2.2 In early 2021 the mass vaccination of the population and the positive impact of the most recent lock-down, has seen a fall in infection rates across the UK and there are early signs that we will be able to move out of lock-down from the Spring onwards. However, we now know that we will have to adapt to living our lives with the virus present in our communities and so it will not be a case of simply returning to normal, we can for example expect social distancing to continue for some time. It is widely accepted that what we will move to as a society is a 'new normal' and that the way we live and work will be very different, and has the potential to be better. Welsh Government has already signalled an ambition within Wales and a commitment to 30% of the workforce working from home or remotely. The vision being to reduce the numbers commuting to work and keeping more people working in their local communities. The Council has an opportunity, now, to be at the forefront of

delivering this national ambition by making a step change in how we work, how we deliver services and to improve access to council businesses and services for our residents.

- 2.3 In the early summer we took the opportunity to pause and reflect on how the Council had responded to the initial surge in the virus. From this we identified that staff and Elected Members had responded admirably to the challenge of remote working and the investment that had previously been made in technology had stood the Council in good stead. The realisation that we can run our business and deliver services in a very different way, be more in line with modern working practices and reduce our costs and impact on the environment has opened up new opportunities for us to make a step change now and not to simply return to how we operated before. A survey of staff conducted late in 2020 shows that staff have responded positively to home working and consider that the Council has handled the change well. This shows support from staff to continue working in a more agile and flexible way and the positive impact this has had on productivity and a reduction in staff absence due to sickness. It is also notable that the Council has reduced its costs in relation to running buildings and business travel, with a subsequent decrease in carbon generated as a result of Council operations.
- 2.4 Linked to the Council's ambition emerging out of the first wave of the pandemic, a number of reports were considered by Council in 2020 regarding the possible acquisition of a site in Ebbw Vale and the opportunity to develop alternative arrangements for its democratic and customer services, which would remove reliance on the Civic Centre.
- 2.5 On 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2020 Council first considered a report regarding the potential purchase of Festival Park and agreed that detailed negotiations be undertaken with the current owners with a view towards agreeing Heads of Terms for acquisition of the site for refurbishment/redevelopment and that a Business Case be prepared for acquisition and future use, for consideration by Council in September 2020. It was also agreed that a Member Working Group be established to work on the Business Case alongside officers.
- 2.6 A Special Council meeting was held on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2020 to consider the Business Case and it was agreed that the report be approved with the recommended option, as outlined in the business case, to proceed with the purchase Festival Park subject to funding approval from Welsh Government and the finalisation of the purchase arrangements be delegated to the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Community Services in consultation with the Leader/Deputy Leader. It was also agreed that a further report relating to the commercial negotiations be presented to Council, prior to the finalisation of any purchase arrangements.
- 2.7 At the Ordinary Meeting of the Council on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2020 a further report was considered and recommended that the position previously agreed at Council, to proceed with acquisition of Festival Park, had been reconsidered by the Member Working Group, and that it should now be left to private investors who had expressed an interest in the site to take it forward. Also that the Council should take forward the other aspects agreed at Council (October 2020) to develop the democratic facility at the General

Offices (GO), community hubs in town centres, and vacate and demolish the Civic Centre. A capital allocation of £180,000 was agreed to fund the cost of the required works at the GO and the Community Hubs and a further £650,000 for demolition of the Civic Centre. The subsequent sale of land was expected to generate a capital receipt that would cover this cost.

- 2.8 Since the decision of Council in November the Member Working Group has worked with Officers and Trade Union representatives to develop a model for new working arrangements, based on agile working, which will allow the organisation to operate out of its remaining offices at Anvil Court, ViTCC, General Offices and other appropriate Council buildings. These proposals are detailed in Section 5 of this report. Work has also progressed the Democratic Hub and Community Hubs, and this report also provides an update on the new hubs and these are detailed in Section 5.

### 3. **Options for Recommendation**

#### 3.1 **Option One (Preferred)**

Council approves the new Operating Model based on Agile Working, Democratic Hub and Community Hubs, and confirms work can now proceed to decommission the Civic Centre.

#### 3.2 **Option Two**

Council does not approve the new Operating Model based on Agile Working, Democratic Hub and Community Hubs, and does not confirm that work can now proceed to permanently vacate and demolish the Civic Centre.

### 4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

- 4.1 This supports the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan priority to be an efficient organisation and to operate using modern working practices in a way which supports our workforce, effective service delivery and improves access to Council business for our residents. It also supports the priority to regenerate the site in Ebbw Vale opening up the opportunities for investment in new homes and community facilities in the centre of the community.
- 4.2 The proposals also support delivery of our ambition set out in the Decarbonisation Plan to reduce our carbon emissions to a point where our impact is net zero carbon.
- 4.3 Finally, this will support the delivery of the Bridging the Gap Programme which seeks to reduce the cost of our corporate property estate through a process of rationalisation and introduction of more modern and efficient workplaces.

## 5. Implications Against Each Option

### 5.1 Budget Implications

The Financial Plan is attached at Appendix 1 and details the potential costs and funding, based on a number of assumptions. In summary the financial implications are:

#### Capital Costs

Total capital costs of development of the Democratic & Community Hubs, decommissioning / demolition of the Civic Centre and refurbishment of Anvil Court / VITCC are estimated to cost £1.2m.

The Council has already agreed capital funding of £180,000 to support the delivery of the Democratic Hub and Community Hubs and has agreed that the costs for the demolition of the Civic Centre will be offset by capital receipts generated from the sale of the site which is estimated to achieve in excess of £650,000.

It is proposed that the remaining capital requirement be funded by a contribution from revenue, utilising the Transformation budget for 2021/2022.

#### Revenue Costs

Total revenue costs of the new operating model are assessed as £1.47m in the first year reducing to £1.1m in year 2 and £1.05m in subsequent years.

The revenue financial plan shown at Appendix 1, indicates that over a five year period there are potential savings of £1.46m compared to current budgets. However, this will be subject to the:

- agreed home/agile working / set up allowances
- the outcome of job evaluation (Community Hubs)
- the timescale and cost for decommissioning the civic centre
- Termination costs (if applicable)

The assessment of revenue costs & funding is analysed below:-

#### Democratic Hub

There are no additional revenue implications arising from the Democratic Hub.

#### Community Hub

There will be a revenue cost relating to the operation of the Community Hubs of approximately £151,000 per year (subject to job evaluation). These costs will be largely met by re-purposing 4 posts resulting in a budget transfer of £107,000, a cost pressure of £25,000 which has been agreed as part of the 2021/22 Revenue Budget and repurposing of £19,000 budget.



### Agile Working

The estimated revenue costs of providing a home/agile working allowance to around 750 staff is £322,000 (including an allowance for set up costs) in year 1 and £171,000 per annum thereafter. It is proposed to fund these costs through re-purposing the budgets for mileage and operating costs of the Civic Centre.

It is proposed that the savings / cost reductions identified by moving to the new operating model will be built into the Workplace Transformation project within the Bridging the Gap programme.

## 5.2 Workforce

- Agile Working – this will impact on working and contractual arrangements for c.750 staff who are currently office based at locations in the borough including (but not exclusively) Civic Centre, Anvil Court, ViTCC, Depot and General Offices. Proposals will impact all staff which will involve a varying of their contracts of employment and will designate posts as either homeworker, agile worker or service/community based worker. This will involve statutory consultation and reaching a joint agreement with trade unions, a new Agile Working Policy and the designation of posts. The new policy which will require scrutiny and Council endorsement will include allowances to support permanent and agile workers and this will be subject to negotiation with the trade unions. There will also be the need to ensure those permanent and agile workers have appropriate workstations at home and take into account the health, safety and well-being of workers, including reasonable adjustments, where staff are not able to work from home. It will be critical to engage the workforce and their representatives along this journey.
- Community Hubs – there will be the deletion of 4 posts within the existing Commercial Services structure, and the creation of 4 new posts to run the Hubs. There is a risk of redundancy if not all staff are able to be redeployed into other posts within the Council.
- Democratic Hub – no workforce implications.

## 5.3 Legal

There will be a requirement to reach a formal agreement with the trade unions regarding the change to terms and conditions and the payment of home/agile working allowance.

An Equality Impact Assessment will also be completed prior to the full implementation of the change programme, and will be signed off by the Programme Board.

## 5.4 Risks

**Workforce** - If there is no joint agreement to the new Agile Working policy and variation of the contract the Council will need to consider the impact on timelines and contractual obligation. However, the trade unions have worked with Officers on these proposals and have co-produced the new working arrangements and this reduces the risk that an agreement will not be achieved.

**Cost Reduction** – If there is not close management of the programme then there is a risk that the cost reductions will not be achieved. A Programme Board is established to provide leadership for the work and this is supported by lead officers for each workstream to ensure that the work progresses and that outcomes are delivered.

**Behaviours required to sustain new working arrangements not achieved** – If there is not a permanent change to how we work as an organisation then the move to new arrangements will not work successfully. The proposals are however informed by the change in work practices achieved successfully over past 12 months and the recent staff survey shows that the majority of staff support the new arrangements and consider they have been more productive.

**Insufficient capacity to deliver the changes** – This programme represents a significant change to working arrangements, for staff and Members, on a permanent basis and will need careful implementation. If there is insufficient capacity it could result in desired outcomes not being fully delivered. If further capacity is required the Council would have the option to allocate funding from the Transformation Fund.

**Further surge in Covid 19** – if there was an increase in cases and/or another lockdown then the timescales for delivery would be impacted.

**Increase in numbers of posts allocated as Homeworkers or Agile Workers, above/below the assumed levels** – if there is an increase in number of posts categorised as agile workers then there is flexibility to accommodate this increase (up to the c.400 desk capacity available); if there is an increase in number of home workers then this will make additional office capacity available.

**Risk of lost opportunity** – the Council has an opportunity to build on the positive work done over the past 12 months and to make a step change in how it works and delivers services. There is a risk that if this is not agreed now the organisation will simply move back to operating as it did before and these benefits will not be achieved.

## 6. Supporting Evidence

### 6.1 Agile Working

The new working arrangements will support the closure of the Civic Centre and put in place a model of agile working to enable staff to work either at home, in Council buildings or in the service or community. It is planned to roll

this out from May onwards, dependent on the relaxation of Welsh Government guidance on working from home. It is intended to implement the change on an incremental basis, accepting that while some coronavirus restrictions continue i.e. social distancing, this will limit the capacity within offices.

The Agile working arrangements will be a contractual change and place job roles in one of 3 categories - Homeworker, Agile Worker or Service Based Worker. Those posts designated as home or agile workers will receive a home/agile working allowance to compensate for the costs associated e.g. heating, electricity, broadband.

Home Worker - Home is the base and all work can be carried out from home. An appropriate workstation and tools to do the job will be required (if necessary facilitated by the Council) and there will be no need to access an office to work on a frequent basis. There will be a need for occasional attendance at an alternative base for e.g. team meetings/ training. Estimated c.370 Staff (Example - Support Services).

Agile Worker - Home is the base with time split time between home and office working i.e.3 days' home working and 2 days in office. Work is carried out at home and in the office. Agile workers will not have a dedicated desk in the office but will book desk space (using a booking system) for the days' they are in the office. They will also require an appropriate workstation and tools to do the job at home (if necessary facilitated by the Council). They will be required to attend meetings in the office. Estimated c.390 Staff (Example - support for democratic processes, Social Workers, Public Protection).

Service Based - Work is carried out 100% from a base in a building or in the community. Some roles would require desk space – but no fixed workstation. These workers cannot work from home due to the nature of the job. Estimated c. 950 staff (Examples - Social Services Cwrt Mytton, Extra Care, Flying Start, schools, refuse, cleansing).

An assessment of the office space available shows that there are 271 desk spaces in AC and the GO, 24 at the Depot and 122 at the ViTCC providing an overall desk space availability of **417** (including shared space with the ABUHB).

As the initial appraisal identifies c.390 Agile staff will need to be accommodated under this model, for 2 or 3 days a week, then it is apparent that the Council could operate on a reduced office footprint, with an average of 160 staff in the office on any one day.

There will be a requirement to refurbish offices to ensure that the layout supports new working arrangements and provides access to the digital platforms (i.e. MS Teams) including facilitating a blended approach to meetings.

## 6.2 Democratic Hub

A new Democratic Hub would provide a similar level of space as in the Civic with enhanced functionality for blended meetings and improved public access.

A phased approach is being used for planning purposes i.e. temporary arrangements working with Covid 19 restrictions from May 2021 and then permanent Democratic Hub arrangements when restrictions in the community are relaxed sufficiently. While social distancing remains a requirement it will be necessary for some Members, and Officers, to continue to participate remotely using a blended solution based on MS Teams. The new Democratic Hub will continue to offer an agile approach to meetings by providing hybrid meetings when restrictions are lifted as part of the requirements of the Local Government and Elections Bill.

The first floor of the GO will be the Democratic hub including flexible office and meeting space for Members and Officers. The new Hub will enable the Council to meet the requirements of the Local Government and Elections Bill e.g. on broadcasting, and provide improved facilities for public access to formal meetings and council business.

The existing fixtures and fittings from the Civic Centre will be used, wherever possible, and some investment will be required in new audio-visual equipment to support delivery of the requirements of the Bill and to facilitate improved working arrangements for Members.

## 6.3 Community Hubs

The Hubs will be located in the main libraries at Abertillery, Brynmawr, Ebbw Vale and Tredegar. As these libraries are open 4 days a week there is capacity to offer an outreach/surgery style service in Blaina, Cwm and Llanhilleth once a week. The Hubs will:

- Provide a face to face counter service dealing with requests from residents to pay, register, ask, tell, apply, book and check the status of their request across a range of services including benefits, council tax and community services;
- Help to residents wanting to self-serve using computers based in the libraries through the My Council Services application or through direct support where necessary;
- Signpost/connect residents to other council services including housing, parking and environmental health;
- Signpost/connect residents to services delivered by partners including support from Job Centre Plus, Citizens Advice Bureau, Integrated Health and Well-being network activities and voluntary/community based provision. This has been the approach of the Locality Response Team and have proved very successful;
- For more complex service queries requiring access to council officers, options for booking appointments will be offered. This will include access to surgery style appointment so residents can access planning

officers, building control officers, support around welfare benefits, employment services and business advice.

The timescales for implementation will be determined by the relaxation of current restrictions and the full re-opening of libraries.

#### 6.4 **Expected Outcomes for Residents**

The new arrangements will improve customer access to the Council and to council services through the Community Hubs. These will be based conveniently in our main communities and remove the requirement for travel to Ebbw Vale for those needing to speak directly to an officer.

#### 6.5 **Involvement**

There has been staff consultation regarding home and agile working and work is in progress to ensure that statutory consultation takes place with the workforce regarding the implementation of new terms and conditions.

#### 6.6 **Thinking for the long term**

The new working arrangements will establish how the council will work in the future and will enable it to consolidate its property portfolio, reduce its carbon impact and to align with Welsh Government's ambition to modernise delivery of public services in Wales.

#### 6.7 **Preventative Focus**

The new working arrangements will support preventative models of service delivery.

#### 6.8 **Collaboration/Partnership Working**

It is anticipated that partners will be part of service delivery through the Community Hubs.

#### 6.9 **Integration**

The new working arrangements will be delivered in an integrated way across all Services.

### 7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The delivery of this programme will be overseen by a Programme Board comprised of the Corporate Leadership Team. Project/Workstream Leads have been identified for each element of the work including Agile Working, Democratic Hub, Community Hubs, Office Re-configuration, Decommissioning Civic Centre.

7.2 The financial benefits delivered by the Programme will be reported as part of the Bridging the Gap Programme.

#### **Background Papers**



Financial  
modelling.pdf



Staff Survey  
Results.docx

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