

Hyndburn Borough Council



SMART
Working Strategy

Context

The ability of the Council to succeed in achieving its corporate priorities is underpinned by a skilled and well-supported workforce which is fit for the future and able to innovate. During the pandemic, we showed that we can adapt rapidly, work across organisational and departmental boundaries and achieve excellent outcomes for the people we serve. It is important that we recognise and celebrate this, and learn lessons to ensure we can respond to future challenges.

Our workforce is more diverse than many people realise, with a vast array of professions and services, from front-line officers who work out and about in our Borough, to those who develop plans and strategies or perform essential administration. The scope for different workstyles will depend on roles, the nature of the team, the service being provided and individual circumstances.

The government's requirement for many of our staff to work wholly or partly from home for long periods during the pandemic gave us the opportunity to review the way we work and update our use of technology. We do not know what lies ahead in terms of the pandemic and how this will influence how we need to work into the future, so any decisions we make now may need to be reviewed.

We wish to use what we have learnt from these new ways of working to continue to improve how we do things so that our customers benefit from more responsive and efficient services. This strategy is about working in a smarter, more intelligent and efficient way and therefore goes beyond traditional approaches to flexible working.

“Smarter working empowers us all to make the right decisions about where, when and how we work; optimising the use of workplaces and technology, and realising savings for the taxpayer. It improves productivity through a focus on outputs and enables a better work life balance for all.”

Government Guidance¹

The majority of staff and managers in teams where roles can be worked from home or elsewhere tell us that they believe a hybrid option would be the best, giving benefits in productivity and wellbeing. This approach may also improve our attractiveness as an employer to existing staff and potential recruits with the skills and experience we need, especially in roles that have become harder to fill due to several years of public sector pay restraint. However, to make this work, it is important that we have systems in place to ensure that individual and team performance, communication, social interaction and learning and development are supported and well-managed. We recognise that there will be tensions and challenges to work through in balancing the needs of the Council and the preferences of individual staff and teams. One of the key early actions will be to review our Flexible Working Policy, which covers homeworking, to ensure that it supports proposed working arrangements by giving more detailed guidance to staff and managers.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-way-we-work-tw3-best-practice-guidelines-for-smarter-working>

Supporting Climate Change

The Climate Emergency declared by the Council in September 2019 included the following amongst its commitments:

- to make the Council's activities net-zero carbon by 2030
- to ensure that all strategic decisions, budgets and approaches to planning decisions are in line with a shift to zero carbon by 2030.

Reducing journeys through more mobile or home-based working, and virtual meetings, will support these commitments and reduce our carbon footprint as well as costs. Hybrid working will also allow us to take a fresh look at how we use our property assets.

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Our Smart Working Principles

- We will be flexible, accept that there are uncertainties, and review how things are working. Our Smart Working Strategy action plan is a dynamic document that will change as required.
- Smart working is primarily about giving additional flexibility over where we work, rather than when. Our normal business hours and flexi-time arrangements will continue to apply unless we specifically agree otherwise.
- We value our organisational culture and the role of face to face interactions in supporting team spirit, effective working relationships and staff development. Time spent in the workplace will remain an important feature of our working arrangements.
- We will always consider the needs of our customers and support our elected members to perform their roles effectively.
- We will trust our staff to plan their work so that it takes place at the most effective location, respecting the needs of the customer and their team. Individual preferences will need to be balanced with service needs.
- We will invest in technology to modernise ways of working, drive efficiencies and provide flexible meeting opportunities.
- We will look for opportunities to reduce the costs associated with our property and estates.
- We will support our managers to manage within any changed ways of working and to focus on outcomes rather than presence. This will include developing the right skills and having the right frameworks and guidance to monitor and review the performance of their staff.
- We will encourage staff to challenge and improve processes.
- We will take advantages of the opportunities more virtual meetings offer to encourage people to collaborate across teams and with partners.
- We place a high value on the health, safety and wellbeing of our staff and other users of our building, including elected members.
- We will involve staff and work closely with our Trade Union colleagues in developing our HR policies and to address any concerns.
- We will ensure that new working practices are inclusive and support our equality objectives. In particular, we will take account of any issues for individual staff around disability and reasonable adjustments.
- We will prioritise information governance and confidentiality, particularly in respect of personal and sensitive information.

Smart Working - People and Culture

The flexibility for some of our staff to continue working to a hybrid model will need to be balanced with meeting service priorities. Staff will remain accountable for their work outcomes but have greater freedom on how and where their work is delivered. Clearly there will be some areas of work where this level of flexibility is not possible or is more limited.

To be successful, our Smart Working aspirations will rely on the following:

Empowerment

Staff will be provided with the tools, opportunities and support to enable them to maintain high levels of engagement and performance in a positive, supportive culture, based on trust.

Effective leadership and management

We will support and develop our leaders to be strong, confident and engaging with a clearly articulated vision of success and positive role modelling.

We will expect our leaders and managers to encourage new ways of doing things and to capture the creativity, collaboration, sense of purpose and shared decision-making that we have seen in our response to the pandemic.

Our leaders will need to ensure that all their teams understand the contribution they can make to our corporate priorities.

Communication and engagement

This strategy sets out the Council's high-level framework for smart working. Effective communication and engagement with staff and stakeholders is essential. Clear and consistent messages and employee feedback will help shape and implement our detailed approach. We will keep our internal communications mechanisms under review to make sure these fit with new ways of working.

Health and wellbeing

Our duty of care to staff includes physical, emotional and mental wellbeing. We need to continue to promote our existing support mechanisms and also review our provision to reflect developing needs and to maintain our sense of team within a culture that is physically and psychologically safe.

Our values

Underpinning how our staff operate are our Corporate Values. We are committed to embracing these values and making sure they are embedded across the organisation.

Customer Focus

We will make best use of our resources to support the delivery of excellent services to our customers. We will treat each customer as a valued individual and show sensitivity to their needs and differences.

Integrity

We will always try to do the right thing. We will act and communicate honestly and openly, honour our commitments and be accountable for our actions

Positive Attitude

We will be proactive and optimistic in finding solutions to challenges, open to improved ways of working and to updating our knowledge and skills to meet these changes.

Teamwork

We promote a friendly and supportive working environment. We will work together across teams, services and with partners to achieve the objectives of the Council and the best outcomes for our customers.

Smart Working Strategy Action Plan



Lead	Task	Progress	Next steps
People			
KB	Undertake Customer First Analysis of Smart Working Strategy	Completed	Circulate with Strategy
KB	Review HR policies around hybrid working incl FW, mileage to ensure that we have suitable detailed guidance around hybrid working	Initial meeting held with local TU reps 5/11/21	Circulate updated draft of FW policy for consultation with Unions and service managers
KB	Agree a staff feedback mechanism to raise concerns over working arrangements	Survey conducted	Risk measures clarified
KB	Consult with TU on any proposed policies		
KB	Develop a plan to address training needs	Sessions being planned with CMT and with managers early 2022	
KB	Co-ordinate regular internal communications on progress (including elected member group)		
KB	Review Wellbeing Strategy / WHAT Team	Activities have been delivered throughout pandemic. Reported to Safety Committee.	New HRM will resume WHAT team meetings Wellbeing themed Hyndsight planned for early 2022
KB / SS	Review project management documentation and ensure involvement of relevant colleagues		
CMT	Engagement with senior managers to ensure a consistent approach and message		
KB / CMT	Promote the values and behaviours expected for effective and respectful inter-service working		
People (H & S at work)			
PF	Review covid RA's in light of any changing guidance / risk levels	Currently under review	
PF	Ensure system in place to monitor DSE compliance for range of work locations	Draft circulated to SWS group 1/11/21 and agreed. Now	Monitor completions and ensure action taken to address any issues /

Smart Working Strategy Action Plan



		circulated to staff	risks
KB	Complete and implement review of policies and messages to promote zero tolerance of aggressive or violent behaviour from customers	Draft produced, some final details to be confirmed	Needs to be finalised then taken to Cabinet for approval and implemented / communicated
PF	Review lone working arrangements – office / site visits	HD to speak to SR re using Sector Security for daytime as well as out of hours	
PF / HMM	Ensure workplace fire safety arrangements are suitable for different ways of working		
KB / HD	Ensure system clear and people up to date for when members of staff test positive	Circulated to managers	Review as circumstances change
Digital Transformation			
CB	Provide full conference facilities which allow for combination of face to face and virtual attendees at meetings	ICT looking at QER to spec any work and additional equipment needed, with cost implications	Will require a capital bid
CB	Improve wifi in office buildings so it is suitable for needs of users	Currently looking to increase internet feed into SH (end Jan) Market now sorted Willows Lane OK Broadway – limited as to feed into building	Review provision once internet feed increased
CB	Continue to work with services to support roll out of improved systems which support efficiencies and mobile working	Covered by IT Strategy	
CB	Ensure data security arrangements are robust	Covered by IT Strategy Collating info re remote working arrangements eg from cafes	

Smart Working Strategy Action Plan



CB	Provide increased network space to align with service plans to store documents digitally	Covered by IT Strategy	
CB	Renew / update hardware as laptops etc come to end of life	Covered by IT Strategy	
Buildings			
HMM / KB / CB	Structured method needed to monitor office occupancy and know who is physically present in the office on given days, especially directors and heads of service.	Service managers to have rotas for teams Ask CMT to share their weekly plans Reinforce need for staff to use outlook calendars – KB to discuss with CB	
HMM / CB / MB	Ensure we have appropriate “housekeeping” processes, ensuring that documents are not kept at home except when necessary (and secure) and that unnecessary paperwork / filing cabinets etc are removed		
HMM	Consider the best use of our property assets to best accommodate employees etc, considering costs of repairs and maintenance	Actions and timescales to be determined	
Other			
KB	Where possible, align actions with work to support Climate Change	Liaise with climate change group	

KB – Kirsten Burnett, Head of Policy and Organisational Development
 CB – Head of ICT
 MB – Head of Audit and Investigations

HMM – Regeneration and Development Manager
 HD – Head of Environmental Health
 PF – Safety and Emergency Planning Officer