

## **Appendix 2 - Pre-Decision Scrutiny: Relighting our Council**

### **Our Council Scrutiny Panel - 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2021**

#### **Relighting Our Council – summary discussion**

1. The panel supported the principle of flexible working and the approach to developing a new flexible and agile operating model.
2. Consideration was given to the tools and strategies that would be used to collect information and to help the council to understand what productivity and performance looked like for employees working remotely. The Panel understood that a key part of the approach was performance management and noted that some initial performance information was included in the report.
3. Consideration was given to productivity and performance at departmental level and whether information in relation to this was available to allow for comparison across the Council. The Panel understood that the initial performance data already provided would continue to be built on and requested that departmental and work pattern information be provided when available.
4. The panel welcomed the assurance that a key part of the approach would be to continuously assess how and if processes were working, through ongoing engagement with employees and key stakeholders, and that if something wasn't working, changes would be made.
5. The panel highlighted the reduction in the number of respondents who took part in the first life in lockdown survey compared to the second survey. The Panel were reassured, that in addition to the survey there had also been a range of employee engagement and consultation exercises, including continuous dialogue with employees, trade unions and other key stakeholders.
6. Consideration was given to the reduction in sickness absence and whether data from previous years could also be included to allow a better understanding of the direction of travel. The Panel were satisfied that HR were working on this issue and that this information would be included in future reports, along with information relating to the different categories of sickness absence.
7. Consideration was given to the definition of sickness absence and scenarios such as when employees were working remotely and continued to work even when they were sick. The Panel understood that if employees were sick, then they should not be working. The Panel received information on the range of initiatives and sources of information on offer to support employee's health and wellbeing, and that the current approach was a direct response to employee feedback in relation to working in a more agile and flexible way to support health and wellbeing.

8. Consideration was given to the reasons for reduced call abandoned rates in customer service and it was agreed to consider this in more detail at a future meeting.
9. The panel considered Council owned assets which had been identified for disposal. Information was shared about asset management and the panel were advised that the list of assets for sale was available on the Council's website and was updated monthly. It was confirmed that when a decision was made to sell an asset several different factors were considered including whether the asset would be of benefit to the community, in which case community and voluntary organisations were invited to submit a bid.
10. The panel considered the allocation and classification of job roles to one of the three 'work styles' – fixed, flexible and field, it was noted that no formal challenges had been received, and that any such challenges would follow an established HR process.
11. The panel considered the matter of the home working allowance and understood that this would be considered as part of the broader employee piece over the coming months. The issue of a homeworking allowance had been raised by the trade unions and the Council would continue to engage with them.
12. The Panel noted the full breakdown of financial implications included in the report and understood that there would be continued transparent reporting in relation to this moving forwards.
13. The panel noted that that there had been and continued to be ongoing engagement with trade unions in relation to proposed changes to current terms and conditions and that this would continue.
14. The panel discussed how managers were supporting members of their team who were working remotely and understood that key meetings such as professional conversations, health and wellbeing conversations and risk assessments were being used to make sure that employees, managers and supervisors felt they were being properly supported.
15. The panel discussed the insights gained from the employee survey in relation to recruitment, retention, and job satisfaction and how these insights would inform matters going forward. It was understood that recruitment and retention of staff would benefit from being able to work flexibly, which was a key issue in the job market. The impact of the proposed changes would be monitored, and the information used to provide a detailed understanding about recruitment and retention moving forward.
16. The panel considered feedback from partner organisations and were reassured in relation to the positive conversations with key partners that had taken place.

Reference was made to the work to let space to partners in the Civic Offices, the benefits of co-locating were highlighted and all feedback from partners had been positive.

17. The Panel welcomed the inclusion of a Menopause Policy which had been endorsed by the Council in 2019 and was a great example of the work of the Gender, Maternity and Paternity Staff Equality Forum which had worked with staff to bring the policy forward.