Ways of Working Project Update: Way We Work Strategy 2021-2024

Corporate Priority:	Ensuring the right conditions to support delivery
Relevant Ward Member(s):	N/A
Date of consultation with Ward Member(s):	n/a
Exempt Information:	No
Key Decision:	No
Subject to call-in:	No Not key decision

1   Summary

1.1   The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet on a new 'hybrid' operating model and ways of working, based on lessons learned from changes in working practices required as a consequence of the pandemic. The new working model will sustain the increased use of remote technology, improve productivity and work-life balance, whilst still ensuring high quality public services. The report asks Cabinet to recommend to Council the approach as set out in the Council's new Way We Work Strategy and Action Plan, new Behaviour Framework and New Working Model appended to the report.

2   Recommendations

That Cabinet recommends to Council:
2.1   **Adoption of "The Way We Work: Our Strategy 2021 to 2024" and accompanying documents, as set out in Appendix A, B and C;**
2.2   **That the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council be delegated authority to make changes to the Strategy to account for economic, organisational or environmental changes (particularly considering Covid-19).**

3 Reason for Recommendations

3.1 The Way We Work – Our Strategy 2021 to 2024 is a refresh of the previous Workforce Strategy 2018 to 2020. It considers the current post pandemic environment, and the learning from the last 18 months and sets out four areas of priority for the next three years along with a detailed programme of work with anticipated time scales.

3.2 The strategy has been developed through engagement and in consultation with various groups of the workforce and has been discussed with Trades Unions through the Joint Staff Working Group. The strategy reflects the approach many other councils and organisations are taking in ensuring the workforce is agile and flexible, building on the learning from how people changed the way they worked through the pandemic.

3.3 The approach promotes a hybrid model of working which seeks to maximise productivity gains through home working, whilst recognising the value of team working within the Council's office environment.

4 Background

4.1 With the emergence of the pandemic and the first national lockdown in March 2020, organisations across the country had to redefine how they worked. Like many places, Melton Borough Council asked the majority of colleagues to work from home where they could, and quickly the council adapted to increase the use of remote technology to facilitate meetings and continuing engagement with other colleagues, members, residents and communities.

4.2 Given the continuing and protracted public health risks associated with covid, the adoption and utilisation of this technology became common place. Whilst there are limitations, the benefits arising from increased home working and effectiveness of utilising remote technology became clear, both in terms of productivity and reductions in carbon emissions.

4.3 Notwithstanding the above, the benefits of face-to-face engagement in team working, relationship building and joint problem solving also remain clear, and with the easing of restrictions the Council sought to encourage greater utilisation by officers of the office space, whilst maintaining measures to minimise the risk of covid transmission.

4.4 Through ongoing engagement with colleagues across the council it became increasingly clear that organisationally a new hybrid working model was required.

5 Main Considerations

5.1 Responding to the lessons learned over the last 18 months, and with a need to refresh our existing Workforce Strategy, this report sets out the refreshed Way We Work: Our Strategy 2021 to 2024. The strategy sets out how we will learn and develop, and how we work to ensure we have the right people, with the right skills and behaviours, in the right place to deliver the Council's vision and priorities over the next three years.

5.2 The strategy sets out a vision for the "Way We Work":

> *Melton Borough Council will be a positive place to work and build a career; a place where our diverse team display behaviours which embody our values; care, innovate*

and achieve, and know they are making a difference every day. We will engage and work collaboratively across our teams, partners and communities, focused on becoming a more agile, learning, digital council.

5.3   Four themes have been identified as key to delivering the vision. These are:

Attracting - Constantly reviewing how we attract, recognise, reward, and retain great people

Working - Redefining how we work to be more agile, flexible & responsive

Supporting - Focussed on well-being, working collaboratively and equality for all

Learning - Supporting us as individuals, teams, and an organisation to develop and learn together

5.4   For each theme there are a clear set of three outcomes which need to be achieved to ensure that we can fulfil our priority in the Corporate Strategy; ensuring the right conditions to support delivery – Being an outstanding employer, positive and purposeful council, equipping and supporting our people to deliver.

5.5   Against these outcomes, the supporting action plan sets out an ambitious programme of work over the next three years. Our people are critical to the delivery of the strategic outcomes set out in the Corporate Strategy. They are the face of the Council in terms of our day to day operations and contact with residents as well as a whole range of other key stakeholders. Our Strategy therefore sets out our investment in our colleagues and the areas we intend to prioritise to deliver our Way We Work vision, and in turn the priorities in the Corporate Strategy.

5.6   The Strategy, outcomes and the action plan to support them are set out in appendix A.

5.7   Our Way We Work is underpinned by a Behaviour Framework (appendix B) and hybrid working model (appendix C). These are in the early stages of being rolled out across the Council.

5.8   The Strategy is part of a wider Organisational Development Programme, which encompasses a number of other related work streams. This includes the need to review how we use and get the most from our assets and office environment, which in turn links to the Asset Development Programme previously reported to Cabinet and Council. Further updates will be provided on this separately. The Council is also investing in rolling out Microsoft Teams to enable more effective utilisation of remote technology.

6   Options Considered

6.1   **Do nothing and continue to work in the way we are** – whilst we have demonstrated we can be extremely adaptable and our colleagues are prepared to work flexibly, it is important we set a clear direction and provide clarity about what the future operating model should be. A hybrid model is preferable to a fully remote one, as it will ensure managers can maintain relationships, collaboration and oversight, whilst retaining the benefits of partial home working.

6.2   **Go back to the "old" ways of working with reduced home working** – through regular and continuing engagement with our colleagues it is clear that this is not their preferred working environment. The Council has demonstrated it can work effectively through remote technology and getting the balance with face to face, should enable to best of both worlds. There is also the potential to make savings through consolidating facilities and

improving carbon footprint through reduced travel and freeing up office space. Working in a hybrid way offers improved working conditions and can help attract talent into new posts.

7 Consultation

7.1 The strategy and supporting documents attached to this report have been developed through engagement and feedback with a variety of working groups. The Trades Unions have been consulted and feedback and support has been received from the Joint Staff Working Group.

8 Next Steps – Implementation and Communication

8.1 A communication plan is being developed to support the rollout and implementation of the strategy. Some work is already underway under the "Working" theme which has included teams developing their Team Charters, which as set out in appendix C, set out how teams will work together. Whilst the strategy supports a hybrid way of working, one where we appreciate all teams can work in a different way, they will be required to check that teams still work together to deliver services for customers.

9 Financial Implications

9.1 £15k has been allocated from the Regeneration and Innovation fund to support the development of the strategy and some of the work required under the "Working" theme.

9.2 The action plan does set out an ambitious programme of work for the next three years where resources will need to be allocated to help deliver the work. Most of this will come from the existing HR team and existing HR budget but it must also be owned and led by the whole organisation.

Financial Implications reviewed by: Director for Corporate Services

10 Legal and Governance Implications

10.1 The revised strategy takes account of the post pandemic environment and sets four areas of priority for the next three years along with a detailed programme of work with anticipated time scales.

10.2 The revision of HR policies and procedures may be required and further legal advice on this issue will be obtained once a review has been completed and any proposed changes identified.

Legal Implications reviewed by: Monitoring Officer

11 Equality and Safeguarding Implications

11.1 The strategy includes a "Supporting" theme along with three outcomes focused on wellbeing, working collaboratively and equality for all. Specifically focussing on mental health, personal attitudes to diverse styles and ways of working and more opportunities to celebrate success.

11.2   There are no safeguarding implications identified as a result of this report.

12   Community Safety Implications

12.1   There are no community safety implications as a result of this report

13   Environmental and Climate Change Implications

13.1   The New Ways of Working Model allows greater flexibility at work embracing digital and hybrid meetings which will in turn reduce the need for colleagues to travel and use their vehicles as much. Greater digital collaboration also reduces the amount of office space required and the need to print out documents. All of these new ways of working positively support climate change initiatives.

14   Other Implications (where significant)

14.1   No other implications identified

15   Risk & Mitigation

Risk No	Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Risk
1	Failure to Deliver the strategy	Low	Negligible	Low Risk
2	Insufficient resources allocated to undertake the work	Low	Negligible	Low Risk
3	Employees are not engaged in the new ways of working	Low	Negligible	Low Risk

		Impact / Consequences			
		Negligible	Marginal	Critical	Catastrophic
	Score/ definition	1	2	3	4
Likelihood	6 Very High				
	5 High				
	4 Significant				
	3 Low	1,2,3			
	2 Very Low				
	1 Almost impossible				

Risk No	Mitigation
1	The action plan has clear outcomes identified along with dates of anticipated completion of the actions
2	External support has been made available to support the HR team
3	Groups of colleagues have been engaged through out the development of the strategy and accompanying documents and feedback included in the final versions

16 Background Papers

None

17 Appendices

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