TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to:	**Employment Committee**
Date:	**6 September 2021**
Report for:	**Information/Update**
Report of:	**Angela Beadsworth, Interim Director of Human Resources**

Report Title

Update on SMART Work Styles Engagement and Reintegration

Summary

This report updates Employment Committee on the work undertaken to date on our proposed SMART Working styles and the outputs of the engagement sessions with staff and stakeholders. It also updates on the work undertaken and to be undertaken to enable the organisation and its people to adopt and embed Smart working.

Recommendations

That the content of this report is noted.

Relationship to Corporate Priorities	This report aligns with the council's Corporate Priorities
Relationship to GM Policy or Strategy Framework	None
Financial	Some costs relating to equipment factored into medium term financial planning
Legal Implications	Changes to terms and conditions will be legally compliant
Equality/Diversity Implications	The proposals for new ways of working support a better work life balance and enhances our workforce diversity aspirations
Sustainability Implications	None
Carbon Reduction	None
Staffing/E-Government/Asset Management Implications	None
Risk Management Implications	See Legal Implications section.
Health & Wellbeing Implications	The proposals complement our aspirations for a better work life balance that supports our mental and physical well-being
Health and Safety Implications	All workforce proposals will support health and safety compliance

Summary of key stakeholders involved in report production:

Name: Nina Kijowski, interim Head of Resourcing & Development

1.0   INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1   We like many organisations, including other GM authorities, want to capitalise on the lessons we have learnt from the pandemic in terms of how our staff can work in very different ways. Before the pandemic we had agile working in place with varying levels of maturity across our business.

1.2   There has been consensus that we want to continue with flexibility of location for staff who work in suitable roles and after considerable research and benchmarking, a proposed approach called 'Trafford Smart Working' with 4 work styles was developed.

1.3   Further to support from the Silver Group – Staffing, Digital and Modernisation, we took a paper to CLT in May 2021 to gain agreement in principle for the approach and to seek support for a period of workforce engagement. Employment Committee was also briefed in June 2021 on the approach.

2.0   SMART WORKING CONCEPT

2.1   'Smart Working' is an approach that has been used by some Central Government departments for several years and is suggested as the umbrella term for this change programme.

2.2   Smart Working is a business-focused approach to flexible working that delivers more efficiency and effectiveness in work organisation, service delivery and organisational agility. It achieves this via modernisation of working practices while providing improved work environments and benefits for staff.

2.3   Key features of Smart Working include, managing by outputs, a trust based culture, high levels of trust and autonomy, reduced reliance on physical resources and maximising the use of digital tools. Our concept is based on the fact that 'work is something we do, not somewhere we go' and this underpins our new approach.

2.4   In adopting the SMART working approach there are many benefits, which include:

- An increase to the effectiveness of our activities by focusing on work outcomes rather than processes and inputs.
- A more balanced work-life balance for colleagues.
- A reduction in financial costs associated with running the organisation.
- A reduction in our environmental footprint of our working practices.

3.0   WORK STYLES

3.1   We proposed 4 different "work styles'" to cover all roles within the Council. A "work style" is an approach to delivering the outcomes of a job from the most appropriate location. Defining these styles helps to inform the individual kit/equipment

requirements for each style. It also helps us to manage workplace capacity and makes it clear to staff the expectations of how they spend their time in terms of location. There are also different contractual positions linked to these.

3.2   A reminder of the proposed smart work styles and their principles can be found in appendix A.

3.3   The "Home, Office and Neighbourhood" work styles have a mostly fixed location. The hybrid worker may have different locations of work, such as home, community and office and/or partner locations.

3.4   We propose that assigning of work styles to roles/individuals is based primarily on business need, however, where employees have certain requirements these are discussed and taken into consideration.

3.5   Colleagues who would like to request to become a "home based" worker will do this through the existing flexible working process, as this will be a contractual change. For this reason we are not proposing that home based working is mandated for any services/roles at this time.

3.4   It is envisaged that the majority of staff who use a laptop for a proportion of their time, will be hybrid workers, we will adopt a 'hybrid by default' position for these staff. As the business models for our teams and services are so diverse our suggested approach is that it is up to them to determine how much time staff spend in different locations, including their home.

3.5   This will vary from team to team and over time. However we recommend that we have a framework of parameters in place to differentiate between home and hybrid workers as there are distinct contractual differences - it is suggested that hybrid workers should attend a Council setting at least one day each week on average.

3.5   The ultimate aim is that the work style for each employee will be recorded on the I-Trent system. We will also record their main base. This will enable us to report on the numbers of staff in the different work styles and their locations. It is suggested that work styles are not finalised and agreed for staff until a settling in period after full reintegration has taken place.

4.0   COLLEAGUE ENGAGEMENT

4.1   To ensure that we have the right approach for the Council and the support of and buy-in from our workforce. We undertook a period of engagement throughout June and July. This included:

- Union colleague briefing
- EPIC Pioneers briefing
- Staff networks/groups liaison and offer to attend meeting
- Staff engagement sessions
- Management engagement session

- <u>Dedicated intranet page with presentation, recording of the first engagement session and feedback form.</u>
- Attendance and feedback from DMTs

Staff Engagement Sessions

4.2   Around 240 employees and managers attended one of our 7 engagement sessions. At each session we delivered a presentation on the Smart working concept and the Estates and ICT considerations and support that we would need to support this change.

4.3   Before each session we issued a slido poll/questionnaire to all attendees. We repeated 2 of the same questions from our pulse survey in June/July last year. We wanted to revisit how colleagues currently feel about working from home for all or part of the time and if views had shifted since we undertook the pulse survey last year. Although it was a small sample size (57 respondents) the results are almost exactly the same.

Question	Pulse 2020	SLIDO Poll 2021
I would be open to working from home for all of my working time?	60%	53%
I would be open to working from home for part of my working time?	95%	96%

4.3   During each of the engagement sessions we split colleagues into break out groups to gather their feedback and views on the proposals presented. We asked staff 5 questions and themes coming from each of these questions were as follows:

1. Do you have any comments/suggestions on the names of the 4 working styles and the concept of Smart working in general?

On the whole staff were comfortable with the terminology of the 4 smart work styles. 47 out of the 74 comments gave no specifics and 18 had comments on the terminology which included some suggestions for other names. A couple of comments were 'like the concept & the options, names seem to be clear' and 'group members felt that the working styles were appropriate and everyone in the group could identity with a working style'.

2. What do you like about the proposals?

A proportion of comments just stated that they liked the proposals. The themes that came out most strongly around what they liked were: increased flexibility; supportive IT/technology; reduced time spent commuting, improved productivity. Comments included 'provides flexibility for services to undertake their roles whilst

supporting individual staff in their work/life balance' and 'some felt that they are more productive at home and more in control due to increased autonomy'.

3. What concerns do you have/challenges might there be?

Interestingly there were a vast range of comments in response to this question – of 159 comments they were categorised into 33 themes. There was no one area of significant strength of feedback. The areas with most comments were: technology; work life balance; who decides work styles; confidentiality; new starters; desk availability. A couple of comments were 'IT equipment needs to work efficiently to support people working away from the office/home workers' and 'Staff need separation between work and home'.

4. What further support is required?

There was some cross over with the previous question in terms of suggestions as to how we can overcome some of the potential barriers. The key themes were: equipment; IT support; Technology; guidance for managers. A couple of comments were 'what additional equipment will be provided for home working - monitors, chairs, desks etc.?' and 'will need straight forward guidance which is readily available in relation to new technology'

5. What other suggestions, feedback or ideas do you have?

There were a vast range of responses to this question with the only theme coming out strongly being technology. One really positive response was 'Trafford has shone through the pandemic with the support they have given to their staff'.

6.0 OVERVIEW OF FEEDBACK FROM WIDER ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY

6.1 **DMT'S** - As part of our engagement process, we met and presented our proposals to each DMT (including the CCG). Feedback was overwhelmingly positive towards the smart working concept. There was support for 1-2 days back in the office as we transition back to the "new normal" and most services were anticipating at most a return to 2 days in the office; with the exception of Children's Services, Planning and Regulatory services who anticipated 3 days.

6.2 There were concerns raised around maintaining confidentiality in a flexible work environment voiced by HR, Adult's Services and Children's Services. Equally to enable effective "hybrid working" a fit for purpose desk/room booking facility was felt to be essential along with the ability for whole teams to still be able to come together as and when required. Other feedback included:

- Particular concern to retain a team 'base location' to enable collaboration voiced by the Place Directorate as a whole.

- Suitable training spaces needed by Exchequer and Customer Services.

- Non-office staff need to be acknowledged within the approach.

- Resident access to services needs to be considered at all times.

6.3 **Wider Groups** - Equally there was support for our suggested approach from union colleagues, EPIC pioneers and staff networks and our staff networks were encouraged to also give specific feedback as a group or via the form on the intranet.

6.4 Based on the feedback, no changes to the core proposals need to be made and no issues were raised that hadn't already been anticipated. However we know which areas we need to give more focus on. The leads for this project have been sighted on all of the comments that link to their work stream to ensure they are acknowledged and factored in where possible. The comments mostly link into the next section.

6.0 NEXT STEPS & RECOMMENDATIONS - SMART WORKING ENABLERS

6.1 We are opening our doors to colleagues from September and will welcome staff back into the office with the guideline of up to 1-2 days a week. We are asking all services to maximise all of the 5 working days of the week to reduce the burden on facilities and ensure space within the offices.

6.2 We are asking managers and colleagues to complete check-ins to discuss re-integration and wellbeing to ensure a balance of service/operational requirements along with wellbeing needs.

6.3 Taking into account winter / further waves of the pandemic, the Project Team (which is cross functional ICT, HR and Business Transformation) will use the time until March 2022 to plan and implement updated home equipment, office based solutions for colleagues and ensure all the necessary support is in place to support the culture change. This will also give managers and colleagues an opportunity to road test the "hybrid working" role. We would expect (subject to any changes in government guidance) to fully implement the smart working styles by March 2022.

7.0 NEXT STEPS AND WORK TO BE UNDERTAKEN

7.1 There are some enablers and supporting work streams to this project, which we need a focus on to ensure we meet our legal responsibilities, improve employee experience and productivity – this should ensure that our new ways of working are successful and the benefits are realised. These include the following which are being progressed:

- Reviewing floor plans with desk allocation by directorate to support the return of staff in September, along with support with how spaces are shared. We are currently reviewing options to enable a fit for purpose desk and room booking system.

- New technology is proposed to be tested and evaluated further in rooms 5 & 9 at Trafford Town Hall and meeting room 5 at sale waterside for a further 3 months, we will also expand the meeting technology pilot to meeting room 12 at the Town Hall. We have had some evaluation (positive and constructive) but we hope to

collect richer data for a further 3 months as footfall increases in each of the spaces. This will allow us to confirm and evidence a correct level of investment in the meeting room technology. In the short term we will be holding live demo/drop in sessions to support colleagues to become familiar and confident in using the meeting room equipment.

- Car parking – We are currently working through a longer term solution to support Smart working and the environment. However, for the month of September as we welcome staff back into the office for 1-2 days a week car parking at Trafford Town Hall will be available on a first come first served basis and existing arrangements at Sale Waterside will continue. We will survey staff throughout September to help shape our proposals whilst reviewing the options (to promote) for sustainable and active travel.

- Appropriate kit in the office, home and hybrid workers – We have secured Covid contain funding to equip up to 200 home workers, work is currently under way to devise a logistics solution to deliver this equipment to staff at home with minimal impact on the organisation. We are working with H&S to define the "core kit" required for a hybrid worker to work safely and productively whilst at home and the potential budgetary impact for existing and new starters.

- Policy development – We have reviewed and updated our home worker and flexi time policy and are currently defining our Smart working policy. Once we have had wider stakeholder input on the smart working policy all updated policies will be sent to CLT to review and sign off for implementation.

- Support for Colleagues and Managers – We have reviewed and refreshed our Health and Wellbeing Pages which includes pages with tools and resources on subject areas such as: returning to the office, leading through Covid and Mental Health and Wellbeing. We appreciate that returning to the office will be a further period of change for colleagues and some staff, understandably may be anxious. We have two virtual workshops to help colleagues with personal change and to support managers to lead through change, which are available for all to attend. Equally we are encouraging all managers and colleagues to have a conversation with their team members during their check in on returning to the workplace. A wellbeing coaching guide has been produced to support managers to have these essential conversations and is available alongside all our other check in tools and support guides. Moving forward we will produce further learning and development support on areas such as "working together as a smart team", "maintaining confidentiality" "inclusive leadership" and "managing by outputs", for example.

- Implementation of Office 365 will be a key enabler to Smart working and work is progressing against this area against the MS 365 implementation plan.

- Work is also underway to make sure that we meet our duty of care both in the office and at home (first aiders, fire marshals, PEPs) and various options are being considered for the reception provision at Trafford Town Hall.

Appendix A: Overview and Principles of Smart working styles

Smart Work Styles	Principles
Home-based Worker	- Contract states home as work base. - Business ICT applications the service uses are efficient accessed from home. - Not required to attend many 'in-person' meetings in Council offices, except may attend for check-ins and team meetings. May have meetings but can be held remotely. - Role requires them to spend the majority of their time at a work station.
Office-based Worker	- Contract states Council setting as work base. - May need a fixed desk/chair or be able to hot desk. - Only works from an office location and doesn't work from home or works from home on a very occasional basis. - May be considered: - Where ICT applications/software or equipment used by the service are not suitable or efficient enough for more than ad hoc home working or working from other locations. - For other business reasons. - As a supportive measure for the employee.
Neighbourhood-based Worker	- Contract states Council setting as work base. - Normally in roles where they spend most of their time working with service users/residents and working patterns/location are tied to this direct interaction. - Normally won't use a PC much if at all – may have shared access to one for certain tasks. - Examples of this are: cleaners; catering staff; school crossing patrol; passenger assistants; staff who work in nurseries, care facilities, children's homes etc.
Hybrid Worker	- Contract states Council setting as work base. - Work can be carried out from a variety of locations including council buildings, the home, partner's offices, with service users. - Expectation that on average a minimum of 1 day per week will be spent in an office base. - When in a Council office building will hot desk.