
NON-EXEMPT

HAVANT BOROUGH COUNCIL

Human Resources Committee

Update: Hybrid Working Trial

Date of Meeting: 5 October 2022

Report by: Matt Goodwin, Executive Head of Internal Services

Report No: HBC/082/2022

Introduction

This report is intended to update the Human Resources Committee on the progress regarding trials for extended hybrid working at Havant Borough Council. It provides context for discussions, progress made to date and details of the next steps. This is for noting, at this stage.

Context

Since the recent reduction in incidences of Covid-19, and the relaxation of Government provisions for testing and compulsory self-isolation, increasing efforts have been made to support staff to return to the offices at Havant Borough Council. This has been via trialling of a fuller 'Hybrid' working model, which balances working from home, with obligations for teams to attend the office on defined days, and, where practicable, for them to work in defined zones. This is intended to recognise the importance of collaboration and better team working, whilst addressing issues, for example, with staff feeling isolated and impacts on the ability to induct and train new starters. That, though, is offset against a clear realisation that staff have realised benefits from flexible working and have adjusted their work/life balance accordingly. It is also important to note that the ability to attract and retain staff does require a recognition that, post-Covid, flexible working is a benefit that many employees will actively seek.

In addition to this, the Council is seeking to make better commercial use of the excellent facilities at Public Service Plaza. This has involved active engagement with potential partners, and direct steps to create Zones in Block A which can be let. This is the basis for efforts to move staff to distinct Zones in Block B.

Progress to Date

The roll out of the current trial was timed to commence 4th July 2022. That is when requirements to attend 1 day per week minimum and for staff to use the current zonal system commenced. That zonal system is accompanied by a rota, which determines days and requested working locations for teams. The month of July was considered a "pilot" to iron out logistical and technical issues. Attendance has been monitored and activity promoted consistently since the beginning of August. It receives regular mention at the Fountain, where the matter is actively discussed with all staff. To date, the

average number of staff attending office has been 95 – 98 people, which is around 35 – 40% of our full complement. This should be taken in context that, in conduct of their duties, not all staff *should* attend site. As such, this represents a relatively strong attendance pattern.

Whilst overall attendance is at a reasonable level, the zonal system has not fully worked. Many teams feel unable to use the zones, for logistical or operational reasons. As a result, the zones can be left relatively empty and the decant from Block A has not been fully realised. Work to address that is underway, on a team-by-team basis.

In addition to the physical and logistical arrangements, attendance has been supported by a range of other measures:

- Provision of free tea, coffee, and milk.
- Introduction of flexibilities in Zone usage, to support, for example, cross team working.
- Active consultation with the Diversity & Wellbeing Group (DaWG), to seek suggestions for improvement.
- Commencement of staff engagement sessions, where steps which would encourage attendance at site are being actively considered.
- All staff briefings, where the entire staffing complement are encouraged to attend and play an active part in building the new Havant Borough Council. The first such event was 6th July 2022 and a further one is scheduled for 29th September 2022.
- Engagement of design specialists to consider cost effective solutions which would create a working environment which better suits modern working styles. This follows an insightful visit to Breckland Council by the Leader and CEO. Breckland have employed innovative office configurations to support more flexible working.

These are only just the beginning.

Next Steps

Over the next few weeks the following will be delivered:

- Delivery, development, and implementation of office re-design proposals.
- Further steps to commercially let areas of Block A.
- Conclusion of ongoing staff engagement sessions. Findings will be considered and used to develop and deploy further initiatives which support new working styles.
- Opening of the canteen. This is currently subject to commercial procurement requirements.

These, we are confident, will be the final elements needed to deliver both an offer of flexible working, and a thriving, collaborative, office environment.

Recommendation

The Committee are asked to note this report.