

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Staff Governance Committee
DATE	7 June 2021
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	The Future of Work Survey- Action Areas for Consideration
REPORT NUMBER	RES/21/116
DIRECTOR	Steven Whyte
CHIEF OFFICER	Isla Newcombe
REPORT AUTHOR	Lindsay MacInnes
TERMS OF REFERENCE	2.2 & 2.3

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. To seek approval for an action plan which has been developed in response to the results of the Future of Work employee check-in survey and to ask the committee to instruct the Chief Officer People & Organisational Development to implement the plan.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the Committee approve the action plan set out in Appendix 2 and instruct the Chief Officer People & Organisational Development to implement the action plan.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1. All-Staff Communications and Service Update

The Future of Work Employee Check-In Survey results were published on the Intranet in March 2021 and were shared with Staff Governance Committee via [Service Update](#).

The focus of the all-staff communication was the central need to demonstrate mutual accountability for acting on the findings from the survey. The presentation of the survey results indicates future direction and actions that can be taken on an individual, team and corporate basis. Results were presented in a format to encourage participation, conversation, and consideration about how we all contribute towards work; both in the present and the future.

Within the Service Update was the commitment to present to Staff Governance Committee on the proposed actions in response to the survey, for its consideration and approval.

3.2 Survey Background

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in early 2020, ACC's response was immediate. Six months into the pandemic, we had adapted significantly and there was a sense that the experience could fundamentally build our organisational and personal resilience, in changing the way we think about how we work and how we deliver services. At this point, we carried out a workforce-wide 'Check-in' employee survey on The Future of Work to assess:

- To what extent the projects and transformations we had been making as an organisation pre- COVID-19, both culturally and digitally, had prepared us for the challenges we have been forced to confront
- Whether we, as individuals and as One Team, have the personal and collective resources and skills in place to effectively deliver what was needed
- How best we can build upon the changes made during the pandemic and ensure that any innovations or improvements in the way we work are embedded into the future of work

We learned how employees were adapting to different ways of working, particularly those who were undertaking remote working, and gained their views on how this impacts their work and personal lives. The results give us insights into our shared experience of working through the pandemic, as well as ideas about what our workplace and workspaces could look like in the months and years to come. It also helped to identify any concerns and anxieties among staff around returning to office-based environments in the future.

3.3 Scope of the Survey

1817 employees took part from across the organisation. To ensure the maximum input possible from Operations & Protective Services colleagues in particular, the layout of the survey was amended to suit colleagues in this area, a 2-week extension to the closing date was provided and scannable posters/leaflets were circulated for distribution and placement in vehicles. This extension enabled a further 68 colleagues to take part from frontline roles such as cooks, catering assistants, support workers, technicians, janitors, pupil support assistants, building assistants, drivers, and bus escorts.

(The breakdown of participants in the survey can be seen at Appendix 1)

Overall, the results reflected:

- Individually, how prepared and ready we felt for change
- Culturally, how we experienced working with others
- Organisationally, our experience of being an employee of Aberdeen City Council during the pandemic

3.4 Developing our Future of Work Actions for Consideration

3.4.1 Key considerations

Engagement with our stakeholders and review of the strategic landscape has shown that, as the action areas are developed into proposals, the following drivers will need to be considered and balanced at all times:

- The experience of our employees – as described through the Future of Work survey, “Discovery” sessions with frontline staff and evidenced through technology adoption data and absence data; including particular attention to mental health and wellbeing
- Our customer expectations and needs
- Benchmarking – understanding and learning from the approaches of other local authorities, professional networks and the private sector more widely
- Economic recovery including supporting our city centre through staff and supplier footfall and delivering best value – ensuring that our work is as productive, effective and efficient as possible
- The environment and our commitment to net zero

3.4.2 Areas for Action

The priorities raised in the survey results highlighted ten areas for action and each will have their own working group; in parallel also tying in with existing aligning groups and workstreams already established in the council. The **ten areas for action** are detailed below and further description around these are included as Appendix 2 to this report.

1. Health & Safety
2. Mental Health & Wellbeing
3. Guiding Principles & Capability Framework
4. Future of Workspaces
5. Digital Skills & Adoption
6. Internal Communications & Employee Engagement
7. Leadership & Management
8. Employee Benefits & Reward
9. Energy & Climate Change
10. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

3.4.3 Approach

The co-creation of working groups and wider staff engagement around these areas will ensure that any arising enabling actions will be designed alongside colleagues and will build on our existing flexibility, aligned to business need. Employee participation in these working groups and peer-led sessions will inform this work, as will the ongoing input from, and collaboration with, Trade Union colleagues.

Co-working and updates with Trade Union partners have been invaluable within the progress already made thus far, particularly in activity to achieve greater engagement in these areas with our **frontline services**. This focus will continue as central within the planned Actions under Digital Skills & Adoption, Internal Comms & Employee Engagement and Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (see Appendix 2 for outline) and the

planned work will help to engage fully with all colleagues. Some examples of this ongoing activity with frontline colleagues include:

Increasing digital skills and adoption:

- Individual access to collaboration and communication tools such as Teams, the Intranet and Yammer has been rolled out for all front-line staff, providing equality in access to such digital tools.
- Within the roll-out of these licenses, work is underway with services, to understand different skills gaps and build these into dedicated Learning Plans including access to partner resources (for example the Digital Office and SCVO) .
- A specific training plan is being developed to focus on increasing fundamental digital literacy for all colleagues that would benefit from this- both for work and in day-to-day life.
- Identification and use of a dedicated point of contact within services for individuals has been used effectively during the recent roll out of digital pay slips – ensuring that face to face contact is used when needed.
- Use of an appointments system within operational services for individuals to gain one to one support on logging in using laptops and tablets.
- Within the Digital Payslips project, “Early Adopters” were identified in Environmental Services, Roads and Cleaning and moved onto digital payslips first as an opportunity to evaluate this move as well, as providing buddies for colleagues. This community is being built upon in further roll-outs of digital tools.

Ensuring accessibility of information and inclusion:

- Supporting managers to identify literacy/digital skills needs to ensure any concerns or unique challenges could be supported or letters translated where necessary.
- Distribution of Frontline leaflet to highlight to team members where they can use their digital payslip log-in, access Microsoft Teams, chat collaboratively, call their manager, join online meetings, access information about working for ACC and more.
- Equipping managers to allow them to offer the right levels of support to team members. Follow up calls with and ongoing discussions are in place where there are any difficulties.
- Further volunteers to become frontline Digital Champions have been sought, via distribution of leaflets and posters and line managers liaising with interested staff members.

3.5 Governance:

Progress against the Future of Work action plan will report into the monthly officer Transformation Board as it is considered as part of the transformation programme.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Some spend may be required on training and development as well as promotional and printed material where required to ensure messages and initiatives reach all employees. This will be funded by the Corporate Training

budget held within People and Organisational Development. Spend may also be required on technology/workstations and space reconfiguration, with funding to be allocated from existing budget streams.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report, however we will remain watchful of a report by the Women and Equality Committee in relation to COVID-19 support which contained a range of recommendations. One of these concerned amending the legislation on flexible working. The UK Government has previously committed to consulting on changes to the Flexible Working Regulations 2014 as part of an Employment Bill. The UK Government's Flexible Working Taskforce, which is made up of business associations, charities and trade unions including Acas and the CBI, has also been reviewing what practices and policies would support workers and their employers post-pandemic, such as hybrid and flexible working. The taskforce has recommended that flexible working should be the new default position for all workers. However, there was no specific mention of an Employment Bill in the recent Queen's speech.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
Strategic Risk	None	L	None
Compliance	Risk of non compliance with Health & Safety requirements.	L	Ongoing monitoring and implementation with our Corporate team as required for existing measures and updates in line with Government and H&S guidance.
Operational	Maintaining customer delivery and service provision through changing government requirements and adjusting ways of working.	L	Clear guidance and principles for SMTs and employees as we move through phases. Through the workstreams, manage ways of working and digital solutions, use of buildings etc in line with service area needs.
Financial	There could be required spend for training, promotional printed material, technological tools	L	This training/promotional spending will be covered by the agreed corporate training budget held within People and Organisational

	and changes to workspaces.		Development. Technological tools for remote working - budgetary elements to be agreed with Digital and Technology and Corporate Landlord from existing budget streams.
Reputational	As an employer, there could be a perception that we are not an employer of choice or a fair and inclusive employer.	L	Development of a comprehensive project plan and action plan around Future of Work to enable employee choice and flexibility in line with Service and Customer needs.
Environment / Climate	Potential reduction in staff commute and business travel. To be balanced with energy consumption.	L	Continue work with Environmental Policy team and Corporate Landlord team to assess this. Build on Green Champions network and other work described within Appendix 2 at "Energy and Climate Change".

7. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement	The Future of Work survey is cited in the Delivery Plan and this resulting work feeds into our responsibilities under Workforce for the Future and the vision of the 21 st Century Public Servant.
Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	This report has a link to Economic plans referenced in this section of the LOIP such as the Regional Economic Strategy and the City Centre Masterplan Review.
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	The action plan outlined within this report (particularly under Energy & Climate Change, Appendix 2) supports the delivery of People Stretch Outcome 11 – Healthy life expectancy is five years longer by 2026. Following of COVID-19 government guidelines and flexible working options also actively support and encourage sustainable travel and help reduce environmental pollutants which are harmful to human health.

UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes	(See Legal Implications at Section 5.)
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8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Impact Assessment	Required
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Remote working: How cities might change if we worked from home more - BBC News
Zoomshock: The Geography and Local Labour Market Consequences of Working from Home by Gianni De Fraja, Jesse Matheson, James Rockey :: SSRN
Expecting the unexpected | Close Brothers Asset Management (closebrothersam.com)
Does flexible working improve mental wellbeing? - Employee Benefits
Coronavirus (COVID-19): Flexible working during the pandemic and beyond | Guides | CIPD
Scottish Futures Trust- New Frontiers for Smarter Working Work and Workplace post COVID-19 MARCH 202
LGIU Briefing An unexpected side-effect of Covid-19: accelerating the use of data. What can councils learn?Nuffield Trust: The impact of Covid-19 on the use of digital technology in the NHS
Community Care Article: Digital capabilities should be improved to help staff practice wherever
Coronavirus (COVID-19): Mental health support for employees | CIPD

10. APPENDICES

Appendix 1- Breakdown of Respondents to the Survey
Appendix 2- Action Areas for Consideration

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

Name	Lindsay MacInnes
Title	People & OD Manager- Organisational Change & Design
Email Address	lmacinnes@aberdeencity.gov.uk
Tel	01224 523831

Appendix 1- Breakdown of Respondents to the Survey

Cluster	Count	Cluster size	Percentage
Adults' Social Work	77	398	19%
Capital	49	64	77%
Childrens' Social Work	133	392	34%
City Growth	81	212	38%
Commercial & Procurement	41	45	91%
Corporate Landlord	45	68	66%
Justice	16	122	13%
Customer Experience	158	330	48%
Data & Insights	24	29	83%
Digital & Technology	46	90	51%
Early Intervention and Community Empowerment	222	472	47%
Education	413	4289	10%
External Communications	11	19	58%
Finance	41	96	43%
Governance	50	65	77%
Health & Social Care Partnership	40	1116	4%
Operations - Building Services	43	424	10%
Operations - Environmental Services	29	317	9%
Operations - Facilities Management	31	728	4%
Operations - Fleet & Transport	8	37	22%
Operations - Protective Services	58	68	85%

Operations - Roads and Infrastructure	23	155	15%
Operations - Waste Services	18	193	9%
People & Organisational Development	32	33	97%
Strategic Place Planning	76	134	57%
Total	1817		

Appendix 2 - Action Areas for Consideration

Area	Actions Encompassed	Target overall Completion	Responsible Officer(s)
1. Health & Safety	Getting H&S compliance right via <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining the register of Health and Safety policies, procedures (corporate and local) and guidance, including review schedule. • Maintaining a record of Health and Safety training requirements within each Cluster as part of broader training needs analysis being led by People and Organisational Development. • Delivering a data set for health and safety reporting review at Function H&S Groups, SMTs, ECMT and Performance Board. This will include learning from COVID-19, for instance to ensure that actions are monitored to completion (eg risk assessments, lone working, asbestos compliance). • Delivering training to SMTs on the Three Lines of Defence (3LOD) so that everyone is clear on their responsibilities in respect of Health and Safety, using our collective experience with COVID-19 to ensure clarity. In the First Line (Do-ers), managers and staff identify and manage health and safety risks; in the Second Line (Helpers), policies and procedures are established by Committees and Boards; in the Third Line (Checkers), controls are checked to ensure there are no gaps in our health and safety framework (internal audit, external audit, Health and Safety Executive). • Completing a suite of Aberdeen City Council e-learning training sessions (to replace current content) aimed at each employee group to explain their health and safety responsibilities. • Continuing to learn lessons from the pandemic, both in terms of procedures and compliance/behaviours, and ensuring this is reflected in health and safety practice of the future. 	March 2022	Vikki Cuthbert, Colin Leaver
2. Mental Health & Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand on potential in links found between Wellbeing/Attendance and Flexible working and build into the review of Smarter Working guidance and our use of workspaces, where appropriate. • Consider further “mainstreaming” of the Action areas into communications and with People policies/processes. 	December 2021	Kirsten Foley, Fiona Lindsay

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update our mental health action plan, taking account of survey findings. • Increase Library of Mental Health and Wellbeing e-Learning courses available through new Thrive Contract. • Further developing these resources to meet the range of needs in this area across the organisation, such as the recently promoted SAMH Time for You online/virtual mental health support service for frontline workers during the pandemic. • Increase number of Mental Health First Aiders across the organisation to provide frontline support and signposting service to employees. 		
3. Guiding Principles Indicators & Capability Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and refresh these tools in line with learnings, to define the behaviours, knowledge and skills needed to take us forward. • Develop worker types covering all employees and a choice of workstyles within these, based on role requirements, organisational need and - where possible- personal preferences. • Review of Continuous Review & Development for frontline colleagues – to continue to embed our cultural ambitions in a way that takes account of differing role needs. 	March 2022	Lindsay MacInnes, Linsey Blackhurst
4. Future of Workspaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall review, between Corporate Landlord, Digital & Technology and P&OD, to plan productive employee interactions and utilise our physical space as best we can. • Build on understanding of the needs and challenges of employees by role, worker type and workstyle through focussed engagement sessions. Refresh and rebuild our Smarter Working Guidance in line with this work, customer need and service need, • Continue to explore growth of partnership model and multifaceted use of buildings to build collaboration and thereby maximise City footfall and dwell-time. Phase 1 off sharing Marischal College with Police Scotland is complete and other opportunities will continue to be explored. • Through the Estates Strategy and Climate Change Group a number of projects are being progressed to ensure that our assets will be environmentally and economically sustainable via reduction of carbon emissions, reduction in energy consumption per year and via review of the total cost of our core property costs. This will be developed in an action plan. Ensure links are enhanced with Energy and Climate change work (see 8.) and the implementation of actions under the Buildings Subgroup (ACC's Climate Change Plan) to increase energy efficiency and to optimise assets. 	December 2021	Alastair Reid, Jennifer Strachan, Mai Muhammed (linked with Strategic Place Planning)
5. Digital Skills & Adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve productivity, communication and engagement for, and with, frontline workers through the roll-out of 1,600 Microsoft licenses. 	March 2022	Chris Sellar Sandie Scott Louise Ironside

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase flexibility of working and improve access from anywhere through promotion of 'Bring Your Own Device' and 'Use Your Personal Computer' to safely access apps for work. • Utilise Teams and Yammer to communicate directly with frontline colleagues to reduce our use of email-cascades, paper memos, printing and mailshots. • Ensure ROI in frontline licenses and smart devices via upskilling supervisors and making Microsoft Teams a 'one-stop-app' for all communication and engagement with the council, promoting the benefits and opportunities of staying connected. • Improve core digital skills of all employees in line with digital roadmap to meet the needs of our digital council through increased use of peer-led training through Digital Super Champions, particularly in front line areas. • Target digital training and communications to specific worker types via intelligence from PowerBI dashboard on adoption levels and return-on-investment and build learning pathways to meet bespoke needs of individual and service. • Further development of basic digital literacy training for identified employees. 		
6. Internal Comms & Employee Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-create the Future of Work through engagement with staff via working groups for all action areas. • Communicate on our shared journey towards the Future of Work, building on positive survey feedback by continuing to feed regular communications with the organisation; primarily using the digital platforms available. • Ensure all are informed and engaged through roll out of frontline licences, tying in with successful models utilised within the digital payslips project. • Engage with employees through discussion events and working groups to increase usability and employee ownership of intranet. • Reduce reliance on email as the primary mode of all-staff communication and cascade to frontline, through use of Yammer for instant communication and open conversations to increase employee voice. • Integrate employee intranet into Microsoft Teams for ease of access and seamless communication platforms for all employees, wherever they work. • Close the Zone and PeopleAnytime and make Intranet the default homepage for all corporate devices. Promote through use of lockscreen to show the possibilities and variety of content. • Support leaders to make best use of their Teams site for wide and frequent communication and visibility. 	December 2021	Lindsay MacInnes, Sandie Scott, Paula Fullerton

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build campaign to increase value and recognition of employees. 		
7. Leadership & Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on the strong community of the Leadership Forum to help shape the Future of Work, in developing our culture and – ultimately- the success of the organisation. • Explore with managers ways that we can reinvent to attract talent, improve collaboration, support performance and reduce overheads. • Provide learning opportunities for all leaders and managers- both the transitional skills needed to adapt to new ways of working and those that underpin solid leadership practice. • Instil the clear driver from the survey for better quality conversations between leaders and their teams via flexible learning modules. 	December 2021	Ka Kuen Mo, Max Hope- Stone Bell
8. Energy & Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulate and build what climate leadership looks like: For Chief Officers, Leadership Forum, Green Champions and all staff. • Utilise Awareness & Behaviour Subgroup (People & OD with Environmental Policy Team), Intranet's Green Workplace and Green Champions to ensure this central element in Council's strategic direction is mainstreamed within the future of our work. • Examples will include: development of a staff e-Learning module on Climate Change via ACC Learn, general staff training on climate change and its relevance to ACC. • Continue to link to the Mobility Subgroup (under ACC Climate Change Plan) to increase low carbon options for staff travel and explore climate benefits of reduced staff travel. 	December 2021	Sinclair Lang, Alison Leslie, Sandie Scott
9. Employee Benefits & Reward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on existing benefits available through schemes such as Cycle to Work, car leasing (with an emphasis on electric cars), discount schemes which support local businesses. • Introduce financial well-being salary finance options including low interest rate loans and salary advances, explore possibilities around discounts on home and electronic goods. • Engage with local businesses, thus benefitting the economy of the city whilst obtaining benefits for our employees. 	December 2021	Kirsten Foley, Gaynor McKechnie
10. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link directly with network of Equality Ambassadors and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan, particularly in aligning our frontline engagements to ensure inclusion and accessibility. • Focus on inclusion driving our existing effort around digital and central to our corporate communications strategy. 	January 2022	Darren Buck, Lindsay MacInnes, Sandie Scott

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employees and Trade Unions in working groups to deliver on the ED&I Action plan as agreed at SGC. Working groups also focused on learning & culture as well as recruitment & selection activity relating to equality, diversity, and inclusion.		
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