

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE LEADER DECISION RECORD

The following decision was taken on 17th May 2022 by the Leader of the Council.

Date notified to all members: 18th May 2022

This report is submitted under Urgency Procedures and is removed from the Call-in Process.

1. **TITLE**

Return to the Worksite and Introduction of Hybrid Working for Council Staff

2. **DECISION TAKEN**

That the Leader of the Council:

1. Notes and endorses the managed partial return to the worksite for those employees currently working from home be implemented from April 2022 in line with the proposals in this report;
2. Approves expenditure not exceeding £1m, funded from a specific reserve set aside for this purpose, be authorised to facilitate the partial return to the worksite as set out in this report;
3. To the extent not covered by existing delegations authorises the Director of Transport, Facilities and Repairs (Direct Services) be granted delegated authority, in consultation with the Director of Finance and Commercial Services and the Director of Human Resources and Customer Services to implement the recommendations of this report and to make any necessary consequential arrangements; and
4. Notes that the Director of Human Resources and Customer Services, in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance and Resources and in line with normal consultation practices with the joint Trades Unions will make any changes necessary to HR policies to enable this change to take effect.

3. **Reasons For Decision**

The proposal outlined above of a working assumption that all staff who have been working from home through the pandemic spend 40% of their working time in the office/worksite is recommended for the reasons set out in the report, and, in particular, because:

- This proposal will enable a balance to be struck between the benefits that many employees have experienced of working from home with the benefits

of being in the worksite, including opportunities for collaboration and closer team-working

- The proposal best accords with the views of our employees as expressed in the survey conducted in spring 2022
- Providing a clear planning assumption of a 40%/60% split between being in the office versus being at home allows for a managed return to the worksite, whilst still enabling local flexibility to take into account the differing needs of teams and individuals across the organisation.
- The additional expenditure required to support the return to the worksite is proportionate, and aspects of it (e.g. upgrade of our Wi-Fi capability would have been required in any event).

4. Alternatives Considered And Rejected

A number of alternative options were considered during the development of the proposals:

- A. Retain current working from home arrangements for the cohort of staff concerned. This option was rejected because it would not deliver the broader wellbeing benefits of a hybrid approach, would not enable the collaboration and interaction that is possible from being in the worksite, and would risk the development of a two-tier workforce, with those unable to work from home attending a worksite and those able to do so benefitting from the flexibility of home working
- B. Introduce a 'looser' hybrid working arrangement. This option would involve leaving the option of continuing to work from home or a partial or full return to the office open for discussion and agreement at a local level, without setting any organisation-wide expectations of what this would look like. This option was rejected on the basis that it would lead to significant and unwarranted variation between different parts of the organisation and would be difficult to plan for from a facilities management perspective.
- C. Full return to the worksite. This option would see everyone return to their pre-pandemic working arrangements, which for most people would mean a full time return to the office. This option was rejected because it was not in-line with feedback received from employees, would cause significant issues in terms of maintaining a Covid-secure workplace, as well as not capitalising on some of the benefits and improvements that have been observed in working practices over the last 24 months.

5. Any Interest Declared or Dispensation Granted

None

6. Respective Director Responsible for Implementation

Executive Director, Operational Services

7. Relevant Scrutiny Committee If Decision Called In

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee