



## **POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 29TH SEPTEMBER 2020**

**SUBJECT: FLEXIBLE WORKING**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES**

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To seek the views of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee of a more formal approach to flexible working that builds upon the progress made in respect of working in a flexible manner throughout the lockdown prior to its consideration and determination at Cabinet.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 Because of the speed and nature of the COVID-19 lockdown, the Council was required to equip and train a significant proportion of its workforce to work and to provide services remote from their usual places of work and, in many cases, from home.
- 2.2 While the transformation to this new model of service delivery happened at a significant pace, the technology platforms that have formed the foundations of remote working have proven to be intuitive and stable.
- 2.3 Some sections of the workforce have been operating remotely and very effectively since the beginning of lockdown and, over time, further services have been enabled and brought back online with much less of a reliance on buildings, premises and travel.
- 2.4 This has enabled many services to the public to be delivered safely and continuously and for the Council's employees to manage multiple aspects of their professional and personal lives in a way that has brought about a much greater balance than was possible previously.
- 2.5 Of course, not everyone has found the isolated nature of working remotely a positive experience and the results of the Flexible Working survey provide a healthy note of caution. Whatever the Council does from here on in, must be truly flexible and meet the differing needs of its employees, as well as reducing any operating costs associated with service delivery.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 In terms of recommendations, Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee are asked to recommend that Cabinet:

- 3.1.1 Acknowledge the benefits of the flexible working arrangements that have supported service delivery across the Council since March 2020.
- 3.1.2 Agree to formally adopt the flexible working principles set out at Appendix 1 as a core principle for supporting service delivery.
- 3.1.3 Delegates authority to the Head of Paid Service, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member, to determine on a service by service basis the optimum approach to flexible working and accommodation requirements.
- 3.1.4 Note the need to consider how the current flexi system can be aligned with and support the principles of flexible working through ongoing discussions with Trade Unions.
- 3.1.5 That Members note the potential investment associated with the deployment of flexible working in relation to IT equipment and furniture as well as the potential savings that can be generated through the rationalisation of buildings and reductions in other operating expenditure.
- 3.1.6 Agrees to receive additional reports, as required, to agree funding and any associated HR and IT Policy changes that might be required
- 3.1.7 Endorse the proposal to set aside an initial one-off sum of £500k to be funded from Capital Earmarked Reserves to ensure that the Council can respond proactively in the short-term to commence the roll-out of new flexible ways of working.
- 3.1.8 Endorses the development of an appropriate training and development programme for managers and staff to ensure the benefits of flexible working are maximised

#### **4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 The authority has gone through an unprecedented period of flexible working in relation to the current Coronavirus pandemic. It is wholly evident that there are options to enhance the standard approach to office accommodation that will benefit staff, the Council, the residents of Caerphilly County Borough and the wider environment.
- 4.2 The progress achieved over recent months in delivering services through flexible arrangements must now be captured and built upon to ensure services can remain sustainable over the long term, whatever challenges may emerge.

#### **5. THE REPORT**

- 5.1 The current pandemic has provided a stimulus to show the benefits of working in a more flexible manner. The progress made and the lessons learned over the last four months can directly shape the blueprint for future service delivery and redesign. Embedding flexible practices will enable the organisation to be ready to manage any future crisis as well as reflect the Council's need to remain an attractive and progressive employer.
- 5.2 It is acknowledged that it is not going to be possible to design a one size fits all approach and that flexible working models will need to be developed and tailored to each service area and, in some cases, these models will differ depending upon role. The core focus, however, will remain a reduction in the reliance of the workforce and services upon physical buildings.
- 5.3 The success of any flexible implementation will be linked to a clear set of objectives, a consistently applied corporate approach, a strong communication and engagement plan as well as a suite of policies that support the new ways of working.

- 5.4 Team management and appropriate support will also be vital to the success of flexible working and Managers will need to be provided the necessary training and tools to be able to manage and support a distributed workforce while maintaining and optimising the benefits of team working.
- 5.5 It should also be noted that flexible working is not simply home working. Home working will form part of a range of flexible arrangements. Some employees will use their home as their office base, some will operate across multiple office buildings and some may even take advantage of working at times from other buildings. The flexible working approach should support staff to work where and when it best suits them while still ensuring the needs of the business are supported.
- 5.6 The introduction of a broader flexible working approach will be a move to a trust-based organisation with employees empowered to deliver their roles flexibly. Measures will still be in place, however, to ensure staff achieve their required tasks and outputs and fulfil their contracted hours.
- 5.7 Organisations that have introduced 'flexible working' opportunities (such as the NHS, other local authorities, business in general), have confirmed improvements in the following areas:

For the employer:

- Increased motivation and engagement of staff
- Increased productivity and Efficiency
- Improved business continuity – less disruption due to weather, office security issues, travel problems etc.
- Reduction in organisational and personal carbon footprint
- Reduced parking
- Improved staff performance
- Ability to attract and retain high quality talent
- Reduced absenteeism and related costs
- Reduced staff turnover with associated costs and reduction in lost knowledge, skills and experience
- Asset rationalisation

For employees:

- Reduced travel time and related cost.
- Personal productivity linked to fewer distractions, improved focus, concentration, creativity, better use of skills and less frustration due to fewer barriers.
- Improved work life balance
- Increase in wellbeing, health and happiness linked to reduced stress, better sense of control, ability to integrate healthy eating, childcare responsibility, caring responsibilities and exercise into the day
- Increased engagement as a result of the autonomy and trust at work

- 5.8 One of the other gains typically witnessed through flexible working is around productivity. In many cases, productivity when working flexibly can be maintained, even enhanced, because commutes and office distractions are often gone.
- 5.9 It is equally important to set out the potential negative impacts to flexible working. Some of the downsides can include the following:
- Communication difficulties
  - Longer working hours
  - Poor posture
  - Staff can be more difficult to oversee

- IT issues
- Lone working issues
- Different management skills required
- Individual well-being
- Manual handling

5.10 Through effective and targeted training for managers and staff and appropriate investment in the tools and resources needed to work flexibly, many of these negatives can be addressed

5.11 The appendices to this report contain a detailed exploration of some of the requirements of a flexible workforce as well as some of the key considerations. Some of the headlines from the appendices are set out over the coming paragraphs.

#### 5.12 Flexible Working Principles

The Council has in a place a set of 'Agile Working Principles' which set out guidance on working flexibly. These were introduced in 2019 as a means of encouraging the use of flexible working and providing the necessary guidance and support to staff and managers who wished to deliver their roles flexibly. These principles will need to be reviewed and adjusted as the numbers of staff working flexibly has increased exponentially.

#### 5.13 The New Normal?

The pandemic has created a new normal that has transformed the organisation and society alike. The use of flexible working approaches over recent months has demonstrated the opportunities that exist to create new services that meet specific needs, break down barriers across services, bring previously disparate resources together and quickly meet the changing needs of staff and residents. It has also become clear that a 'one size fits all' approach to flexible working should not be introduced. Instead, a blended approach should be developed that ensures the needs of all staff and customers can be met.

#### 5.14 Foundations for a Successful Flexible Working Programme

Our staff will be key to the delivery of this major change programme and their buy in will be key to its success. What will be equally important will be the policies that support it, access to the right systems, tools and training and the communication strategy that will bring this new way of working to life. There will also be a need to develop management systems that get the best out of staff and managers, providing the necessary support and enabling the needs of the business to be met across a distributed workforce.

#### 5.15 A New Customer Interface - Public Interaction and Digital Capability

The restrictions on movement that have underpinned lockdown have demonstrated that many of our residents have the access and the skills to conduct many aspects of their daily lives online. The assessment of digital capability across Caerphilly explored in Appendix 4 identifies that 75% of the adult population in the Borough have all five of the basic digital skills required. While this provides an opportunity to increasingly engage our residents in new ways and across different hours of business, our services must continue to support those that do not have either the access or the digital skills at present.

#### 5.16 Health, Safety and Wellbeing Considerations

With a potential move to a more formal approach to flexible working there are multiple benefits that emerge in terms of Health and Wellbeing. Increases in productivity, being able to better balance the competing demands of increasingly busy work and home lives and the positive impact of feeling trusted to get the job done, have all been proven to enhance an individual's wellbeing. Conversely, there are individuals whose wellbeing could be negatively impacted by

working remotely and the Council will need to work hard to strike the right balance, put in place the right support and ensure that the wellbeing needs of all of our staff are being met.

#### 5.17 Flexible Working Policy Considerations

The Council already has 'Agile Working Principles' in place to support flexible working approaches but their use has been sporadic to date. Similarly, the Council has a range of HR and IT policies designed to support work life balance and safe systems of work. Over the coming months, these policies will each need to be reviewed and potentially adjusted to support a broader application of flexible working. Any changes that result would be developed in consultation with staff and our Trade Union partners.

In the short term, and as a means of ensuring the ongoing wellbeing of our staff, those staff working away from the office will be asked to seek line manager approval in advance to work longer than their contracted hours. This interim adjustment will not restrict staff from being able to accrue time off in lieu, but it will help managers ensure that workloads are being appropriately balanced while staff are operating remotely.

#### 5.18 Environmental Impact

During the pandemic, there has been a significant reduction in the number of journeys undertaken by staff to and from work and travelling to and from meetings during the working day. This has resulted in a sizeable increase in the air quality, not just in Caerphilly, but across the world. An enhanced approach to flexible working would clearly provide these benefits over a sustained period as well as reducing the Council's operating expenditure.

#### 5.19 IT and Equipment

As a result of the need to transition to flexible working arrangements in only a matter of days, many Council staff are working remotely at present using their own IT equipment, desk etc. As the Council moves to formalise its flexible working arrangements over the coming months Council staff must be provided with fit for purpose equipment, tools and systems that support them to do their job as efficiently and effectively as possible. It is likely that these packages will be linked to particular roles and separate reports will be brought forward over the coming months to provide a sustainable funding package.

#### 5.20 Investment and Property Requirements

An initial exercise undertaken by Property Services has identified that currently there are circa 2000 desks available within the authority for use by staff. If service provision was undertaken in a flexible manner, property portfolio rationalisation opportunities could emerge which could result in 8 buildings being surplus to requirements and savings being generated in terms of building occupancy and reduced running costs.

#### 5.21 Flexible Working Staff Survey June 2020

Nearly 1500 employees completed a flexible working staff survey during June 2020 giving some fantastic insights in to the benefits and challenges facing staff working remotely. There some very positive views shared on flexible working in overall terms as well as some concerns. The overarching results are provided in Appendix 10.

The key aspects of the survey revealed that 50% of respondents would like to split their time between home and office working, 23% having a preference for working from home and 21% wanting to work from the office but have the option to work from home occasionally. These results clearly demonstrate that with the expansion of flexible working there is likely to be a surplus of office accommodation linking back to the outcome set out in 5.20.

#### 5.22 **Conclusion**

When considering the way the world has adapted and changed, particularly in the light of the current pandemic, it is wholly evident that a new way of working can and should be supported to ensure that the organisation remains as flexible as possible and is able to react to any future pandemics or similar events that would restrict service provision. The organisation may well need to turn on and off services more frequently as we respond to the current pandemic.

- 5.23 Flexible working has been proven to work in Caerphilly. Services provided by the Council have not “fallen over” or ceased, in fact, it has been possible to continue to deliver many of them as a direct result.
- 5.24 The gains made over the last few months, albeit out of necessity, cannot now be lost. Now is the time to embrace transformational change and shape an organisation that is able to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century head on.

## **6. ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 There have been no assumptions made within this report.

## **7. LINKS TO RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES**

### **7.1 Corporate Plan 2018-2023.**

- 7.1.1 The report links to the Council’s Corporate Plan 2018-2023, and contributes to the Well-being Objectives, as follows:
- 7.1.2 Objective 1 - Improve education opportunities for all – Flexible working has and will continue to allow teachers to deliver lessons remotely.
- 7.1.3 Objective 2 - Enabling employment – Flexible working promotes more autonomy over where and when staff work, thus affording flexibility for enabling balance between work, leisure, family and caring responsibilities. This will open up more opportunities for people to apply for roles that may have previously been unsuitable due to the lack of flexibility around working hours and locations.
- 7.1.4 Objective 3 - Address the supply, condition and sustainability of homes throughout the county borough and provide advice, assistance or support to help improve people’s health and well-being – The ability to better balance the professional and personal aspects of our employees lives, combined with application of appropriate wellbeing and management support for these new ways of working should create an environment where employee health and well-being will flourish.
- 7.1.5 Objective 4 - Promote a modern, integrated and sustainable transport system that increases opportunity, promotes prosperity and minimises the adverse impacts on the environment - There are clear environmental benefits realised by flexible working in terms of office/asset rationalisation and lesser journeys attributed to commuting or work based travel. This will assist in reducing the impact on the climate and improving air quality. With less cars on the road it is already evident that more people are prepared to engage in active travel.
- 7.1.6 Objective 5 - Creating a county borough that supports a healthy lifestyle in accordance with the sustainable Development Principle within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 - Improving work life balance and reducing the need to commute utilising flexible working offers the opportunity for staff to partake in more social, sports and leisure activities and to utilise active travel options which will improve health and well-being.
- 7.1.7 Objective 6 - Support citizens to remain independent and improve their well-being – Flexible

working when linked into a digital transformation of service delivery will assist residents to access services at the time and location that suits them helping them to remain independent.

- 7.2 There are further links to the TeamCaerphilly transformation strategy, firstly echoing the mantra - *A new "whole-authority" operating model to ensure a resilient Caerphilly County Borough for the future.*
- 7.3 Further synergies include – *"We will need to move away from traditional models of service delivery, embrace change, be prepared to innovate and take well managed risks. We will also need to modernise through harnessing emerging technologies and fully engaging with our workforce and communities".*
- 7.4 The recognition of strong corporate will and clear strategy, with equal buy-in by the leadership team, is again reflected in the TeamCaerphilly transformation statement;

*"This ambitious programme of change articulates the combined vision of the Cabinet and the Corporate Leadership Team and has been developed over the last 12 months. In making this Strategy a reality, courageous political and officer leadership will be essential to ensure that we successfully deliver the outcomes that we are aiming to achieve."*

- 7.5 Furthermore, the Cabinet commitments already defined, include: -
- We will build on Caerphilly County Borough Council's reputation as an innovative, high performing local authority.
  - We will ensure we have an engaged and motivated workforce.
  - We will always strive to ensure Caerphilly County Borough Council delivers value for money in everything it does.
- 7.6 Similarly, the notion of harnessing the success of the recent transformation in view of flexible/digital working and customer interaction (equally with the corporate appetite for such) can be harmonised with the **Customer and digital strategy**; whereby the Cabinet Members foreword describes being brave / bold in approach to embracing technologies and innovation to deliver citizen centric services, including an flexible, iterative approach to our work.

## 8. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

- 8.1 This report links directly to the Well-being goals within the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015:
- A prosperous Wales
  - A resilient Wales
  - A healthier Wales
  - A more equal Wales
  - A Wales of cohesive communities
  - A globally responsible Wales
- 8.2 It is consistent in all of the five ways of working as defined within the sustainable development principle in the Act that it supports:
- 8.2.1 **Long-term** – Flexible working promotes many long-term benefits for the organisation as a whole, with both employer and employee recognising substantial improvements as outlined within the report. The introduction of flexible working will have a positive impact on future generations and primarily will offer safeguard in view of; improved business continuity, reduction in organisational and personal carbon footprint, improved work life balance and increase in wellbeing, health and happiness. Equally, the Council's customer-centric ethos will be enhanced and the needs and demands of Caerphilly's citizens best met.

- 8.2.2 **Integration** – A flexible workforce will form an integral part of the Council's overall transformation strategy and complements the suite of policies that serve to balance home and work life commitments. There current crisis has provided opportunities for the many varied services of the authority to become truly "One Council". Each service area is clearly assisting others to ensure the highest priority objectives are delivered to the customer. There is clear evidence that the flexible working approach has allowed true service integration across the council, with other service sectors and primarily with its residents and customers at the heart of its approach.
- 8.2.3 **Involvement** – All staff need to be fully engaged in view of the flexible working transformation as not all roles and responsibilities are conducive to flexible working, and there will be a notable disparity between blue and white-collar workers and those that need to provide front line service delivery. There needs to be an effective communication plan to ensure the strategy behind flexible working, along with the suitability of application, is transparent to all parties. This will require the involvement of staff (staff survey already conducted) and engagement with all relevant stakeholders.
- 8.2.4 **Collaboration** – Flexible working not only brings the Council's internal departments closer together to deliver the best working model and to move to the "One Council" approach, it has also already promoted wider collaboration within the private / public sector due to the ease in which meetings and working arrangements have continued almost seamlessly with the utilisation of a digital approach.
- 8.2.5 **Prevention** – Carefully prioritised and justified budget commitment for flexible working platforms will ensure confidence in both application and investment. This will assist in ensuring service continuity, reducing the risk to service failure during any future crisis or emergency. Embracing transformation to flexible working will ensure the Council is both resilient and flexible in terms of business continuity during adverse conditions and aligns with priorities to improve the way the council operates in order to protect the environment for future generations in many aspects but particularly from an impact on the climate.

## 9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 An EIA screening has been completed in accordance with the Council's Strategic Equality Plan and supplementary guidance. No potential for unlawful discrimination and/or low level or minor negative impact has been identified; therefore, a full EIA has not been carried out. The flexible working approach will allow more flexibility in where and how people undertake their roles which will assist in providing equality.

## 10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Moving forward there will be far reaching financial implications from this report. The detailed financial implications will be firmed up in the medium to longer-term as specific requirements become clearer following further discussions with Heads of Service. Further reports will be prepared for Scrutiny and Cabinet which will include detailed costings and funding proposals, along with details of where revenue budget savings will arise from the new working models.
- 10.2 It is also is vitally important that we are able to respond proactively in the short-term to commence the roll-out of new flexible ways of working. Cabinet is therefore asked to approve a proposal to set aside an initial one-off sum of £500k to be funded from Capital Earmarked Reserves.

## 11. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS



- 11.1 There will be wide-ranging personnel implications from this report. There will need to be consultations undertaken with the trade unions and staff in relation to policies and procedures.
- 11.2 A staff survey has already been undertaken in relation to flexible working which identified overwhelming support for the initiative. Details of the survey results are highlighted in Appendix 10.

## **12. CONSULTATIONS**

- 12.1 A full list of consultees is included at the end of the report. Comments from all consultees are summarised below.
- 12.2 The Consultations responses received from the Trade Unions have been included in full as a separate Response Pack attached to this report.

## **13. STATUTORY POWER**

- 13.1 Local Government Act 1972 and 2000

Author: Marcus Lloyd, Head of Infrastructure

Consultees: Cllr Philippa Marsden, Leader of the Council  
Cabinet Members  
Christina Harray, Chief Executive  
Corporate Management Team  
Leadership Team  
Cllr Jamie Pritchard, Chair of Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee  
Cllr Gez Kirby, Vice Chair of Policy and resources Scrutiny Committee  
Cllr Colin Mann, Leader of the Plaid Group  
Cllr Graham Simmonds, Leader of the Independent Group  
Trade Unions

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Caerphilly County Borough Council - Agile Working Principles  
Appendix 2 – The New Normal?  
Appendix 3 – Some Foundations for a Successful Flexible Working Programme  
Appendix 4 – A New Customer Interface - Public Interaction and Digital Capability  
Appendix 5 - Health, Safety and Well-Being Considerations  
Appendix 6 - Flexible Working Policy Considerations  
Appendix 7 - Environmental Impact  
Appendix 8 - IT and Equipment  
Appendix 9 - Investment and Property Requirements  
Appendix 10 – Flexible Working Staff Survey June 2020  
Appendix 11 – Trade Union Response Pack

## **Appendix 1 – Caerphilly County Borough Council - Agile Working Principles**

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

#### **(i) The concept of Agile Working**

Agile working is a transformational tool that enables organisations to work smarter by eliminating all barriers to working efficiently. It uses communications and information technology to enable people to work in ways which best suit their needs without the traditional limitations of where and when tasks must be performed.

Agile working can support staff to:

- Have more autonomy over where they work.
- Have more autonomy over when they work.

Agile working is based on the complete flexibility of work to drive long-term organisational success. It can unlock value for both the employer and the employee.

#### **(ii) The Benefits of Agile Working?**

Organisations that have introduced 'agile working' opportunities (such as the NHS), have confirmed improvements in the following areas:

For the employer:

- Increased motivation and engagement of staff
- Increased productivity and Efficiency
- Improved business continuity – less disruption due to weather, office security issues, travel problems etc.
- Reduction in organisational and personal carbon footprint
- Reduced parking
- Improved staff performance
- Ability to attract and retain high quality talent
- Reduced absenteeism and related costs
- Reduced staff turnover with associated costs and reduction in lost knowledge, skills and experience
- Asset rationalisation

For employees:

- Reduced travel time and related cost.
- Personal productivity linked to fewer distractions, improved focus, concentration, creativity, better use of skills and less frustration due to fewer barriers.
- Improved work life balance

- Increase in wellbeing, health and happiness linked to reduced stress, better sense of control, ability to integrate healthy eating, childcare responsibility, caring responsibilities and exercise into the day
- Increased engagement as a result of the autonomy and trust at work

## 2. **AGILE WORKING IN THE CONTEXT OF CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL (CCBC)**

This section identifies why CCBC might consider starting an agile working programme.

### (i) **Cabinet's clear vision**

Caerphilly's Cabinet have set a clear vision for the Council with staff engagement at its core. The standards that underpin this vision that agile working could compliment, are highlighted in bold:

- We will always do our best to protect jobs and services within the current challenging financial climate
- We will build on Caerphilly County Borough Council's reputation as an innovative, high performing local authority
- We will ensure we have an engaged and motivated workforce
- We will always strive to ensure Caerphilly County Borough Council delivers value for money in everything it does
- We will help protect the most vulnerable people in our society and make safeguarding a key priority
- We will always welcome feedback and consider the views of residents, staff and other key stakeholders
- We will be open, honest and transparent in everything we do

### (ii) **The catalyst / drivers for agile working:**

There are a number of catalysts that encourage further exploration of agile working and the benefits that it could bring to Caerphilly.

For CCBC the clear drivers are:

#### **The Council's need to keep up with the pace of change as a progressive employer in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.**

Our approach to working life is changing fast. Both men and women want to find a balance between work, leisure, family and caring responsibilities.

Studies commissioned by the Employment Human Rights Commission (EHRC) support that people (regardless of gender) want a wider range of flexible job opportunities in all types of jobs. They want policies that reflect the social and economic benefits of integrating work life balance and care.

Agile working methodologies that afford staff more autonomy over where and when they work can support this position.

## **CCBC's Business Continuity Plan Review (Inclement Weather)**

The Guardian Newspaper reported in 2018 that gridlocked motorways, multiple rail cancellations, a string of crashes on motorways, empty restaurants and idle diggers seen across Britain at that time could cost the economy at least £1bn a day.

In March 2018 the Council felt it was important to acknowledge the fantastic work undertaken by employees during the 4 days of difficult conditions. Without whom all our roads would not have been cleared, care could not have been provided to the most vulnerable in our society and emergency conditions could not have been dealt with to name just a few.

Conversely however, the inclement weather forced many staff to stay close to home and hundreds of Caerphilly staff did not attend work for this reason. The enforced office closures for health & safety reasons exacerbated this position.

In this context, many staff might have been equipped to work from home or nearer to home during the office closure period through the effective implementation of a refined business continuity plan that caters for such events, i.e. a plan that takes advantage of the technology and/or the office space at its disposal.

A truly agile workforce is a mobile one and there is great strength in a mobile workforce to meet the needs of the Council and its residents during periods of inclement weather. This was proven in the context of the hundreds of staff who did turn up to work and who did step out of role with transferrable skills to assist colleagues/residents to go about their business safely.

If a post suits agile working in terms of Location, the relevant service area can build this into its business continuity plan and extend the opportunity to staff to continue working safely during periods of inclement weather.

### **Savings targets / MTFP**

Some of the most successful companies have led the way on re-assessing how their workplaces operate and have introduced flexible and agile options for their employees. They did this to improve their business but it has also got them in good shape for tougher times and fit to take on new opportunities in the future.

The Council's vision for the future is ambitious against the MTFP target savings of £39m over the next four years. In meeting the MTFP targets, there is always the potential for asset rationalisation to be an outcome. The impact of any such asset realisation on office space is unknown at this time and cannot be predicted. It would however serve the Council well to know the extent to which agile working could extend across Services if necessary in the future.

### **The Gender Pay Gap**

Flexible working and agile working methodologies are intrinsic in supporting the reduction of the gender pay gap.

The government has supported a series of incremental changes in statutory entitlements to increase men's take up of family leave and make it better paid and more flexible, for example greater flexibility in how paternity and parental leave can be taken including shared parental leave. Organisations are being encouraged to raise awareness of entitlements and to open up flexible working/agile working opportunities particularly for men.

### **3 AGILE WORKING IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ONGOING WORKFORCE PLANNING EXERCISE**

The Council must ensure that it continues to have a workforce that is sustainable over the long term and is equipped with the necessary skills to meet the needs of our citizens as well as the changing demands for our services.

In July 2018, the Interim Chief Executive wrote to all staff inviting expressions of interest for reduction in our hours of work, flexible retirement or wish to leave the Council's employment under the premise of Voluntary early retirement and/or Severance.

In the Autumn Term of 2018, all who have submitted a form will receive feedback on their expressions of interest. All expressions of interest will be carefully considered and those that can reasonably be supported will progress to the next stage.

The results of this workforce planning exercise will have an impact on the Council's staffing structure. The extent of that impact is yet to be determined but will inevitably steer service managers to plan accordingly in support of staff who will continue to provide their service to the Council following it.

### **4. HOW FLEXIBLE ARE SERVICES**

#### **(i) Is it reasonable to think that staff can be given more autonomy over where and when they work?**

Yes it is but one size methodology will not fit all. Major economic and technology-driven shifts have caused significant social change. New technologies, data analytics and social networks have all had an impact on the way that people communicate, collaborate and work. The rapid acceleration of technology has changed what is possible in the workplace.

The way in which we think about office space, how and when we work has started to change. With the ownership of smartphones ever increasing, the internet, cloud communications and smart devices, it has never been easier to plug in and work from anywhere.

#### **(ii) Which jobs suit agile working?**

Most jobs will have some scope for agility in the context of where staff work and/or when staff work.

The Council's services however are diverse and include cleaning, catering, refuse and recycling, housing, social services/care services, leisure, youth, libraries, education services including adult education, technical services, planning and highways. 5

Before any service manager can advise on which posts suit agile working, a table top exercise should be undertaken to consider how much flexibility is available in each and every role in their Service Area.

#### **(iii) What Heads of Service might consider in the table top exercise?**

Heads of Service should consider if posts are:

- Location Dependent or Location Independent
- Time Dependent or Time Independent, i.e.

By mapping every job in their service area to identify how much flexibility can realistically be achieved for each role. For example:

Post	Location Dependent	Location Independent	Time Dependent	Time Independent	Comment – Be clear on how much flexibility the post affords
Post 1		X		X	Offers full choice over where to work. Significant flexibility over when to work.
Post 2	X		X		No choice of where to work. Working hours are set. Flexible working applications welcome.
Post 3	X			X	No choice over where to work but infrastructure supports significant time independence

**(iv) Explanation of terms:**

Location Dependent Receptionist, home carer, refuse collector, highway maintenance operative, youth worker and/or any other such post that requires the member of staff to work from, or, at a specified venue to carry out specific works.

These will mostly be front line facing posts that provide a service directly to/for the public from a fixed location and no other location will do. Location Dependent Posts do not support staff to have autonomy over where they actually work.

Location Independent A post is location independent if it does not fall within the descriptor for location dependent.

These are posts that suit hot desking; drop in and work locations; Mobile working where technology supports staff to work remotely; Home working (substantial or ad-hoc); mixed seating (where different roles are located together to gain efficiencies); multi-site (fixed or flexible).

As technology improves, the traditional limitations of having to report to a specific office or place of work to carry out the duties of location independent posts could become a thing of the past.

Time Dependent A post is time dependent if staff working hours are set and immovable. In such posts staff must be contactable and able to commit to their post at a specified time and no other time will do.

Time Dependent Posts do not support staff to have complete autonomy over when they actually work.

Most posts however will afford some time autonomy. In Time Dependent Posts this is likely to take the form of part time hours or compressed hours, term time only working, i.e. agreed working patterns around which there is clarity and others are working alongside each other to meet the full needs of the service in terms of total time required to be covered.

Time Independent A post is time independent if it supports staff to have complete autonomy or part autonomy over when they work.

Most jobs lend themselves to part autonomy, which means that staff could to a greater or lesser extent determine their own working pattern throughout the week and/or hours throughout the day but that at certain times they would need to be available to attend scheduled meetings, training etc.

**(v) What might Heads of Service do with the results of the table top exercise?**

The results of the table top exercise will give a good indication of how much flexibility is available in each role and lead to the development of an agile working model that suits that Service Area. One size will not fit all.

The Head of Service might also give consideration to the results of this desk top exercise in relevance to reviewing business continuity in the event of enforced Council/office closure in the case of Inclement weather, etc.

**5. POLICIES THAT UNDERPIN FLEXIBLE WORKING**

The Council already offers numerous benefits aimed at making it easier for employees to balance home and work life commitments including flexible working, home working, career breaks, adoption leave, carers' leave, salary sacrifice childcare voucher scheme, job share, leave of absence, parental, shared parental and paternity leave, part-time working, shift/day swapping and term-time working opportunities.

Agile working in terms of offering more flexibility over when and where staff work, could complement this suite of policies.

The flexible working policy and the home working policy specifically lend themselves to agile working in the context explained. A review of these policies in the context of promoting agile working / mobile working could be prioritised.

Other policies/procedures requiring review within the context of agile working will include 'expenses'; 'Insurance'; 'Data Privacy and Guidelines';

**6. MANAGER RESPONSIBILITIES**

- (i) Keep an open mind /a willingness to embrace change – Managing employees in a flexible / agile working environment can be a challenge and this in itself can encourage the continuation of traditional working patterns and rituals.

In an agile working environment where posts are largely Location Independent, employees will need to understand:

The specific parameters of the agile working arrangement in respect of location and time as appropriate.

- What they are expected to do (will involve prioritising, planning ahead and clear objective setting)
- The methodology for agreeing and monitoring workload
- How success will be measured
- How this feeds into the performance development cycle
- What communication is required from them
- How the line manager will communicate with them

Managers will need support too. Agile working will lead to a change in corporate culture that includes the dissipation of control frameworks in favour of 'TRUST'

- (ii) Develop a business plan – following the table top exercise, Service Managers might develop a business case – clarifying the business benefits and gains for their service area in relevance to the drivers/catalysts referred to in point 2 above. Within the business plan:

Clarify the agile working model that will suit the area of service - This would be largely led by the results of the table top exercise and reference to point 4 above.

Identify the barriers and enablers that would support the introduction of agile working opportunities in the Service Area, for example:

- Changes to working practices and IT support required.
- Culture, performance management and training requirements
- Policies required to support the new ways of working (note point 4 above)
- Costs and benefits
- Impact Assessment
- Communication plans
- Implementation timetable



## Appendix 2 – The New Normal?

Directors have all reviewed their services and have considered what a “New World Norm” could look like for the future. The key outcome is a supportive approach to introduce flexible working as a normal part of service delivery going forward. Flexible working in many sectors is already seen as the norm and although Caerphilly could be seen as slightly behind the curve this is a great opportunity for the authority to embrace a truly positive transformational change.

As a result of the pandemic response there has been much cross-fertilisation of teams across the Council which has demonstrated the benefits of skill sharing, synergies in projects and creating more diverse and responsive teams. This style of working promotes opportunities to create more flexible service delivery to support customer needs and to help manage a more flexible and diverse workforce which could lead to greater retention, engagement and opportunities for staff.

The co-location of services and delivery, at times and locations when residents are most likely to engage, could change our relationship with residents so that we are seen less as an institution and more as a supportive Council here to help and assist our communities.

Increasing our use of digital tools to help support our staff and customers will help limit demand on a return to the previous "normal". There is clear recognition amongst staff that the pandemic has proven the ability for technology to expand service capacity and that skills / tools now being employed should form the blueprint for future settings.

It is important to recognise that sometimes face to face is the only method for some residents and such reassurance services (particularly for vulnerable/older people) should continue, particularly in areas such as social services. There may always be requirements to send letters and paper forms, appreciating that there are those citizens that will not or cannot engage digitally. However, to further promote / enable the digital front door to Caerphilly's services, there is a recognised benefit to having Digital Champions and greater Wi-Fi / Mi-Fi provision in the community to support service needs.

There is wider research that promotes the use of voice activated services to help those who wouldn't engage with digital interface as it can be perceived as too hard. This is an area that many organisations have already successfully introduced and will need further research and possible trials.

Business continuity is key going forward. The Council has proven that it can and has delivered the vast majority of services remotely. Although this has been through necessity it is evident that it can be achieved and that it works. It is essential that the momentum gained in the past few months must not be lost as services need to be responsive to further peaks in infection rates or even new pandemics that could occur in the future. There is a need to maintain the ability to flex services or even turn on and off as the situation necessitates.

Greater digital presence is called on to allow a more integrated and autonomous customer service offer, adopting new or building on existing initiatives. There are many opportunities if suitably navigated in tandem with greater transparency of service provisions, to deliver improved customer relationships and lessen the burden of time-consuming complaints and service requests.

In the medium to longer term there may be the opportunity to reduce office accommodation requirements. This could produce ongoing revenue savings and possible one-off capital receipts that could be re-invested in service provision.

To move to a more flexible and digitally focussed service provision there is a requirement for a significant financial investment which will need to be fully identified and funded. This could be considered on an invest to save basis. However, the savings are much wider than purely direct financial impacts. There are savings in regard fuel usage, carbon emissions, building requirements, etc that will impact positively on the residents of the borough.

### **Appendix 3 – Some Foundations for a Successful Flexible Working Programme**

Staff buy-in will be key to the success of any change in approach to service delivery. Staff will need to be provided with the equipment to allow them to work more flexible. They will need to be trained appropriately and be clear on how they can best work in this manner. Appropriate mechanisms for ensuring staff welfare will need to be introduced to ensure any required support is available and easily accessible

Staff will need to understand that this new way of working will provide much more flexibility in how they undertake their roles. There will be a clear need for outcome-based measures to be put in place along with many other support mechanisms such as HR, Manager and peer support, etc

A culture change will be needed at all levels of the Council, from staff to Managers to Elected Members. The days of doing what we have always done have gone. A clear, effective communications and engagement strategy will be key. This will also need to emanate out to the public interface. The customers will also need to understand the necessity for change.

Not everyone will be equipped to work flexible. There will be instances where the new working environment is not suitable for staff to undertake their roles. This could be down to security and privacy from both a personal and work perspective. Although the service may suit flexible working Managers will need to review each role and circumstance individually to ensure that it can be undertaken safely and appropriately.

Social distancing requirements are likely to be in place for the longer term or at least until a proven vaccine is available and this could be a number of years away. In order to facilitate social distancing, all staff working across buildings over a traditional 9 to 5 pattern is no longer an option. New ways of working must be found and implemented.

## **Appendix 4 – A New Customer Interface - Public Interaction and Digital Capability**

Public interaction with services has been changing over the years with a reduction in face to face contact and an increase in telephony and online contact. This is likely to increase over the short term as residents become increasingly used to undertaking many everyday activities over the internet. The pandemic has proven that a significant proportion of the population is now digitally enabled.

An assessment of the “Digital Capability Within Caerphilly Population” highlights the extent to which our residents are able to access digital services for many aspects of their lives. The move to support a more digitally enabled and aware customer fits neatly with the proposal to have a more flexible approach to service delivery.

While the assessment highlights that 15% of adults in the wider Gwent region are not currently on-line, it also highlights that 75% of the Caerphilly adult population have all 5 basic digital skills.

Housing rent payments to the Council have seen a 20% reduction in the use of cash/cheque and now only 12% of rents are being paid in this way. Conversely the Council has seen an increase of 8% in internet payments and 10% in telephone payments.

Across our Customer First offices there has been a marked downturn in footfall for a variety of payments at these locations. There has also been a significant increase in the use of the automated payment option – IVR (Integrated Voice Response).

On average footfall has reduced by 19% between 2018/19 and 2019/20 and has resulted in an average reduction of 33% in the value of payments collected in person.

Since March 2020 Customer services offices have been closed and all customer interactions have been via telephone or digital services. There is a growing confidence and acceptance of on-line, real times services.

For those that are not digitally enabled there are a variety of training options already in place and a variety of further initiatives are being considered to assist in moving them to a more appropriate payment channel.

The authority has already obtained support to make Caerphilly and Blackwood town centres wi-fi enabled with funding from Brexit. This is ready to be rolled out in the coming weeks/months. There is no reason that this cannot be widened for other towns and villages to provide greater access opportunities for residents. This could be coupled with community hub type locations where residents could attend to undertake online payments if they have limited wi-fi access at home and also obtain assistance in the early days on how to undertake this payment option at these facilities. This could be centred around helping people to help themselves in the longer term.

## **Appendix 5 - Health, Safety and Well-Being Considerations**

Living and working through an unprecedented event such as the Coronavirus pandemic can be a worrying time for everyone. It's all too easy in uncertain times to neglect your health, especially when it's necessary to reduce your social contact and time spent outdoors.

Caerphilly County Borough Council employees all have access to the Care first Service. Care first provides confidential, impartial advice and support 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Employees don't need to ask permission from their manager before contacting Care first.

When working from home there are clear guidelines that need to be considered and implemented to ensure staff feel confident and capable that they are able to manage the separation between work and homelife. A good work life balance is essential to personal well-being.

Caerphilly has implemented many support mechanisms for staff which are available via the HR intranet pages. Weekly updates have been communicated to staff via e-mail entitled Wellbeing@work. Line managers have ensured that those frontline staff not on e-mail are fully aware of the support mechanisms available. This support, advice and guidance for staff is invaluable and would be an area that would need to receive a key focus moving forward.

It has become apparent during the pandemic that although there has been coronavirus, social distancing, childcare and shielding absences the authority general sickness absence levels have reduced significantly to just over 3%. This is reflective of other sectors who have introduced flexible working principles. By providing the flexibility to staff to work their hours to suit their personal circumstances sickness absence reduces.

The authority already has flexible working principles (home working and lone working policies) and solutions that can be adapted to suit this new way of flexible working to ensure that staff health, safety and well-being is not compromised in any way. In-fact with more flexible working, risks of accidents, pressure, stress, etc are significantly reduced as staff will need to travel less and will not feel pressured to be present at an office for a set number of hours every day.

Beyond the obvious business benefit of reduced office costs and environmental benefits, research also tells us that flexible working improves morale and reduces stress levels, increases staff retention and importantly widens and unlocks a bigger talent pool, wherein a business can recruit and retain a greater range of talent.

## **Appendix 6 - Flexible Working Policy Considerations**

There are a number of key policies such as but not limited to - use of IT equipment, IT security and flexible working principles that will need to be updated and amended to facilitate a flexible workforce. These will be reviewed and will be subject to the necessary consultation process.

There are already flexible working and home working principles in place since 2015 and 2012 respectively which will require updating accordingly alongside other well-being policies.

Given the significant flexibility that results from flexible working, the Councils existing "Flexi Scheme" will need to be considered to ensure there is a seamless fit in approach. As such, it is proposed to review the scheme to be more in line with the proposed flexible working approaches which in themselves provide employees with additional time management opportunities that can help balance work and personal commitments.

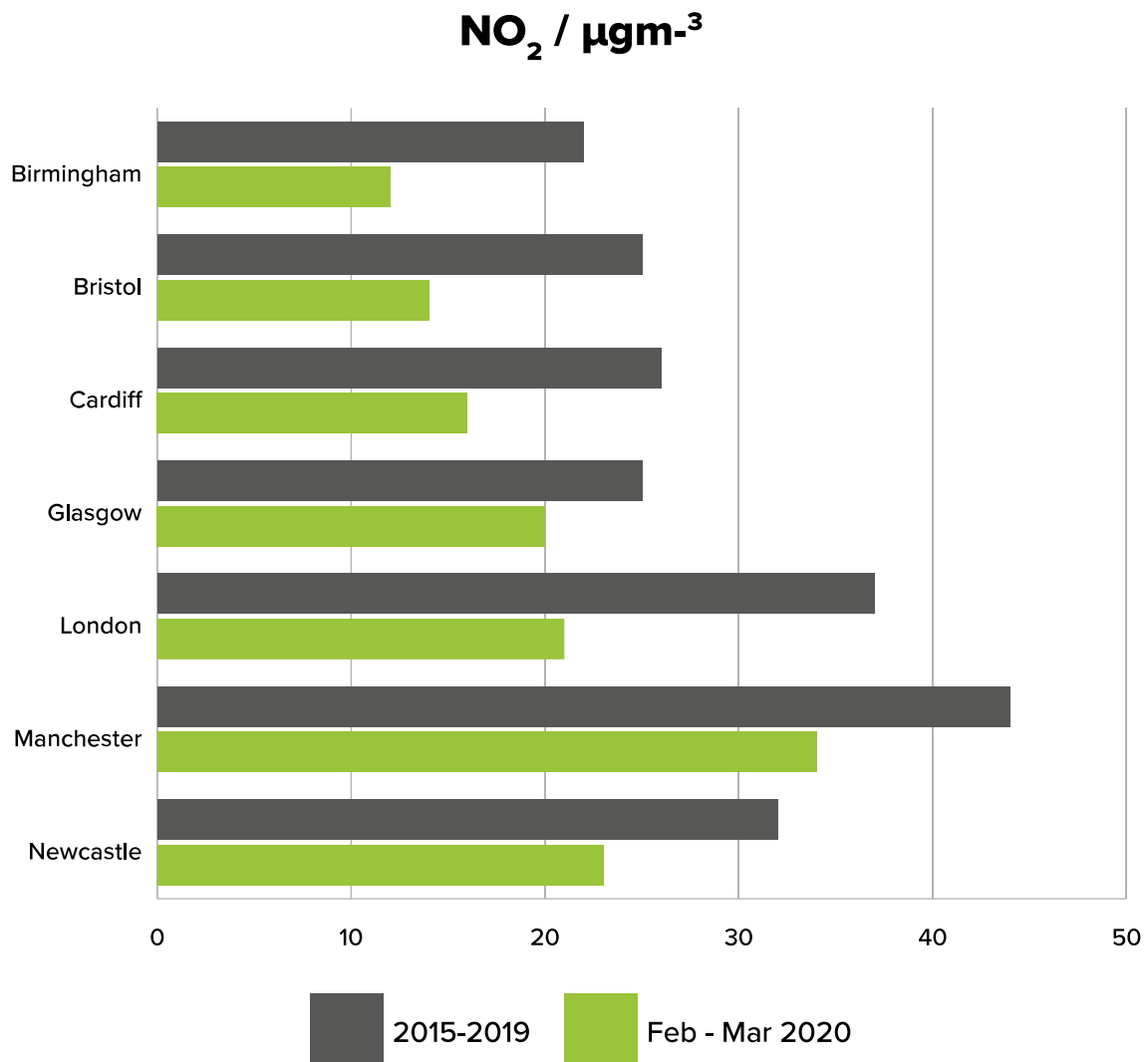
To support the organisation with this transformation, it will be necessary to review the current flexible working scheme to ensure that it provides maximum opportunities to work in a more flexible way to support service delivery, which will benefit the Council and employees.

Caerphilly is currently behind the curve in its approach to flexible working and this is a great opportunity to become a leading light in how services can be delivered in the future.

## Appendix 7 - Environmental Impact

Cardiff, London, Manchester, Birmingham and other cities across the UK have seen a huge decline in toxic nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) levels, according to a study by the National Centre for Atmospheric Science (NCAS). Nitrogen dioxide is a harmful gas released when fossil fuels are burnt, usually by power plants and motor vehicles. Many of the activities that generate nitrogen dioxide are also responsible for the world's carbon emissions and the current climate crisis.

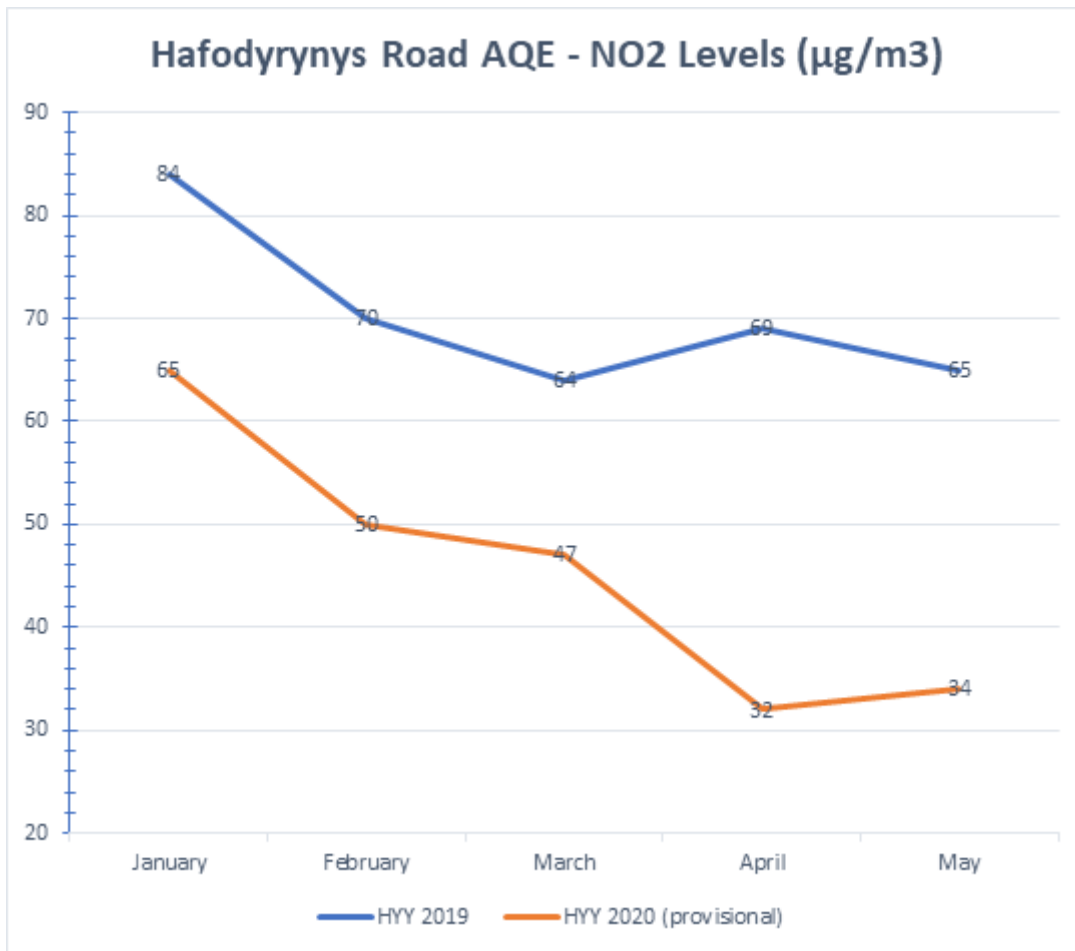
Comparing recent pollution levels to the average from the same period in the previous five years, NCAS states: **“The air is definitely much healthier”**. This is clearly evident from the chart below.



Road traffic accounts for about 80% of nitrogen dioxide emissions in the UK, according to Paul Monks, Professor of Air Pollution at the University of Leicester, and former chair of the UK government's science advisory committee on air quality. The average diesel car emits 52mg of polluting gas for every kilometre it travels, so it's no surprise that the lockdown-induced reduction in traffic is leading to a substantial improvement in air quality.

Caerphilly is one of only two councils in Wales (the other being Cardiff) that have been identified as having a significant air quality problem due to exceedances of permitted nitrogen dioxide levels on the A473 at Hafodryn Hill.

Specifically considering the air quality changes for Hafodyrnys between January to May 2019 to the same period this year it is evident that the reduced vehicle usage during lockdown has had a significant impact as illustrated below.



Caerphilly has declared a climate emergency via a Notice of Motion by the Deputy Leader Cllr Sean Morgan. Cllr Morgan stated “The world is on the cusp of a climate catastrophe and the negative trends we are already seeing can only be halted by transformative change in every aspect of how humans interact with nature. As a council we are continuously seeking ways to improve the way we do things to protect the environment for future generations. We must also look to take advantage of the positive economic and wellbeing impacts that transformative change can bring, and I am pleased that the motion was supported as this is a hugely important cause that requires our action.”

The motion sets out a clear commitment to reduce carbon by developing an energy plan and calling on the UK and Welsh Government to provide the necessary resources and support to enable effective carbon reduction, also to work with the Public Service Board and Cardiff Capital Region City Deal partners to develop opportunities to develop carbon savings.

Moving to a more flexible platform for service delivery the authority makes a clear statement to supportive transformative change. The authority is the county borough’s largest employer and has thousands of employees who make journeys to offices, to sit at desks to undertake their job. It has been proven that the vast majority of these roles can become a lot more flexible and can be effectively delivered from home or other settings drastically cutting vehicle journeys. Enhancing the level of flexible working across the Council would have a significant and positive impact on the climate.

It is estimated that the during 2018 the Council’s fleet of vehicles (including grey fleet):

- drove 8.5 million miles,
- produced 5,538 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO2e),

- consumed 22,298 megawatt hours of energy,
- emitted up to 18.4 tonnes of nitrogen oxides (NOX),
- and up to 245 kg of particulates (PM).

The directly operated fleets (including Plant and “Unknowns”) burnt at least 1.77 million litres of fuel at an estimated cost of £1.79 million (based on 2018 average price, ex VAT) and produced 4,745 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e. Even a small percentage change of say 5% in vehicle mileage will make a significant difference to emissions and expenditure.

If Caerphilly is serious about supporting transformational change that will benefit the climate and environment where we live, work and play then flexible working must have its place. Flexible working can be deployed to make better use of people and space assets, which can greatly improve sustainability while reducing cost and a company’s carbon footprint. If you allow for homeworking as part of the move to flexible working, then this potentially supports a significant reduction in car journeys. What’s more, designing a new, flexible-ready office offers the opportunity to “go green”.



## **Appendix 8 - IT and Equipment**

Prior to March 2020, the Authority operated in a fairly traditional manner with administrative staff mainly working from office accommodation using static IT infrastructure and fixed location equipment. Flexible working across the Authority was ad hoc and to an extent limited.

In March 2020 the Authority transformed overnight moving to become a fully flexible workforce. The move from office based working to home working was completed almost overnight.

Due to the relatively low levels of investment in flexible IT equipment such as laptops, surfaces and i-pads to date, the Authority has encouraged some staff to use their own devices to access Corporate systems via secure virtual private network during the pandemic. This has allowed the Council to maintain the delivery of vital community services.

As flexible working becomes the “new norm” the Authority will need to ensure that it equips its flexible workforce with the appropriate IT tools and equipment to ensure they can undertake their roles as productively and safely as possible.

In recent months, as part of the Customer and Digital Strategy implementation, Cabinet have already taken the decision to deploy modern software in the form of Microsoft Office 365, Abavus and Thoughtonomy. These tools have been fundamental to the Council’s recent success in dealing with Covid 19 and maintaining key public services. To maximize the use of these tools and flexible working the Authority will now need to invest in appropriate IT equipment and infrastructure.

Digital Services are currently undergoing a strategic service review with the support of an external party. The future direction of travel in terms of IT infrastructure and operating model will be subject to an additional Cabinet report during the autumn 2020.

As a result of recent work it is estimated that the Authority will need to develop a full device strategy and future operating model which will require a significant investment in flexible working equipment.

It is not possible to fully estimate the cost of this migration at this point but the development of a sustainable investment plan for this equipment will be required going forward if the Council is to ensure its staff can maintain these flexible approaches.

In addition to the procurement of appropriate IT equipment the authority will need to consider options for additional support for equipment such as desks and chairs to ensure a safe working environment for all flexible workers who could potentially be using their home as their office base in the future.

## Appendix 9 - Investment and Property Requirements

The goals of organisations in adopting flexible working are to create a more responsive, efficient and effective organisation, which improves business performance and increases customer satisfaction.

By empowering employees to work how, where and when they choose, there is evidence that productivity is increased and service improvement can be provided by employees working in a way that suits them best. This in turn provides savings for the organisation. These savings should be seen as the investment needed to stimulate the transformational change.

In an American based study, Global Workplace Analytics reports that the average business would save \$11,000 per person per year if staff with remote-compatible jobs worked from home just half the time.

A flexible Working Business Case was reported to Carmarthenshire County Council CMT in May 2017, which concluded potential significant 5-year cumulative savings of £5.3m after an initial capital investment of £2.1 million. This could be achieved from the implementation of flexible working, there would also be significant implications for the Council's office accommodation portfolio in terms of potential release of buildings.

Pembrokeshire County Council also moved to a flexible working approach in 2018 and identified that revenue savings in the order of £925k per annum could be achieved. Further, Monmouthshire County Council have also moved to a flexible working model and their Headquarter building provides only 88 desks for 200 staff that can use the facility coupled with their flexible working option.

This invest to save approach could be developed for a Caerphilly business case. The savings would not happen overnight. However, in the longer term the property portfolio could be rationalised and reconfigured to suit flexible working. The office layouts would need to change and be more aligned with flexible working principles. There would be limited desks and more docking type workstations to provide flexibility on when and where you could work.

The current pandemic may limit the reduction on office space in the short term due to social distancing measures. Longer term there would be significant savings if the accommodation requirements were halved as a result of flexible working. There would be reduced annual running costs for the wider property portfolio and possible one-off capital receipts from the sale of assets that would no longer be required.

An initial exercise undertaken by the Property Services has identified that currently there are circa 2000 desks available within the authority for use by staff. If service provision was undertaken in a flexible manner, there could be a property portfolio rationalisation which could result in 8 buildings being surplus to requirements.

Service provision would be delivered from 3 core locations, Ty Penallta, Tredomen and Tir y berth. This rationalisation would limit desk availability to approx. 1300 desks, a reduction of about one third. However, with social distancing requirements the availability of desk space will be significantly less than 1300.

If the move to a flexible working platform is supported there will need to be a detailed property portfolio report presented detailing the options available along with the relevant cost implications.

## Appendix 10 – Flexible Working Staff Survey June 2020

The flexible working staff survey undertaken in June 2020 had 1483 respondents. Some of the main highlights from the survey include the following:

- 83% worked in a flexible way during the coronavirus restrictions.
- 95% worked away from the office full-time during this period.
- 66% of respondents normally work from either Ty Penallta or Ty Tredomen.
- **78% stated that they would like to work in a more flexible way in the future.**
- **Only 8% stated that they did not want to work in a more flexible way in the future.**
- 98% stated that flexible working provided a better work-life balance for them.
- 84% stated that flexible working demonstrated trust in staff from the organisation.
- 84% stated that flexible working would allow them to achieve greater productivity.
- 93% stated that flexible working would support better mental health and well-being.
- 80% considered flexible working would provide a positive impact on the environment.

However:

- 74% stated that they thought that would have less effective teamworking.
- 93% stated that it could be open to abuse.
- 77% had concerns that the authority could see less productivity.
- 78% stated that flexible working may have a negative impact on mental health.
- 67% thought that lack of equipment may be an obstacle to flexible working.

Overall:

- 50% stated that they like to split their time between home and office working.
- 23% had a preference for working from home
- 21% wanted to work from the office but have the option to work from home occasionally.
- Only 2% wanted to be office based.

The analysis above provides a good indication that the staff preference is that the authority should work in a more flexible way. **73%** preferred to work from home or have a balance between home and office working and only **2%** preferred an office-based approach.

There is support and concern in equal measure in relation to mental health and well-being. 93% have stated that flexible working would be better for mental health but 78% were also concerned over the effect that it would also have on mental health.

Some of the other main outcomes indicate the positive impact that flexible working could have on productivity, 84% stating it would improve, along with the trust that this approach demonstrated in staff, 84% supporting this statement. Again, this is balanced off with 93% indicating that this approach could be open to abuse and 77% stating that they would have concerns over productivity.

The outcome is clear that **78% want to work in a more flexible way** in the future and only 8% were against this approach. A fuller analysis of the survey and comments is included in appendix 2.



### **Unite Feedback** **Flexible Working Report**

Flexible working and the benefits to the workforce is something Unite has argued for many years. We very much welcome the CCBC approach to a move towards flexible working. The crisis has highlighted that it can be done but changes on this level need to be carefully considered with EIAs and regular reviews with the trade unions. We welcome this report but like our sister unions ask that this is done with the primary focus of staff well-being and not just with cost saving being the driving force. If done properly CCBC can be seen as an attractive employer for those with caring responsibilities and those wanting a better work life balance.

Individual preferences are important in making this a success and consideration to what support can be given for those who don't have internet etc set up at home. It shouldn't be for managers to impose new ways of working but allow people to have choice.

Ensuring positive use of services like access to work and real consideration of implementing to social model of disability will be just as important when moving towards a more flexible way of working and should always be considered. The working environment wherever that may be is still governed by the same principles of being in an office environment.

We can never underestimate the benefits of socialising and personal interaction with colleagues and this approach should allow for this.

There are serious benefits of flexible working. However, the negative implications should always be given serious consideration on an individual basis. This crisis has highlighted a serious spike in domestic violence cases and homophobic incidents in the home. There is also the serious impact on mental health, isolation and the inability for some people to know when to switch off. For some workers the workplace is their escape and safe haven. The safe guarding of employees and personal Implications of this system of working can't be overlooked.

To conclude we look forward to working with the council and cabinet to allow workers more freedom and control over their work life balance. Careful monitoring and formal training of middle management will be critical to making it work for all.

## Appendix 11

### GMB FEEDBACK ON AGILE WORKING REPORT.

The GMB supports the principal of agile working, we believe it could be beneficial to, both staff, and the employer alike. The agile working report which has been created by Caerphilly CBC, for consideration by cabinet provides a great deal of information, however we believe the document could be more concise for Elected members to allow them to make a decision on the future working arrangements, for employees of the Council.

The GMB believe that the wellbeing and mental health of its members and all other employees should be at the forefront of Elected Members and CMT minds when making their decision on agile working.

The report covers the positives and not so positives with moving to these new working arrangements, in order to support those staff who could be working from home, we should ensure that there will be regular contact from Managers, through both, team meetings using the virtual technology available, and face to face office meetings, where Managers can offer support and staff can interact with their colleagues, thus reducing the feeling of isolation.

The GMB believe that the Council could realise some significant savings that can be made through staff not attending the offices on a daily basis, lighting and heating would have a reduced usage. Mileage expenses would significantly reduce.

Several policies will need to be reviewed, including the mileage policy, we would ask that HR consider if there would be any HMRC implications for staff, and to advise the Trade Unions accordingly.

GMB would also propose a 6 month or annual review of agile working policy as there may be areas which this is not working, and a review would be able to pick up any issues that are being raised.

## Appendix 11

# Flexible Working Cabinet Report 30 September 2020 – Consultation Feedback from Caerphilly Unison

### Foreword

As the largest trade union in Caerphilly County Borough Council (CCBC) we are fully committed to working with the leadership team on this proposal and believe that significant gains can be made for the organisation and its staff as a result. However, we also have a responsibility to our membership to put forward their concerns and to highlight those issues that we believe may pose a challenge for the organisation and will require partnership discussion and debate.

It is our intention throughout this time to be a critical friend to CCBC and hope that our comments are taken in the constructive manner in which they are offered to achieve the best possible outcomes for all.

Accordingly, given the significance of this report for the workforce and the organisation, we have taken the time to consider each paragraph of the report in detail and offer our comments below. Our comments are shown directly under each paragraph and coloured purple.

Lianne Dallimore  
Branch Secretary Caerphilly Unison

Juan-Antonio Garcia  
Branch Chair Caerphilly Unison



## CABINET 22<sup>ND</sup> JULY 2020

**SUBJECT: FLEXIBLE WORKING**

**REPORT BY: RECOVERY GROUP**

### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet endorsement of a more formal approach to flexible working that builds upon the progress made in respect of working in a flexible manner throughout the lockdown.

The move to flexible working is a significant change in working practice. We fully support, as per the Caerphilly Constitution, that this is a Cabinet decision to endorse such as change. However, given the long term significance of this report, we would also suggest that the appropriate Scrutiny Committee is engaged. To its credit, Caerphilly County Borough Council (CCBC) has an open and transparent decision making structure which we would recommend is made full use of in this instance.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 Because of the speed and nature of the COVID-19 lockdown, the Council was required to

equip and train a significant proportion of its workforce to work and to provide services remote from their usual places of work and, in many cases, from home.

We would concur with this statement. CCBC staff has been exemplary. Their efforts and commitment has been unwavering and we believe that all staff must be recognised and celebrated for this.

- 2.2 While the transformation to this new model of service delivery happened at a significant pace, the technology platforms that have formed the foundations of remote working have proven to be fairly intuitive and extremely stable.

We agree with this statement.

- 2.3 Some sections of the workforce have been operating remotely and very effectively since the beginning of lockdown and, over time, further services have been enabled and brought back on line with much less of a reliance on buildings, premises and travel.

We agree with this statement.

- 2.4 This has enabled many services to the public to be delivered safely and continuously and for the Council's employees to manage multiple aspects of their work / home balance in a way that has brought about a much greater balance than was typically possible.

We agree with this statement.

The ability to work from home has delivered considerable benefits. It has allowed those who were shielding (if well enough to do so) to work from home and assisted those who were experiencing childcare difficulties. From an organisational perspective, it has allowed CCBC services to continue to function and its workforce to remain as productive as possible, which has been to the benefit of our communities.

- 2.5 Of course, not everyone has found the isolated nature of working remotely a positive experience and the results of the Flexible Working survey provide a healthy note of caution that whatever the Council does from here on in must be truly flexible and meet the differing needs of its employees as well as reducing any operating costs associated with service delivery.

We agree with this statement.

We would suggest that careful consideration is given to the words '*truly flexible*' and as an organisation that we are clear on what this means, for example, are we seeking a flexible workforce i.e. the employee, or a flexible organisation i.e. the employee and the employer? We believe only a flexible organisation will deliver the positive outcomes that CCBC are seeking.

We would also suggest that the organisation gives consideration to who will benefit from this flexibility. We would ask that a robust assessment is undertaken to identify those roles that would benefit and those that would not. Again, to ensure transparent decision making, we believe that Cabinet, Scrutiny and the Trade Unions have sight of this information prior to making any decision.

### 3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 In terms of recommendations, Cabinet are asked to:

- 3.1.1 Acknowledge the benefits of the flexible working arrangements that have supported service delivery across the Council since March 2020.



We support this recommendation.

- 3.1.2 Agree to formally adopt the flexible working principles set out at Appendix 1 as a core principle for supporting service delivery.

From the information given in Appendix 1, unfortunately, it is unclear what the flexible working principles are. We would welcome sight of a clear set of principles to which the local authority will work.

With regards to the principles of agile working, we would expect that the overriding principle would be one of fairness and equality across all workforces and places of work.

- 3.1.3 Delegates authority to the Head of Paid Service, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member, to determine on a service by service basis the optimum approach to flexible working and accommodation requirements.

We support this recommendation but would suggest that any assessment of the optimum approach to flexible working and accommodation requirements is done under normal working conditions i.e. when we are operating at full service delivery. To do so at any other time may produce less than accurate data and impede decision making.

- 3.1.4 Note the need to consider how the current flexi system can be aligned with and support the principles of flexible working through ongoing discussions with Trade Unions.

We support this recommendation and welcome discussions on this matter.

- 3.1.5 That Members note the potential costs associated with the deployment of flexible working in relation to IT equipment and furniture as well as the potential savings that can be generated through the rationalisation of buildings and reductions in other operating expenditure.

We support this recommendation but would ask that the additional costs that may be incurred by those working from home be taken into account i.e. heating, lighting, home insurance etc. These costs should be considered within any cost benefit analysis as I am sure that CCBC would not wish to see their employees burdened with additional expenditure as a result of any new working practice.

- 3.1.6 Agrees to receive additional reports, as required, to agree funding and any associated HR and IT Policy changes that might be required.

We support this recommendation and would welcome the opportunity to be consultees on any additional reports.

- 3.1.7 Endorses the development of an appropriate training and development programme for managers and staff to ensure the benefits of flexible working are maximised.

We support this recommendation. Reskilling and upskilling across the whole workforce will be a critical component to ensure any shift towards flexible working is achieved. In some instances, employees may not have the skills or behaviours to operate in this new agile environment which could lead to feelings of frustration and ineffectiveness. As an organisation with staff wellbeing at its heart we trust this will be given full consideration.

#### **4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 The authority has gone through an unprecedented period of flexible working in relation to the current Coronavirus pandemic. It is wholly evident that there are options to enhance the

standard approach to office accommodation that will benefit staff, the Council, the residents of Caerphilly County Borough and the wider environment.

We support this statement.

- 4.2 The progress achieved over recent months in respect of delivering services through flexible arrangements must now be captured and built upon to ensure services can remain sustainable over the long term whatever challenges may emerge.

We support this statement.

## 5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The current pandemic has provided a stimulus to show the benefits of working in a more flexible manner. The progress made and the lessons learned over the last three months can now directly shape the blueprint for future service delivery and redesign. Embedding flexible practices will enable the organisation to be ready to manage any future crisis as well as reflect the Council's need to remain an attractive and progressive employer.

We support this statement.

We would welcome the opportunity to have sight of the 'lessons learned' to which the report refers.

Ensuring that the organisation is 'future proofed' will be the ultimate success factor and this will demand a culture change within the organisation alongside operational changes. CCBC has in the past been described as a 'traditional' local authority. Research has shown that the often lose nature of agile workplaces make them poorly suited to more traditional operating structures. It would be remiss of us not to mention the impact that culture may have on a shift of this magnitude and we would ask that this factor is carefully considered.

- 5.2 It is acknowledged that it is not going to be possible to design a one size fits all approach and that flexible working models will need to be developed and tailored to each service area and in some cases will differ depending upon role. The core focus, however, will remain a reduction in the reliance of the workforce and services upon physical buildings.

We support this statement.

We note that the report makes reference to the fact that *'it is not going to be possible to design a one size fits all approach'*, this is understood, however policies such the Flexible Working Hours Scheme, Mileage, Flexible Working Policy and Procedure, Leave of Absence etc. will likely be applied in to **all**. This could mean that some staff may benefit and some may be subject to poorer working practices/conditions as a result. We would request that:

- Impact assessments are undertaken on all HR Policies;
- A number of workplace scenarios be developed with the Trade Unions to assess how HR policies and the management thereof will operate in practice, and finally,
- A number of real-time service area pilots undertaken, in jointly agreed areas, and analysed prior to the implementation of any change.

- 5.3 The success of any flexible implementation will be linked to a clear set of objectives, a consistently applied corporate approach, a strong communication and engagement plan as well as a suite of policies that support the new ways of working.

We support this statement.

We would also like to suggest that clear boundaries are communicated which sets out the organisations expectations from its employees and conversely what the employee can expect from the organisation in terms of flexibility.

- 5.4 Team management and appropriate support will also be vital to the success of flexible working and Managers will need to be provided the necessary training and tools to be able to manage and support a distributed workforce while maintaining and optimising the benefits of team working.

We support this statement. Reskilling and upskilling across the whole workforce will be a critical component to ensure any shift towards flexible working is achieved. In some instances, employees may not have the skills or behaviours to operate in this new agile environment which could lead to feelings of frustration and ineffectiveness. As an organisation with staff wellbeing at its heart we trust this will be given full consideration.

- 5.5 It should also be noted that flexible working is not simply home working. Home working will form part of a range of flexible arrangements. Some employees will use their home as their office base, some will operate across multiple office buildings and some may even take advantage of working at times from other buildings. The flexible working approach should support staff to work where and when it best suits them while still ensuring the needs of the business are supported.

We support this statement.

The Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service has clearly stated that “*Work is a thing we do not a place we go*”. We agree wholeheartedly with this statement, however, we would ask that further scrutiny is given to clearly establish who within the organisation this would most likely benefit. For those that may not benefit from flexible working, we would not wish to see a loss of flexibility i.e. possible removal of the flexi clocking system, or having to ask permission from their line manager before working beyond their daily contracted hours, which was introduced on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2020. Consideration needs to be given to ensure that this does not manifest into a benefit for the few at the detriment of the many.

- 5.6 The introduction of a broader flexible working approach will be a move to a trust based organisation with employees empowered to deliver their roles flexibly. Measures will still be in place, however, to ensure staff achieve their required tasks and outputs and fulfil their contracted hours.

We support this statement.

Agile working is operated within a framework of trust and therefore it is with disappointment that in paragraph 5.17 a proposal has been suggested (and implemented on 22.07.20 by the Head of Paid Service) informing staff that *‘those staff working away from the office will be asked to seek line manager approval in advance to work longer than their contracted hours.’* As a Trade Union we have a responsibility to represent the voice of our members, some of which have expressed their disappointment on this decision. For those working in an office environment this instruction does not apply, and therefore, the question must be asked – is location and/or being ‘seen’ the deciding factor? It must also be pointed out that this practice would have a greater impact on those at the lower end of the organisational structure given that they are subject to higher levels of management oversight.

- 5.7 Organisations that have introduced ‘flexible working’ opportunities (such as the NHS, other local authorities, business in general), have confirmed improvements in the following areas:

For the employer:

- Increased motivation and engagement of staff
- Increased productivity and Efficiency

- Improved business continuity – less disruption due to weather, office security issues, travel problems etc.
- Reduction in organisational and personal carbon footprint
- Reduced parking
- Improved staff performance
- Ability to attract and retain high quality talent
- Reduced absenteeism and related costs
- Reduced staff turnover with associated costs and reduction in lost knowledge, skills and experience
- Asset rationalisation

For employees:

- Reduced travel time and related cost.
- Personal productivity linked to fewer distractions, improved focus, concentration, creativity, better use of skills and less frustration due to fewer barriers.
- Improved work life balance
- Increase in wellbeing, health and happiness linked to reduced stress, better sense of control, ability to integrate healthy eating, childcare responsibility, caring responsibilities and exercise into the day
- Increased engagement as a result of the autonomy and trust at work

When home becomes a workplace there are a wide range of issues to be addressed, from finding a suitable and separate place to work to having the right equipment, and knowing about insurance and who pays the bills. Information security is also high priority.

There is no general legal obligation on employers to fund a home office set up, but their duty to take reasonable care of safety means they must fund reasonable costs and ensure equipment is suitable.

There are clear threats to workers mental health in the explosion of new home working, but also hopes that - with reasonable adjustments – increased flexibility might help.

Lines between personal life and work can easily become blurred and isolation can lead to loneliness and lack of connection with work colleagues.

Balancing home working with childcare can be a source of stress, while the rise of domestic violence can not be overlooked.

- 5.8 One of the other gains typically witnessed through flexible working is around productivity. In many cases, productivity when working flexibly can be maintained, even enhanced, because commutes and office distractions are often gone.

We support this statement, however, the notion of core working hours can disappear when homeworking begins, as an expectation of always being available takes hold. This should be dealt with sensitively – overtime should be voluntary and not without appropriate compensation; workers need regular breaks, switching off at the end of day; and employers should show that they trust employees.

- 5.9 It also important to set the potential negative impacts to flexible working. Some of the downsides can include the following:

- Communication difficulties
- Longer working hours
- Poor posture
- Staff can be more difficult to oversee
- IT issues
- Lone working issues

- Different management skills required
- Individual well-being
- Manual handling

We support this statement and would expect such issues to be addressed as part of any managing change process. Risk assessments will need to be carried out (these can be undertaken by the employee using a health and safety questionnaire to avoid intrusiveness) and should include how work-life balance will be managed, for example taking regular breaks and switching off from work at the end of the day, so expectations are clear.

- 5.10 Through effective and targeted training for managers and staff and appropriate investment in the tools and resources needed to work flexibly, many of these negatives can be addressed

We support this statement.

- 5.11 The appendices to this report contain a detailed exploration of some of the requirements of a flexible workforce as well as some of the key considerations. Some of the headlines from the appendices are set out over the coming paragraphs.

- 5.12 Flexible Working Principles

The Council has in a place a set of 'Agile Working Principles' which set out guidance on working flexibly. These were introduced in 2019 as a means of encouraging the use of flexible working and providing the necessary guidance and support to staff and managers who wished to deliver their roles flexibly. These principles will need to be reviewed and adjusted as the numbers of staff working flexibly has increased exponentially.

We would welcome sight of a clear set of 'Agile Working Principles'.

- 5.13 The New Normal?

The pandemic has created a new normal that has transformed the organisation and society alike. The use of flexible working approaches over recent months has demonstrated the opportunities that exist to create new services that meet specific needs, break down barriers across services, bring previously disparate resources together and quickly meet the changing needs of staff and residents. It has also become clear that a 'one size fits all' approach to flexible working should not be introduced. Instead, a blended approach should be developed that ensures the needs of all staff and customers can be met.

We support this statement.

We are aware that Directors have been working on their 'New World Norms'; to date this information has not been shared with Caerphilly Unison. As key partners in a changing workplace we would value the opportunity to discuss these 'New World Norms' with the Leadership team.

- 5.14 Foundations for a Successful Flexible Working Programme

Our staff will be key to the delivery of this major change programme and their buy in will be key to its success. What will be equally important will be the policies that support it, access to the right systems, tools and training and the communication strategy that will bring this new way of working to life. There will also be a need to develop management systems that get the best out of staff, provide the necessary support and enable the needs of the business to be met across a distributed workforce.

We support this statement.

We also believe that it will be essential to put in place:

- A performance management system developed that is outcomes based and fairly assessed;
- Development opportunities for staff to ensure they can get the best out of the new environment;
- A clear Home Working Agreement aligned with the Working Time Regulations;
- A clear policy across all workforces and workplaces which fairly compensates staff for working in excess of their hours, which is in many cases done out of goodwill at present, and
- A clear policy on agile working based on sound argument to avoid perceptions of favouritism.

#### 5.15 A New Customer Interface - Public Interaction and Digital Capability

The restrictions on movement that have underpinned lockdown have demonstrated that many of our residents have the access and the skills to conduct many aspects of their daily lives online. The assessment of digital capability across Caerphilly explored in Appendix 4 identifies that 75% of the adult population in the Borough have all five of the basic digital skills required. While this provides an opportunity to engage our residents in new ways and across different hours of business our services must continue to support those that do not have either the access or the digital skills at present.

We support this statement.

#### 5.16 Health, Safety and Wellbeing Considerations

With a potential move to a more formal approach to flexible working there are multiple benefits that emerge in terms of Health and Wellbeing. Increases in productivity, being able to better balance the competing demands of increasingly busy work and home lives and the positive impact of feeling trusted to get the job done, have all been proven to enhance an individual's wellbeing. Conversely, there are individuals whose wellbeing could be negatively impacted by working remotely and the Council will need to work hard to strike the right balance, put in place the right support and ensure that the wellbeing needs of all of our staff are being met.

We support this statement.

#### 5.17 Flexible Working Policy Considerations

The Council already has 'Agile Working Principles' in place to support flexible working approaches but their use has been sporadic to date. Similarly, the Council has a range of HR and IT policies designed to support work life balance and safe systems of work. Over the coming months, these policies will each need to be reviewed and potentially adjusted to support a broader application of flexible working. Any changes that result would be developed in consultation with staff and our Trade Union partners.

We support this statement and would welcome the opportunity to be an active partner in the development of these policies. However, having sight of the Directors 'New World Norms' would be advantageous so that we are all clear on what our Policies are being re-designed to achieve.

In the short term, and as a means of ensuring the ongoing wellbeing of our staff, those staff working away from the office will be asked to seek line manager approval in advance to work longer than their contracted hours. This interim adjustment will not restrict staff from being able to accrue time off in lieu, but it will help managers ensure that workloads are being appropriately balanced while staff are operating remotely.

We support this statement in terms of the wellbeing of our staff being of paramount importance. However, we do not support the proposal put forward on how this will be

managed and note that this is a temporary measure which should be reviewed at the earliest opportunity.

As a Trade Union we have a responsibility to represent the voice of our members, some of which have expressed their disappointment on this decision. For those working in an office environment this instruction does not apply, and therefore, the question must be asked – is location and/or being 'seen' the deciding factor? It must also be pointed out that this practice would have a greater impact on those at the lower end of the organisational structure given that they are subject to higher levels of management oversight. This decision does little to reinforce the message of 'trust' being communicated to the workforce.

UNISON would urge the council to also consider the position of staff outside of the flexi or overtime system who report working above their hours – sometimes for short periods – but in a way that can be easily overlooked. UNISON members working in care and our schools have reported to us that coming in a little early, or staying on a little extra, can easily occur when the needs of service users are immediate. Rather than just accept this as a feature of the job, we want to work with the council to consider ways to proactively challenge this norm where it is present.

#### 5.18 Environmental Impact

During the pandemic, there has been a significant reduction in the number of journeys undertaken by staff to and from work and travelling to and from meetings during the working day. This has resulted in a sizeable increase in the air quality, not just in Caerphilly, but across the world. An enhanced approach to flexible working would clearly provide these benefits over a sustained period as well as reducing the Council's operating expenditure.

We support this statement.

#### 5.19 IT and Equipment

As a result of the need to transition to flexible working arrangements in only a matter of days, many Council staff are working remotely at present using their own IT equipment, desk etc. As the Council moves to formalise its flexible working arrangements over the coming months Council staff must be provided with fit for purpose equipment, tools and systems that support them to do their job as efficiently and effectively as possible. It is likely that these packages will be linked to particular roles and separate reports will be brought forward over the coming months to provide a sustainable funding package.

We support this statement.

#### 5.20 Investment and Property Requirements

An initial exercise undertaken by Property Services has identified that currently there are circa 2000 desks available within the authority for use by staff. If service provision was undertaken in a flexible manner, property portfolio rationalisation opportunities could emerge which could result in 8 buildings being surplus to requirements and savings being generated in terms of building occupancy and reduced running costs.

We support this statement.

We would welcome the opportunity to have sight of the assessment on how many workers will likely benefit from agile working. Given that initial costings and property rationalisation benefits have been discussed in this report it is assumed that the Leadership team have a broad idea of numbers.

#### 5.21 Flexible Working Staff Survey June 2020

Nearly 1500 employees completed a flexible working staff survey during June 2020 giving some fantastic insights in to the benefits and challenges facing staff working remotely. There some very positive views shared on flexible working in overall terms as well as some concerns. The overarching results are provided in Appendix 10.

The key aspects of the survey revealed that 50% of respondents would like to split their time between home and office working, 23% having a preference for working from home and 21% wanting to work from the office but have the option to work from home occasionally. These results clearly demonstrate that with the expansion of flexible working there is likely to be a surplus of office accommodation linking back to the outcome set out in 5.20.

We welcome the survey undertaken with staff and hope that similar exercises will be undertaken as part of the change management process.

## 5.22 **Conclusion**

When considering the way the world has adapted and changed, particularly in the light of the current pandemic, it is wholly evident that a new way of working can and should be supported to ensure that the organisation remains as flexible as possible and is able to react to any future pandemics or similar events that would restrict service provision. The organisation may well need to turn on and off services more frequently as we respond to the current pandemic.

We support this statement.

- 5.23 Flexible working has been proven to work in Caerphilly. Services provided by the Council have not “fallen over” or ceased, in fact, it has been possible to continue to deliver them as a direct result.

We support this statement and would like to give credit to the workforce for their outstanding achievements.

- 5.24 The gains made over the last few months, albeit out of necessity, cannot now be lost. Now is the time to embrace transformational change and shape an organisation that is able to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century head on.

We support this statement.

## 6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 There have been no assumptions made within this report.

## 7. **LINKS TO RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES**

### 7.1 **Corporate Plan 2018-2023.**

- 7.1.1 The report links to the Council’s Corporate Plan 2018-2023, and contributes to the Well-being Objectives, as follows:

- 7.1.2 Objective 1 - Improve education opportunities for all – Flexible working has and will continue to allow teachers to deliver lessons remotely.

- 7.1.3 Objective 2 - Enabling employment – Flexible working promotes more autonomy over where and when staff work, thus affording flexibility for enabling balance between work, leisure, family and caring responsibilities. This will open up more opportunities for people to apply for roles that may have previously been unsuitable due to the lack of flexibility around working hours and locations.

- 7.1.4 Objective 4 - Promote a modern, integrated and sustainable transport system that increases



opportunity, promotes prosperity and minimises the adverse impacts on the environment - There are clear environmental benefits realised by flexible working in terms of office/asset rationalisation and lesser journeys attributed to commuting or work based travel. This will assist in reducing the impact on the climate and improving air quality. With less cars on the road it is already evident that more people are prepared to engage in active travel.

- 7.1.5 Objective 5 - Creating a county borough that supports a healthy lifestyle in accordance with the sustainable Development Principle within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 - Improving work life balance and reducing the need to commute utilising flexible working offers the opportunity for staff to partake in more social, sports and leisure activities and to utilise active travel options which will improve health and well-being.
- 7.1.6 Objective 6 - Support citizens to remain independent and improve their well-being – Flexible working when linked into a digital transformation of service delivery will assist residents to access services at the time and location that suits them helping them to remain independent.
- 7.2 There are further links to the TeamCaerphilly transformation strategy, firstly echoing the mantra - *A new "whole-authority" operating model to ensure a resilient Caerphilly County Borough for the future.*
- 7.3 Further synergies include – *“We will need to move away from traditional models of service delivery, embrace change, be prepared to innovate and take well managed risks. We will also need to modernise through harnessing emerging technologies and fully engaging with our workforce and communities”.*

A particular focus needs to be placed on ‘How’ we undertake our work. This is probably one of the biggest opportunities to modernise the organisation and to help move towards an agile working model. We note within the report Strengthening Team Caerphilly that a number of corporate/service reviews have been undertaken - Caerphilly Unison has not been involved or consulted on any of this work which we would welcome.

- 7.4 The recognition of strong corporate will and clear strategy, with equal buy-in by the leadership team, is again reflected in the TeamCaerphilly transformation statement;
- “This ambitious programme of change articulates the combined vision of the Cabinet and the Corporate Leadership Team and has been developed over the last 12 months. In making this Strategy a reality, courageous political and officer leadership will be essential to ensure that we successfully deliver the outcomes that we are aiming to achieve.”*
- 7.5 Furthermore, the Cabinet commitments already defined, include: -
- We will build on Caerphilly County Borough Council’s reputation as an innovative, high performing local authority.
  - We will ensure we have an engaged and motivated workforce.
  - We will always strive to ensure Caerphilly County Borough Council delivers value for money in everything it does.
- 7.6 Similarly, the notion of harnessing the success of the recent transformation in view of flexible/digital working and customer interaction (equally with the corporate appetite for such) can be harmonised with the **Customer and digital strategy**; whereby the Cabinet Members foreword describes being brave / bold in approach to embracing technologies and innovation to deliver citizen centric services, including an flexible, iterative approach to our work.

Overall, while we recognise that there are many positive benefits and a golden opportunity to reshape our services, it is essential that we are realistic on our assumptions and approach. We would

strongly advocate that robust Equality Impact Assessments are undertaken prior to service change taking place.

## 8. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

- 8.1 This report links directly to the Well-being goals within the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015:
- A prosperous Wales
  - A resilient Wales
  - A healthier Wales
  - A more equal Wales
  - A Wales of cohesive communities
  - A globally responsible Wales
- 8.2 It is consistent in all of the five ways of working as defined within the sustainable development principle in the Act that it supports:
- 8.2.1 **Long-term** – Flexible working promotes many long-term benefits for the organisation as a whole, with both employer and employee recognising substantial improvements as outlined within the report. The introduction of flexible working will have a positive impact on future generations and primarily will offer safeguard in view of; improved business continuity, reduction in organisational and personal carbon footprint, improved work life balance and increase in wellbeing, health and happiness. Equally, the Council's customer-centric ethos will be enhanced and the needs and demands of Caerphilly's citizens best met.
- 8.2.2 **Integration** – A flexible workforce will form an integral part of the Council's overall transformation strategy and complements the suite of policies that serve to balance home and work life commitments. There current crisis has provided opportunities for the many varied services of the authority to become truly "One Council". Each service area is clearly assisting others to ensure the highest priority objectives are delivered to the customer. There is clear evidence that the flexible working approach has allowed true service integration across the council, with other service sectors and primarily with its residents and customers at the heart of its approach.
- 8.2.3 **Involvement** – All staff need to be fully engaged in view of the flexible working transformation as not all roles and responsibilities are conducive to flexible working, and there will be a notable disparity between blue and white-collar workers and those that need to provide front line service delivery. There needs to be an effective communication plan to ensure the strategy behind flexible working, along with the suitability of application, is transparent to all parties. This will require the involvement of staff (staff survey already conducted) and engagement with all relevant stakeholders.
- It is stated that there will be 'notable disparity between blue and white collar workers'. We would request that information on this statement is shared with the Trade Unions and Councillors.*
- 8.2.4 **Collaboration** – Flexible working not only brings the Council's internal departments closer together to deliver the best working model and to move to the "One Council" approach, it has also already promoted wider collaboration within the private / public sector due to the ease in which meetings and working arrangements have continued almost seamlessly with the utilisation of a digital approach.
- 8.2.5 **Prevention** – Carefully prioritised and justified budget commitment for flexible working platforms will ensure confidence in both application and investment. This will assist in ensuring service continuity, reducing the risk to service failure during any future crisis or emergency. Embracing transformation to flexible working will ensure the Council is both resilient and flexible in terms of business continuity during adverse conditions and aligns with

priorities to improve the way the council operates in order to protect the environment for future generations in many aspects but particularly from an impact on the climate.

Overall, while we recognise that there are many positive benefits, again we must be realistic on our assumptions and approach. We would strongly advocate that robust Equality Impact Assessments are undertaken **prior** to service change taking place.

## **9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 An EIA screening has been completed in accordance with the Council's Strategic Equality Plan and supplementary guidance. No potential for unlawful discrimination and/or low level or minor negative impact has been identified; therefore, a full EIA has not been carried out. The flexible working approach will allow more flexibility in where and how people undertake their roles which will assist in providing equality.

We would welcome the opportunity to have sight of the EIA Screening that has been undertaken. Given the scale of the change being outlined, and *the 'far reaching financial implications from this report'* (section 10.1) which will affect both staff and the general public, it is difficult to conceive that a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required.

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 There are far reaching financial implications from this report. As such, there will need to be a series of detailed financial reports prepared should the general principles cited within the recommendations be supported by Cabinet.
- 10.2 The detailed financial implications of the new operating model will be firmed up as specific requirements become clearer following further discussions with Heads of Service. Detailed funding proposals will be developed as part of this process and the costs will be met from a call on usable reserves.
- 10.3 Furthermore, a number of potential areas of savings have been identified throughout the report. As the detail of these areas develops, further reports to Cabinet will be submitted.

We would welcome sight of these reports once they have been prepared.

## **11. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 There will be wide-ranging personnel implications from this report. There will need to be consultations undertaken with the trade unions and staff in relation to policies and procedures.
- 11.2 A staff survey has already been undertaken in relation to flexible working which identified overwhelming support for the initiative. Details of the survey results are highlighted in Appendix 10.

We would welcome full engagement in this process.

## **12. CONSULTATIONS**

- 12.1 Comments from all consultees have been included within the report.
- 12.2 A full list of consultees is included at the end of the report.

## **13. STATUTORY POWER**

- 13.1 Local Government Act 1972 and 2000

Author: Marcus Lloyd, Head of Infrastructure

Consultees: Cllr Philippa Marsden, Leader of the Council  
Cabinet Members  
Christina Harrhy, Chief Executive  
Corporate Management Team  
Leadership Team  
Cllr Jamie Pritchard, Chair of Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee  
Cllr Gez Kirby, Vice Chair of Policy and resources Scrutiny Committee  
Cllr Colin Mann, Leader of the Plaid Group  
Cllr Graham Simmonds, Leader of the Independent Group  
Trade Unions

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Caerphilly County Borough Council - Agile Working Principles  
Appendix 2 – The New Normal?  
Appendix 3 – Some Foundations for a Successful Flexible Working Programme  
Appendix 4 – A New Customer Interface - Public Interaction and Digital Capability  
Appendix 5 - Health, Safety and Well-Being Considerations  
Appendix 6 - Flexible Working Policy Considerations  
Appendix 7 - Environmental Impact  
Appendix 8 - IT and Equipment  
Appendix 9 - Investment and Property Requirements  
Appendix 10 – Flexible Working Staff Survey June 2020

## **Appendix 1 – Caerphilly County Borough Council - Agile Working Principles**

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

#### **(i) The concept of Agile Working**

Agile working is a transformational tool that enables organisations to work smarter by eliminating all barriers to working efficiently. It uses communications and information technology to enable people to work in ways which best suit their needs without the traditional limitations of where and when tasks must be performed.

Agile working can support staff to:

- Have more autonomy over where they work.
- Have more autonomy over when they work.

Agile working is based on the complete flexibility of work to drive long-term organisational success. It can unlock value for both the employer and the employee.

#### **(ii) The Benefits of Agile Working?**

Organisations that have introduced 'agile working' opportunities (such as the NHS), have confirmed improvements in the following areas:

For the employer:

- Increased motivation and engagement of staff
- Increased productivity and Efficiency
- Improved business continuity – less disruption due to weather, office security issues, travel problems etc.
- Reduction in organisational and personal carbon footprint
- Reduced parking
- Improved staff performance
- Ability to attract and retain high quality talent
- Reduced absenteeism and related costs
- Reduced staff turnover with associated costs and reduction in lost knowledge, skills and experience
- Asset rationalisation

For employees:

- Reduced travel time and related cost.
- Personal productivity linked to fewer distractions, improved focus, concentration, creativity, better use of skills and less frustration due to fewer barriers.
- Improved work life balance

- Increase in wellbeing, health and happiness linked to reduced stress, better sense of control, ability to integrate healthy eating, childcare responsibility, caring responsibilities and exercise into the day
- Increased engagement as a result of the autonomy and trust at work

## 2. **AGILE WORKING IN THE CONTEXT OF CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL (CCBC)**

This section identifies why CCBC might consider starting an agile working programme.

### (i) **Cabinet's clear vision**

Caerphilly's Cabinet have set a clear vision for the Council with staff engagement at its core. The standards that underpin this vision that agile working could compliment, are highlighted in bold:

- We will always do our best to protect jobs and services within the current challenging financial climate
- We will build on Caerphilly County Borough Council's reputation as an innovative, high performing local authority
- We will ensure we have an engaged and motivated workforce
- We will always strive to ensure Caerphilly County Borough Council delivers value for money in everything it does
- We will help protect the most vulnerable people in our society and make safeguarding a key priority
- We will always welcome feedback and consider the views of residents, staff and other key stakeholders
- We will be open, honest and transparent in everything we do

### (ii) **The catalyst / drivers for agile working:**

There are a number of catalysts that encourage further exploration of agile working and the benefits that it could bring to Caerphilly.

For CCBC the clear drivers are:

#### **The Council's need to keep up with the pace of change as a progressive employer in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.**

Our approach to working life is changing fast. Both men and women want to find a balance between work, leisure, family and caring responsibilities.

Studies commissioned by the Employment Human Rights Commission (EHRC) support that people (regardless of gender) want a wider range of flexible job opportunities in all types of jobs. They want policies that reflect the social and economic benefits of integrating work life balance and care.

Agile working methodologies that afford staff more autonomy over where and when they work can support this position.

## **CCBC's Business Continuity Plan Review (Inclement Weather)**

The Guardian Newspaper reported in 2018 that gridlocked motorways, multiple rail cancellations, a string of crashes on motorways, empty restaurants and idle diggers seen across Britain at that time could cost the economy at least £1bn a day.

In March 2018 the Council felt it was important to acknowledge the fantastic work undertaken by employees during the 4 days of difficult conditions. Without whom all our roads would not have been cleared, care could not have been provided to the most vulnerable in our society and emergency conditions could not have been dealt with to name just a few.

Conversely however, the inclement weather forced many staff to stay close to home and hundreds of Caerphilly staff did not attend work for this reason. The enforced office closures for health & safety reasons exacerbated this position.

In this context, many staff might have been equipped to work from home or nearer to home during the office closure period through the effective implementation of a refined business continuity plan that caters for such events, i.e. a plan that takes advantage of the technology and/or the office space at its disposal.

A truly agile workforce is a mobile one and there is great strength in a mobile workforce to meet the needs of the Council and its residents during periods of inclement weather. This was proven in the context of the hundreds of staff who did turn up to work and who did step out of role with transferrable skills to assist colleagues/residents to go about their business safely.

If a post suits agile working in terms of Location, the relevant service area can build this into its business continuity plan and extend the opportunity to staff to continue working safely during periods of inclement weather.

### **Savings targets / MTFP**

Some of the most successful companies have led the way on re-assessing how their workplaces operate and have introduced flexible and agile options for their employees. They did this to improve their business but it has also got them in good shape for tougher times and fit to take on new opportunities in the future.

The Council's vision for the future is ambitious against the MTFP target savings of £39m over the next four years. In meeting the MTFP targets, there is always the potential for asset rationalisation to be an outcome. The impact of any such asset realisation on office space is unknown at this time and cannot be predicted. It would however serve the Council well to know the extent to which agile working could extend across Services if necessary in the future.

### **The Gender Pay Gap**

Flexible working and agile working methodologies are intrinsic in supporting the reduction of the gender pay gap.

The government has supported a series of incremental changes in statutory entitlements to increase men's take up of family leave and make it better paid and more flexible, for example greater flexibility in how paternity and parental leave can be taken including shared parental leave. Organisations are being encouraged to raise awareness of entitlements and to open up flexible working/agile working opportunities particularly for men.

### **3 AGILE WORKING IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ONGOING WORKFORCE PLANNING EXERCISE**

The Council must ensure that it continues to have a workforce that is sustainable over the long term and is equipped with the necessary skills to meet the needs of our citizens as well as the changing demands for our services.

In July 2018, the Interim Chief Executive wrote to all staff inviting expressions of interest for reduction in our hours of work, flexible retirement or wish to leave the Council's employment under the premise of Voluntary early retirement and/or Severance.

In the Autumn Term of 2018, all who have submitted a form will receive feedback on their expressions of interest. All expressions of interest will be carefully considered and those that can reasonably be supported will progress to the next stage.

The results of this workforce planning exercise will have an impact on the Council's staffing structure. The extent of that impact is yet to be determined but will inevitably steer service managers to plan accordingly in support of staff who will continue to provide their service to the Council following it.

### **4. HOW FLEXIBLE ARE SERVICES**

#### **(i) Is it reasonable to think that staff can be given more autonomy over where and when they work?**

Yes it is but one size methodology will not fit all. Major economic and technology-driven shifts have caused significant social change. New technologies, data analytics and social networks have all had an impact on the way that people communicate, collaborate and work. The rapid acceleration of technology has changed what is possible in the workplace.

The way in which we think about office space, how and when we work has started to change. With the ownership of smartphones ever increasing, the internet, cloud communications and smart devices, it has never been easier to plug in and work from anywhere.

#### **(ii) Which jobs suit agile working?**

Most jobs will have some scope for agility in the context of where staff work and/or when staff work.

The Council's services however are diverse and include cleaning, catering, refuse and recycling, housing, social services/care services, leisure, youth, libraries, education services including adult education, technical services, planning and highways. 5

Before any service manager can advise on which posts suit agile working, a table top exercise should be undertaken to consider how much flexibility is available in each and every role in their Service Area.

#### **(iii) What Heads of Service might consider in the table top exercise?**

Heads of Service should consider if posts are:

- Location Dependent or Location Independent
- Time Dependent or Time Independent, i.e.



By mapping every job in their service area to identify how much flexibility can realistically be achieved for each role. For example:

Post	Location Dependent	Location Independent	Time Dependent	Time Independent	Comment – Be clear on how much flexibility the post affords
Post 1		X		X	Offers full choice over where to work. Significant flexibility over when to work.
Post 2	X		X		No choice of where to work. Working hours are set. Flexible working applications welcome.
Post 3	X			X	No choice over where to work but infrastructure supports significant time independence

**(iv) Explanation of terms:**

Location Dependent Receptionist, home carer, refuse collector, highway maintenance operative, youth worker and/or any other such post that requires the member of staff to work from, or, at a specified venue to carry out specific works.

These will mostly be front line facing posts that provide a service directly to/for the public from a fixed location and no other location will do. Location Dependent Posts do not support staff to have autonomy over where they actually work.

Location Independent A post is location independent if it does not fall within the descriptor for location dependent.

These are posts that suit hot desking; drop in and work locations; Mobile working where technology supports staff to work remotely; Home working (substantial or ad-hoc); mixed seating (where different roles are located together to gain efficiencies); multi-site (fixed or flexible).

As technology improves, the traditional limitations of having to report to a specific office or place of work to carry out the duties of location independent posts could become a thing of the past.

Time Dependent A post is time dependent if staff working hours are set and immovable. In such posts staff must be contactable and able to commit to their post at a specified time and no other time will do.

Time Dependent Posts do not support staff to have complete autonomy over when they actually work.

Most posts however will afford some time autonomy. In Time Dependent Posts this is likely to take the form of part time hours or compressed hours, term time only working, i.e. agreed working patterns around which there is clarity and others are working alongside each other to meet the full needs of the service in terms of total time required to be covered.

Time Independent A post is time independent if it supports staff to have complete autonomy or part autonomy over when they work.

Most jobs lend themselves to part autonomy, which means that staff could to a greater or lesser extent determine their own working pattern throughout the week and/or hours throughout the day but that at certain times they would need to be available to attend scheduled meetings, training etc.

**(v) What might Heads of Service do with the results of the table top exercise?**

The results of the table top exercise will give a good indication of how much flexibility is available in each role and lead to the development of an agile working model that suits that Service Area. One size will not fit all.

The Head of Service might also give consideration to the results of this desk top exercise in relevance to reviewing business continuity in the event of enforced Council/office closure in the case of Inclement weather, etc.

**5. POLICIES THAT UNDERPIN FLEXIBLE WORKING**

The Council already offers numerous benefits aimed at making it easier for employees to balance home and work life commitments including flexible working, home working, career breaks, adoption leave, carers' leave, salary sacrifice childcare voucher scheme, job share, leave of absence, parental, shared parental and paternity leave, part-time working, shift/day swapping and term-time working opportunities.

Agile working in terms of offering more flexibility over when and where staff work, could complement this suite of policies.

The flexible working policy and the home working policy specifically lend themselves to agile working in the context explained. A review of these policies in the context of promoting agile working / mobile working could be prioritised.

Other policies/procedures requiring review within the context of agile working will include 'expenses'; 'Insurance'; 'Data Privacy and Guidelines';

**6. MANAGER RESPONSIBILITIES**

- (i) Keep an open mind /a willingness to embrace change – Managing employees in a flexible / agile working environment can be a challenge and this in itself can encourage the continuation of traditional working patterns and rituals.

In an agile working environment where posts are largely Location Independent, employees will need to understand:

The specific parameters of the agile working arrangement in respect of location and time as appropriate.

- What they are expected to do (will involve prioritising, planning ahead and clear objective setting)
- The methodology for agreeing and monitoring workload
- How success will be measured
- How this feeds into the performance development cycle
- What communication is required from them
- How the line manager will communicate with them

Managers will need support too. Agile working will lead to a change in corporate culture that includes the dissipation of control frameworks in favour of 'TRUST'

- (ii) Develop a business plan – following the table top exercise, Service Managers might develop a business case – clarifying the business benefits and gains for their service area in relevance to the drivers/catalysts referred to in point 2 above. Within the business plan:

Clarify the agile working model that will suit the area of service - This would be largely led by the results of the table top exercise and reference to point 4 above.

Identify the barriers and enablers that would support the introduction of agile working opportunities in the Service Area, for example:

- Changes to working practices and IT support required.
- Culture, performance management and training requirements
- Policies required to support the new ways of working (note point 4 above)
- Costs and benefits
- Impact Assessment
- Communication plans
- Implementation timetable

## Appendix 2 – The New Normal?

Directors have all reviewed their services and have considered what a “New World Norm” could look like for the future. The key outcome is a supportive approach to introduce flexible working as a normal part of service delivery going forward. Flexible working in many sectors is already seen as the norm and although Caerphilly could be seen as slightly behind the curve this is a great opportunity for the authority to embrace a truly positive transformational change.

As a result of the pandemic response there has been much cross-fertilisation of teams across the Council which has demonstrated the benefits of skill sharing, synergies in projects and creating more diverse and responsive teams. This style of working promotes opportunities to create more flexible service delivery to support customer needs and to help manage a more flexible and diverse workforce which could lead to greater retention, engagement and opportunities for staff.

The co-location of services and delivery, at times and locations when residents are most likely to engage, could change our relationship with residents so that we are seen less as an institution and more as a supportive Council here to help and assist our communities.

Increasing our use of digital tools to help support our staff and customers will help limit demand on a return to the previous "normal". There is clear recognition amongst staff that the pandemic has proven the ability for technology to expand service capacity and that skills / tools now being employed should form the blueprint for future settings.

It is important to recognise that sometimes face to face is the only method for some residents and such reassurance services (particularly for vulnerable/older people) should continue, particularly in areas such as social services. There may always be requirements to send letters and paper forms, appreciating that there are those citizens that will not or cannot engage digitally. However, to further promote / enable the digital front door to Caerphilly's services, there is a recognised benefit to having Digital Champions and greater Wi-Fi / Mi-Fi provision in the community to support service needs.

There is wider research that promotes the use of voice activated services to help those who wouldn't engage with digital interface as it can be perceived as too hard. This is an area that many organisations have already successfully introduced and will need further research and possible trials.

Business continuity is key going forward. The Council has proven that it can and has delivered the vast majority of services remotely. Although this has been through necessity it is evident that it can be achieved and that it works. It is essential that the momentum gained in the past few months must not be lost as services need to be responsive to further peaks in infection rates or even new pandemics that could occur in the future. There is a need to maintain the ability to flex services or even turn on and off as the situation necessitates.

Greater digital presence is called on to allow a more integrated and autonomous customer service offer, adopting new or building on existing initiatives. There are many opportunities if suitably navigated in tandem with greater transparency of service provisions, to deliver improved customer relationships and lessen the burden of time-consuming complaints and service requests.

In the medium to longer term there may be the opportunity to reduce office accommodation requirements. This could produce ongoing revenue savings and possible one-off capital receipts that could be re-invested in service provision.

To move to a more flexible and digitally focussed service provision there is a requirement for a significant financial investment which will need to be fully identified and funded. This could be considered on an invest to save basis. However, the savings are much wider than purely direct financial impacts. There are savings in regard fuel usage, carbon emissions, building requirements, etc that will impact positively on the residents of the borough.

### **Appendix 3 – Some Foundations for a Successful Flexible Working Programme**

Staff buy-in will be key to the success of any change in approach to service delivery. Staff will need to be provided with the equipment to allow them to work more flexible. They will need to be trained appropriately and be clear on how they can best work in this manner. Appropriate mechanisms for ensuring staff welfare will need to be introduced to ensure any required support is available and easily accessible

Staff will need to understand that this new way of working will provide much more flexibility in how they undertake their roles. There will be a clear need for outcome-based measures to be put in place along with many other support mechanisms such as HR, Manager and peer support, etc

A culture change will be needed at all levels of the Council, from staff to Managers to Elected Members. The days of doing what we have always done have gone. A clear, effective communications and engagement strategy will be key. This will also need to emanate out to the public interface. The customers will also need to understand the necessity for change.

Not everyone will be equipped to work flexible. There will be instances where the new working environment is not suitable for staff to undertake their roles. This could be down to security and privacy from both a personal and work perspective. Although the service may suit flexible working Managers will need to review each role and circumstance individually to ensure that it can be undertaken safely and appropriately.

Social distancing requirements are likely to be in place for the longer term or at least until a proven vaccine is available and this could be a number of years away. In order to facilitate social distancing, all staff working across buildings over a traditional 9 to 5 pattern is no longer an option. New ways of working must be found and implemented.

## **Appendix 4 – A New Customer Interface - Public Interaction and Digital Capability**

Public interaction with services has been changing over the years with a reduction in face to face contact and an increase in telephony and online contact. This is likely to increase over the short term as residents become increasingly used to undertaking many everyday activities over the internet. The pandemic has proven that a significant proportion of the population is now digitally enabled.

An assessment of the “Digital Capability Within Caerphilly Population” highlights the extent to which our residents are able to access digital services for many aspects of their lives. The move to support a more digitally enabled and aware customer fits neatly with the proposal to have a more flexible approach to service delivery.

While the assessment highlights that 15% of adults in the wider Gwent region are not currently on-line, it also highlights that 75% of the Caerphilly adult population have all 5 basic digital skills.

Housing rent payments to the Council have seen a 20% reduction in the use of cash/cheque and now only 12% of rents are being paid in this way. Conversely the Council has seen an increase of 8% in internet payments and 10% in telephone payments.

Across our Customer First offices there has been a marked downturn in footfall for a variety of payments at these locations. There has also been a significant increase in the use of the automated payment option – IVR (Integrated Voice Response).

On average footfall has reduced by 19% between 2018/19 and 2019/20 and has resulted in an average reduction of 33% in the value of payments collected in person.

Since March 2020 Customer services offices have been closed and all customer interactions have been via telephone or digital services. There is a growing confidence and acceptance of on-line, real times services.

For those that are not digitally enabled there are a variety of training options already in place and a variety of further initiatives are being considered to assist in moving them to a more appropriate payment channel.

The authority has already obtained support to make Caerphilly and Blackwood town centres wi-fi enabled with funding from Brexit. This is ready to be rolled out in the coming weeks/months. There is no reason that this cannot be widened for other towns and villages to provide greater access opportunities for residents. This could be coupled with community hub type locations where residents could attend to undertake online payments if they have limited wi-fi access at home and also obtain assistance in the early days on how to undertake this payment option at these facilities. This could be centred around helping people to help themselves in the longer term.

## **Appendix 5 - Health, Safety and Well-Being Considerations**

Living and working through an unprecedented event such as the Coronavirus pandemic can be a worrying time for everyone. It's all too easy in uncertain times to neglect your health, especially when it's necessary to reduce your social contact and time spent outdoors.

Caerphilly County Borough Council employees all have access to the Care first Service. Care first provides confidential, impartial advice and support 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Employees don't need to ask permission from their manager before contacting Care first.

When working from home there are clear guidelines that need to be considered and implemented to ensure staff feel confident and capable that they are able to manage the separation between work and homelife. A good work life balance is essential to personal well-being.

Caerphilly has implemented many support mechanisms for staff which are available via the HR intranet pages. Weekly updates have been communicated to staff via e-mail entitled Wellbeing@work. Line managers have ensured that those frontline staff not on e-mail are fully aware of the support mechanisms available. This support, advice and guidance for staff is invaluable and would be an area that would need to receive a key focus moving forward.

It has become apparent during the pandemic that although there has been coronavirus, social distancing, childcare and shielding absences the authority general sickness absence levels have reduced significantly to just over 3%. This is reflective of other sectors who have introduced flexible working principles. By providing the flexibility to staff to work their hours to suit their personal circumstances sickness absence reduces.

The authority already has flexible working principles (home working and lone working policies) and solutions that can be adapted to suit this new way of flexible working to ensure that staff health, safety and well being is not compromised in any way. In-fact with more flexible working, risks of accidents, pressure, stress, etc are significantly reduced as staff will need to travel less and will not feel pressured to be present at an office for a set number of hours every day.

Beyond the obvious business benefit of reduced office costs and environmental benefits, research also tells us that flexible working improves morale and reduces stress levels, increases staff retention and importantly widens and unlocks a bigger talent pool, wherein a business can recruit and retain a greater range of talent.

## **Appendix 6 - Flexible Working Policy Considerations**

There are a number of key policies such as but not limited to - use of IT equipment, IT security and flexible working principles that will need to be updated and amended to facilitate a flexible workforce. These will be reviewed and will be subject to the necessary consultation process.

There are already flexible working and home working principles in place since 2015 and 2012 respectively which will require updating accordingly alongside other well-being policies.

Given the significant flexibility that results from flexible working, the Councils existing "Flexi Scheme" will need to be considered to ensure there is a seamless fit in approach. As such, it is proposed to review the scheme to be more in line with the proposed flexible working approaches which in themselves provide employees with additional time management opportunities that can help balance work and personal commitments.

To support the organisation with this transformation, it will be necessary to review the current flexible working scheme to ensure that it provides maximum opportunities to work in a more flexible way to support service delivery, which will benefit the Council and employees.

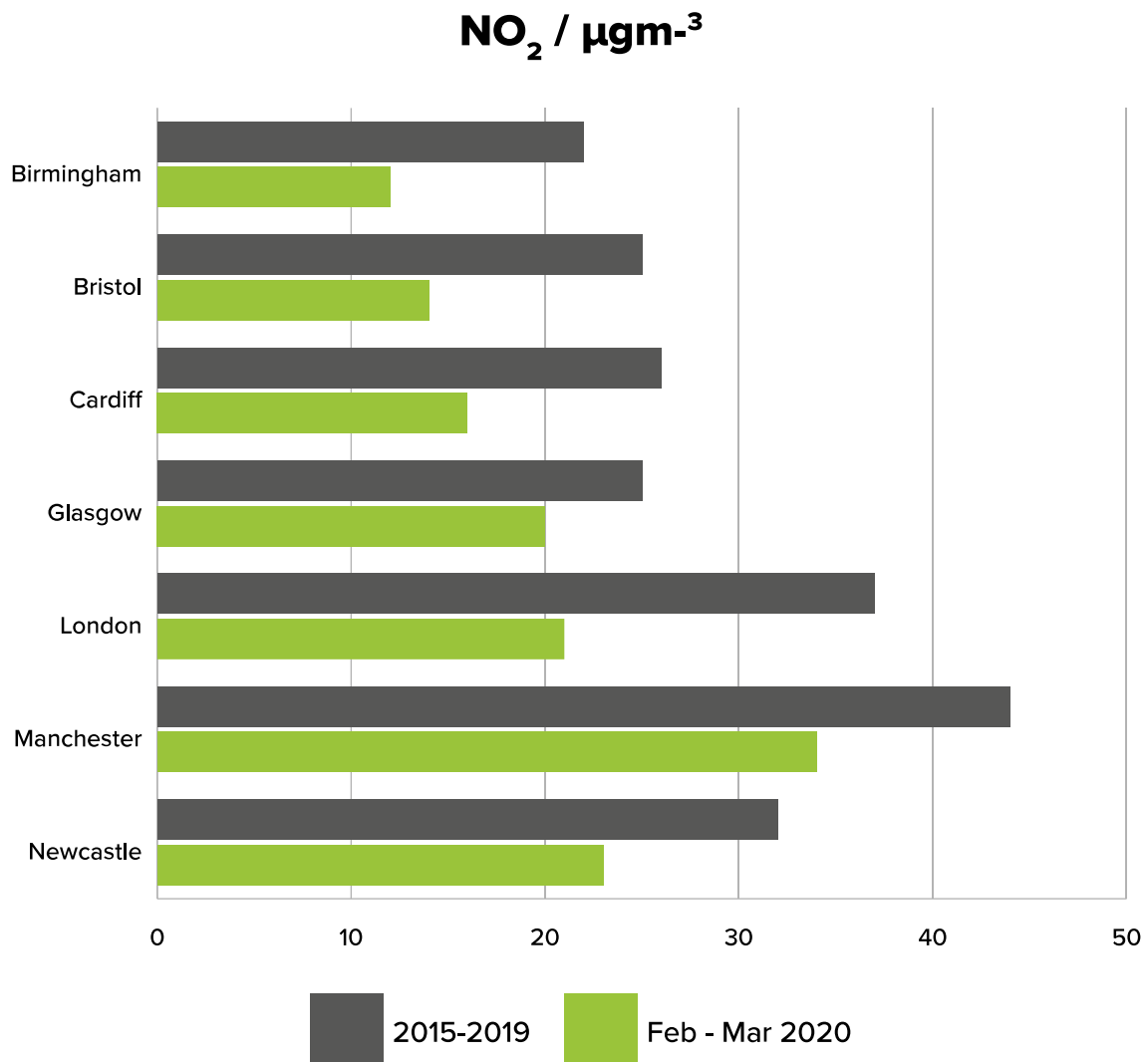
Caerphilly is currently behind the curve in its approach to flexible working and this is a great opportunity to become a leading light in how services can be delivered in the future.



## Appendix 7 - Environmental Impact

Cardiff, London, Manchester, Birmingham and other cities across the UK have seen a huge decline in toxic nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) levels, according to a study by the National Centre for Atmospheric Science (NCAS). Nitrogen dioxide is a harmful gas released when fossil fuels are burnt, usually by power plants and motor vehicles. Many of the activities that generate nitrogen dioxide are also responsible for the world's carbon emissions and the current climate crisis.

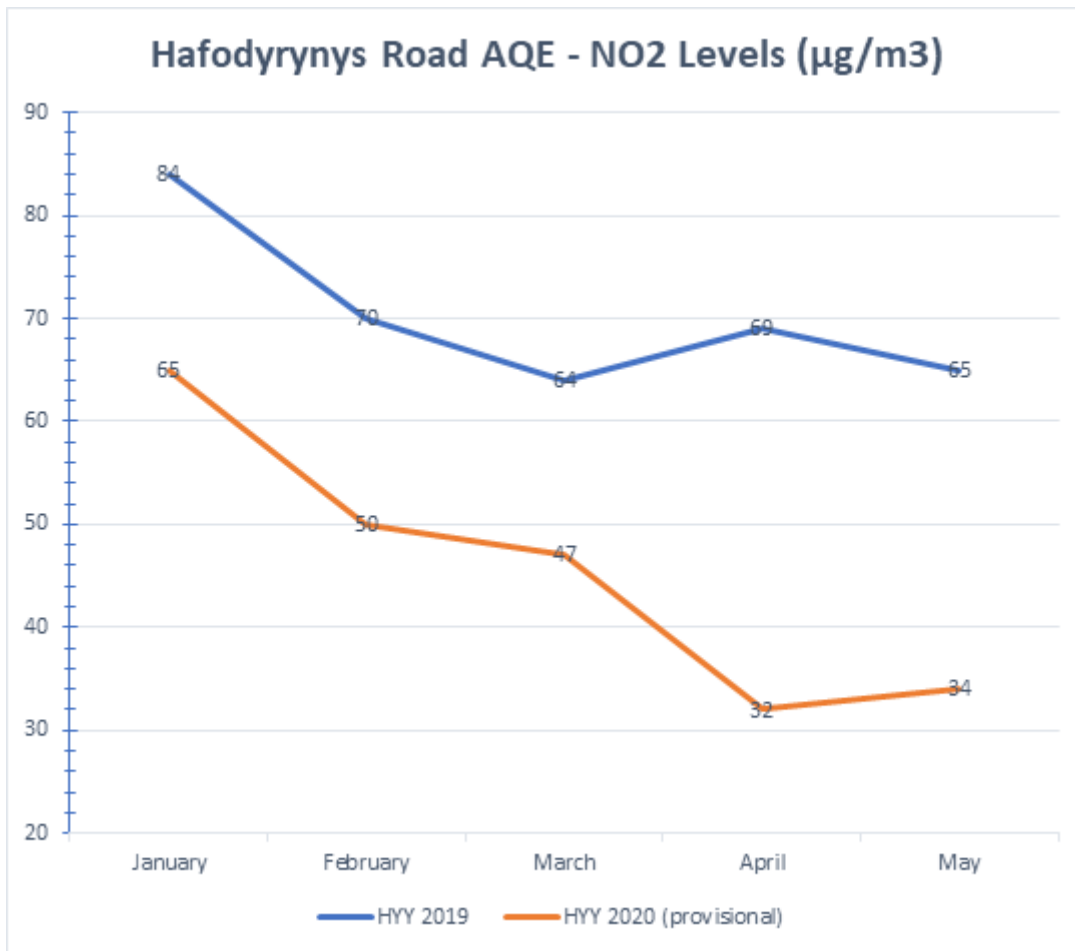
Comparing recent pollution levels to the average from the same period in the previous five years, NCAS states: **“The air is definitely much healthier”**. This is clearly evident from the chart below.



Road traffic accounts for about 80% of nitrogen dioxide emissions in the UK, according to Paul Monks, Professor of Air Pollution at the University of Leicester, and former chair of the UK government's science advisory committee on air quality. The average diesel car emits 52mg of polluting gas for every kilometre it travels, so it's no surprise that the lockdown-induced reduction in traffic is leading to a substantial improvement in air quality.

Caerphilly is one of only two councils in Wales (the other being Cardiff) that have been identified as having a significant air quality problem due to exceedances of permitted nitrogen dioxide levels on the A473 at Hafodryn Hill.

Specifically considering the air quality changes for Hafodyrnyns between January to May 2019 to the same period this year it is evident that the reduced vehicle usage during lockdown has had a significant impact as illustrated below.



Caerphilly has declared a climate emergency via a Notice of Motion by the Deputy Leader Cllr Sean Morgan. Cllr Morgan stated “The world is on the cusp of a climate catastrophe and the negative trends we are already seeing can only be halted by transformative change in every aspect of how humans interact with nature. As a council we are continuously seeking ways to improve the way we do things to protect the environment for future generations. We must also look to take advantage of the positive economic and wellbeing impacts that transformative change can bring, and I am pleased that the motion was supported as this is a hugely important cause that requires our action.”

The motion sets out a clear commitment to reduce carbon by developing an energy plan and calling on the UK and Welsh Government to provide the necessary resources and support to enable effective carbon reduction, also to work with the Public Service Board and Cardiff Capital Region City Deal partners to develop opportunities to develop carbon savings.

Moving to a more flexible platform for service delivery the authority makes a clear statement to supportive transformative change. The authority is the county borough’s largest employer and has thousands of employees who make journeys to offices, to sit at desks to undertake their job. It has been proven that the vast majority of these roles can become a lot more flexible and can be effectively delivered from home or other settings drastically cutting vehicle journeys. Enhancing the level of flexible working across the Council would have a significant and positive impact on the climate.

It is estimated that the during 2018 the Council’s fleet of vehicles (including grey fleet):

- drove 8.5 million miles,
- produced 5,538 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO2e),

- consumed 22,298 megawatt hours of energy,
- emitted up to 18.4 tonnes of nitrogen oxides (NOX),
- and up to 245 kg of particulates (PM).

The directly operated fleets (including Plant and “Unknowns”) burnt at least 1.77 million litres of fuel at an estimated cost of £1.79 million (based on 2018 average price, ex VAT) and produced 4,745 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e. Even a small percentage change of say 5% in vehicle mileage will make a significant difference to emissions and expenditure.

If Caerphilly is serious about supporting transformational change that will benefit the climate and environment where we live, work and play then flexible working must have its place. Flexible working can be deployed to make better use of people and space assets, which can greatly improve sustainability while reducing cost and a company’s carbon footprint. If you allow for homeworking as part of the move to flexible working, then this potentially supports a significant reduction in car journeys. What’s more, designing a new, flexible-ready office offers the opportunity to “go green”.

## **Appendix 8 - IT and Equipment**

Prior to March 2020, the Authority operated in a fairly traditional manner with administrative staff mainly working from office accommodation using static IT infrastructure and fixed location equipment. Flexible working across the Authority was ad hoc and to an extent limited.

In March 2020 the Authority transformed overnight moving to become a fully flexible workforce. The move from office based working to home working was completed almost overnight.

Due to the relatively low levels of investment in flexible IT equipment such as laptops, surfaces and i-pads to date, the Authority has encouraged some staff to use their own devices to access Corporate systems via secure virtual private network during the pandemic. This has allowed the Council to maintain the delivery of vital community services.

As flexible working becomes the “new norm” the Authority will need to ensure that it equips its flexible workforce with the appropriate IT tools and equipment to ensure they can undertake their roles as productively and safely as possible.

In recent months, as part of the Customer and Digital Strategy implementation, Cabinet have already taken the decision to deploy modern software in the form of Microsoft Office 365, Abavus and Thoughtonomy. These tools have been fundamental to the Council’s recent success in dealing with Covid 19 and maintaining key public services. To maximize the use of these tools and flexible working the Authority will now need to invest in appropriate IT equipment and infrastructure.

Digital Services are currently undergoing a strategic service review with the support of an external party. The future direction of travel in terms of IT infrastructure and operating model will be subject to an additional Cabinet report during the autumn 2020.

As a result of recent work it is estimated that the Authority will need to develop a full device strategy and future operating model which will require a significant investment in flexible working equipment.

It is not possible to fully estimate the cost of this migration at this point but the development of a sustainable investment plan for this equipment will be required going forward if the Council is to ensure its staff can maintain these flexible approaches.

In addition to the procurement of appropriate IT equipment the authority will need to consider options for additional support for equipment such as desks and chairs to ensure a safe working environment for all flexible workers who could potentially be using their home as their office base in the future.

## Appendix 9 - Investment and Property Requirements

The goals of organisations in adopting flexible working are to create a more responsive, efficient and effective organisation, which improves business performance and increases customer satisfaction.

By empowering employees to work how, where and when they choose, there is evidence that productivity is increased and service improvement can be provided by employees working in a way that suits them best. This in turn provides savings for the organisation. These savings should be seen as the investment needed to stimulate the transformational change.

In an American based study, Global Workplace Analytics reports that the average business would save \$11,000 per person per year if staff with remote-compatible jobs worked from home just half the time. Furthermore, a poll of 1,500 technology professionals revealed that 37% would take a pay cut of 10% if they could work from home. This implies that there is a trade off in relation to the benefits that the employee values from working in an flexible manner against the desire to be financially driven.

The highlighted section is of concern to us and would ask that it is removed from the report in its entirety. We would not advocate or support any 'trade off' of pay and working from home.

A flexible Working Business Case was reported to Carmarthenshire County Council CMT in May 2017, which concluded potential significant 5-year cumulative savings of £5.3m after an initial capital investment of £2.1 million. This could be achieved from the implementation of flexible working, there would also be significant implications for the Council's office accommodation portfolio in terms of potential release of buildings.

Pembrokeshire County Council also moved to a flexible working approach in 2018 and identified that revenue savings in the order of £925k per annum could be achieved. Further, Monmouthshire County Council have also moved to a flexible working model and their Headquarter building provides only 88 desks for 200 staff that can use the facility coupled with their flexible working option.

This invest to save approach could be developed for a Caerphilly business case. The savings would not happen overnight. However, in the longer term the property portfolio could be rationalised and reconfigured to suit flexible working. The office layouts would need to change and be more aligned with flexible working principles. There would be limited desks and more docking type workstations to provide flexibility on when and where you could work.

The current pandemic may limit the reduction on office space in the short term due to social distancing measures. Longer term there would be significant savings if the accommodation requirements were halved as a result of flexible working. There would be reduced annual running costs for the wider property portfolio and possible one-off capital receipts from the sale of assets that would no longer be required.

An initial exercise undertaken by the Property Services has identified that currently there are circa 2000 desks available within the authority for use by staff. If service provision was undertaken in an flexible manner, there could be a property portfolio rationalisation which could result in 8 buildings being surplus to requirements.

Service provision would be delivered from 3 core locations, Ty Penallta, Tredomen and Tir y berth. This rationalisation would limit desk availability to approx. 1300 desks, a reduction of about one third. However, with social distancing requirements the availability of desk space will be significantly less than 1300.

If the move to a flexible working platform is supported there will need to be a detailed property portfolio report presented detailing the options available along with the relevant cost implications.

## Appendix 10 – Flexible Working Staff Survey June 2020

The flexible working staff survey undertaken in June 2020 had 1483 respondents. Some of the main highlights from the survey include the following:

- 83% worked in a flexible way during the coronavirus restrictions.
- 95% worked away from the office full-time during this period.
- 66% of respondents normally work from either Ty Penallta or Ty Tredomen.
- **78% stated that they would like to work in a more flexible way in the future.**
- **Only 8% stated that they did not want to work in a more flexible way in the future.**
- 98% stated that flexible working provided a better work-life balance for them.
- 84% stated that flexible working demonstrated trust in staff from the organisation.
- 84% stated that flexible working would allow them to achieve greater productivity.
- 93% stated that flexible working would support better mental health and well-being.
- 80% considered flexible working would provide a positive impact on the environment.

However:

- 74% stated that they thought that would have less effective teamworking.
- 93% stated that it could be open to abuse.
- 77% had concerns that the authority could see less productivity.
- 78% stated that flexible working may have a negative impact on mental health.
- 67% thought that lack of equipment may be an obstacle to flexible working.

Overall:

- 50% stated that they like to split their time between home and office working.
- 23% had a preference for working from home
- 21% wanted to work from the office but have the option to work from home occasionally.
- Only 2% wanted to be office based.

The analysis above provides a good indication that the staff preference is that the authority should work in a more flexible way. **73%** preferred to work from home or have a balance between home and office working and only **2%** preferred an office-based approach.

There is support and concern in equal measure in relation to mental health and well-being. 93% have stated that flexible working would be better for mental health but 78% were also concerned over the effect that it would also have on mental health.

Some of the other main outcomes indicate the positive impact that flexible working could have on productivity, 84% stating it would improve, along with the trust that this approach demonstrated in staff, 84% supporting this statement. Again, this is balanced off with 93% indicating that this approach could be open to abuse and 77% stating that they would have concerns over productivity.

The outcome is clear that **78% want to work in a more flexible way** in the future and only 8% were against this approach. A fuller analysis of the survey and comments is included in appendix 2.