

Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council

REPORT TO: Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 13th March 2023

LOCATION: Hybrid/Council Chamber

TITLE: Hybrid Working

PURPOSE OF REPORT: To provide an update on hybrid working

REASON SCRUTINY HAVE REQUESTED THE INFORMATION: For information

BACKGROUND & CURRENT SITUATION:

A Hybrid Working Strategy and Interim Hybrid Policy was agreed in July 2022, to be trialed for 12 months.

The strategy sets out the vision and associated approaches that will be taken to ensure Ceredigion County Council has a workforce with the skills and ability to be working in a way that is fit for our organisation's future, in workspaces that meet its needs.

The Interim Hybrid Working Policy has been developed to provide detailed information around what hybrid working means for the Council. It supports employees and their managers in implementing hybrid working by providing practical advice and information, enabling employees to work from the office or home effectively, productively and safely.

The Hybrid Working Strategy and Interim Hybrid Working Policy were heavily influenced and informed by ongoing engagement with staff and managers. Continued engagement has shown significant support for developing the way staff work and how service are delivered. Feedback has shown that staff are more productive and digital ways of working has enhanced access to services for many customers.

As part of the trial, desk and meeting room usage has been monitored and data collected has helped inform changes within these areas. A short presentation of the type of data being collected will be presented during the meeting. From the data, it's also becoming clearer that there will be significant opportunities to provide new public facing services or accommodate other uses at Canolfan Rheidol in Aberystwyth and Penmorfa and County Hall in Aberaeron. There may be opportunities to rationalise and use other Council properties in different ways as well.

As an example of the opportunities, the Council and Hywel Dda have agreed that part of the ground floor at Canolfan Rheidol be used to provide physiotherapy outpatient services. This will be on a temporary basis whilst the hybrid trial period continues, and the Council considers the best longer term alternative use of space in its offices.

An engagement survey seeking views from the public on the potential reuse of the buildings has recently ended. This along with discussions with stakeholders will help inform options for the future use of offices at the end of the trial.

	Has an Integrated Impact Assessment been completed? If, not, please state why	
WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS:	<i>Summary:</i>	
	Long term:	N/A
	Integration:	N/A
	Collaboration:	N/A
	Involvement:	N/A
	Prevention:	N/A
RECOMMENDATION (S):		
For information.		

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION (S):

The purpose of the paper is to provide Members with an update in hybrid areas.

Contact Name:	Russell Hughes-Pickering
Designation:	Corporate Lead Officer
Date of Report:	23/02/2023
Acronyms:	None

APPENDIX: HYBRID WORKING STRATEGY



Cyngor Sir
CEREDIGION
County Council

Hybrid Working Strategy 2022 - 2025

New Ways of Working



Contents

Introduction

Hybrid Working

Hybrid Working - Ceredigion County Council

The 'Way We Work' Project

- Key Findings

- Benefits and Challenges

- Returning to the workplace after the pandemic

- Types of Employees

- Inventory of Employee Types

- A New World of Work

Moving to New Ways of Working

- Vision

- Priorities

Our Hybrid Working Model

A culture fit for new ways of working

Implementation

- Workplace Design

- Digital Solutions

- Policies, Procedures and Training

Measuring Success





Introduction

Welcome to Ceredigion County Council's Hybrid Working Strategy. This strategy is aligned and contributes to Ceredigion County Council's Corporate Strategy.

The Corporate Strategy 2017-2022 outlines the following vision for Ceredigion,

"Ceredigion County Council delivers value for money sustainable bilingual public services that support a strong economy and healthy environment while promoting wellbeing in our people and our communities."

The priorities outlined in the Corporate Strategy aim to enable the delivery of services that will enhance the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of the people of Ceredigion.

Underpinning the success of our Corporate Strategy is a high performing workforce, operating in a way that is innovative, digitally mature and sustainable.

The Hybrid Working Strategy sets out the vision and associated approaches that will be taken to ensure Ceredigion County Council has a workforce with the skills and ability to be working in a way that is fit for our organisation's future, in workspaces that meet its needs and in a sustainable way.

Hybrid Working

"Hybrid Working is blending some office-based work with a more flexible approach to structuring tasks, communication, hours and physical locations to enable staff to be as productive as possible no matter where, when or who they work with."

Local Government Association (LGA)

Why hybrid?

There is significant interest in more flexible forms of working, and hybrid working in particular, has become a preference for many employees.

Organisations who support flexible forms of working experience reduced employee turnover, increased employee engagement and improved rates of talent attraction.

Hybrid working can also provide many other opportunities for organisations including reduced estate and facilities costs, improved employee wellbeing, diversity and inclusion as well as being more environmentally friendly.



In a recent [CIPD report](#) it was found, despite the many complexities and challenges of living and working through the global pandemic, that employees identified many benefits from working from home, for both them and their organisation. Benefits included a better work–life balance, greater ability to focus with fewer distractions, more time for family and friends, saved commuting time and costs, IT upskilling and higher levels of motivation.

Other benefits of flexible working reported included savings on office space, higher levels of employee job satisfaction and reduced absence rates.



Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)

40% of employers said they expect more than half their workforce to work regularly from home after the pandemic has ended.

<https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/relations/flexible-working/planning-hybrid-working>



Welsh Government

The Welsh Government has stated its long-term ambition to see around 30% of Welsh workers working from home or near from home, including after the threat of COVID19 lessens.

<https://gov.wales/remote-working>



Local Government Association

70% of councils told the LGA they were considering increasing home working, and 67% said they were considering increasing flexible working options.

<https://www.local.gov.uk/developing-hybrid-working-local-government>



Hybrid Working at Ceredigion County Council

The Covid-19 pandemic saw the abrupt enforcement of a national lockdown which included the requirement to remain at home and work from home wherever possible. These measures necessitated that many of our back office staff work in a significantly different way.

Staff were able to respond positively to this change. The positive response was made possible by steps already made towards a more agile and smarter way of working, including generous investment in laptops, roll out of Office 365 early on in the response and the enhancement of the existing range of flexible working arrangements already in place.

The 'Way We Work' Project

Having responded well to the initial challenges posed by the pandemic, focus shifted to how we could learn and build from the experience. The 'Way We Work' project was established to review the remote working practices adopted during the pandemic. The project aimed to explore the appetite for long-term change within the workforce and the extent of a shift in the wider strategic vision of where, when and how we as an organisation approach work.

As part of the project a significant staff engagement exercise was undertaken during April 2021. The purpose of the exercise was to gather feedback, experiences, ideas and future workplace requirements in order to support strategic decision-making.

A mixed-methodology approach was adopted, with data gathered from a staff survey and a number of focus groups. Approximately 1,069 staff were working at home at the time. An estimated 74% of the working from home workforce participated in at least one of these engagement activities.

The responses and underlying themes emerging from the staff engagement exercise, as well as national research, trends and insights, has informed the development of our vision and our strategy towards moving to new ways of working in the long term.



Staff Focus Groups

53

Participants

Staff/Manager Survey

787

Responses

Corporate Manager Sessions

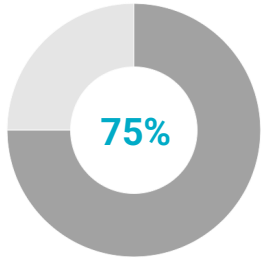
32

Participants

Participation Rate

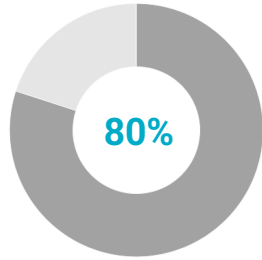
74%

Key Findings



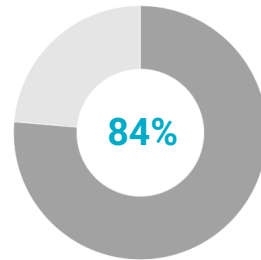
Productivity

When working at home...
**I'm more productive than
I am when working in the
workplace**



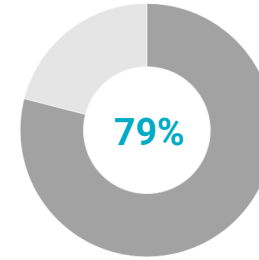
Line Management

When working at home...
**I'm managed as
effectively as I am in the
workplace**



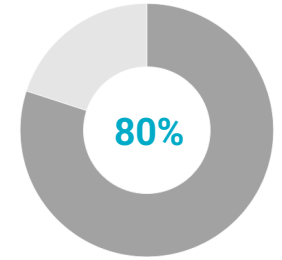
Skills and Training

When working at home...
**I have the skills/training
I need to work
effectively**



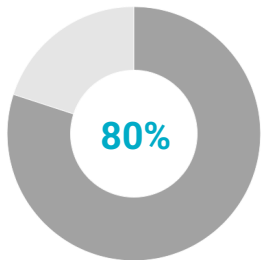
Equipment and Tools

When working at home...
**I have the equipment/
tools I need to effectively
undertake my work**



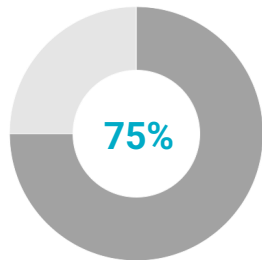
Paperless

When working at home...
**I am able to work
effectively in a paperless
way**



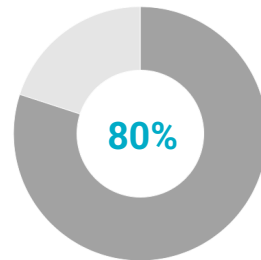
Experience

My working from home
experience...
has been positive



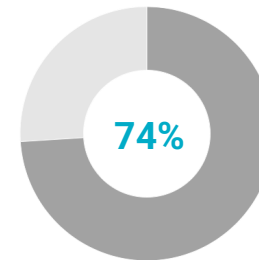
Engagement

My working from home
experience...
**has kept me engaged
and connected with my
team**



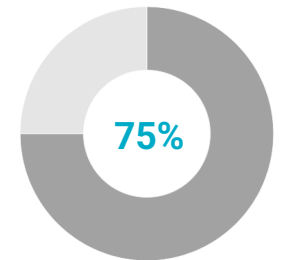
Work-Life Balance

Continuing to work
remotely...
**will improve my work life
balance**



Health and Wellbeing

Continuing to work
remotely...
**will improve my health
and wellbeing**



Financial Wellbeing

Continuing to work
remotely...
**will benefit me
financially**

Benefits and challenges

Findings from the staff engagement exercise show that our staff have experienced many benefits as a result of home-working. A significant number of respondents commented that virtual meetings had allowed them to increase productivity and improve collaboration. Less office distractions and interruptions from colleagues were reported as benefits. As was spending less time travelling to work. Others acknowledged the positive contribution to the environment as a result of less travelling.

Other benefits highlighted were the ability to spend more time with the family during the day and increased wellbeing due to a flexible work environment that helped many maintain a healthier lifestyle. Respondents also found that remote working allowed them to better manage their work-life balance and also felt that not being constrained to standard office hours allowed them to work when they were most focussed and productive.

Working from home for some was not without its challenges however. Poor broadband was recognised as key challenge as well as training new staff. Other respondents highlighted blurred working boundaries had meant more hours of work and a negative impact on work-life balance. Feelings of isolation as a result of reduced levels of human interaction and social encounters with co-workers were experienced by others. Others reported not having an adequate workspace in their home.

"We now have a weekly Team Meeting 'On Line' with better attendance whereas face to face meetings were monthly and relied more on availability."

"It has improved the quality of my work and the ability to complete tasks without being disturbed."

"I think it's been hard for new starters not being able to physically meet their team."

"Have saved a lot over the year in the actual value of my car - 3000 miles instead of 12000!"

"Meetings have been easier to arrange, managing to fit more in due to less travel."

"Due to online meetings, I've connected more with new colleagues across different services whereas I may not have in the office."

"We need fixed base for storing all our resources."

"Not having to travel. Working hours which suit me. Being able to spend time with my family. Being able to exercise during lunch."

"I have found the experience positive, we seem to communicate more, we have weekly team catch ups, we have developed more effective systems and ways of working as time has gone on."

"[Hybrid] workers could use hot desks - however some staff need particular chairs/ desks due to physical problems like back/neck problems."

"Office equipment - not got the space in my house, currently using dining table - not right heights etc."

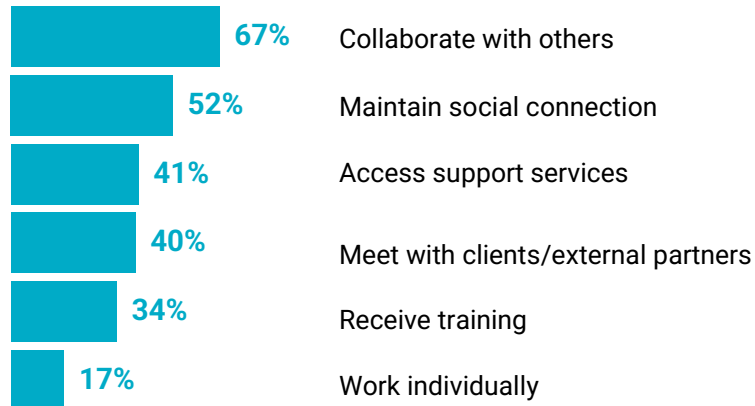
"I have been healthier, no colds or flu this winter."

"The big downside has been the very slow, sometimes intermittent, internet."

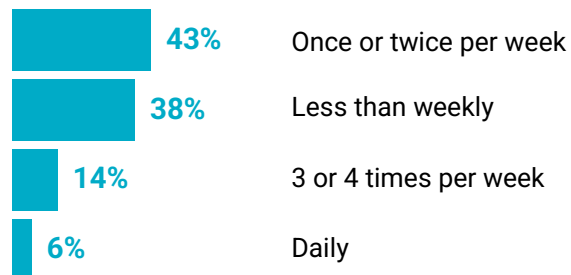
Returning to the workplace after the pandemic

To determine how our workplaces might be used by staff on their return to the workplace we asked them firstly to rank, from the 6 options provided, what would be their main reason for doing returning to the workplace and secondly how often they foresaw they would need to return to the workplace. Our findings showed a significant reduction in attendance with attendance in our main offices reducing on average to 28%.

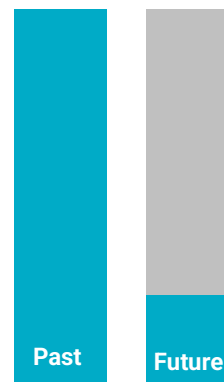
Workplace Use



Workplace Attendance



Estimated reduction in attendance



Types of employees

We also asked staff and managers on feedback as to the possible future employee types within our organisation. The 4 employee types below were agreed upon.

During implementation of our hybrid working model these employee types will allow service area leadership teams to categorise roles and determine which are suitable for benefitting from hybrid working. The categorisation of employee types will also be of assistance when determining needs such as:

- ICT equipment
- learning and development
- health and safety
- recruitment marketing



Fixed

A role which requires the post holder to attend the workplace throughout the day due to the nature and requirements of the role.



Limited Hybrid

A role which can be undertaken as effectively remotely as in the workplace but due to certain responsibilities/client demand the post holder will be required to visit council buildings or schools on a regular basis with little notice.



Flexible Hybrid

A role which can be undertaken as effectively remotely as in the workplace.

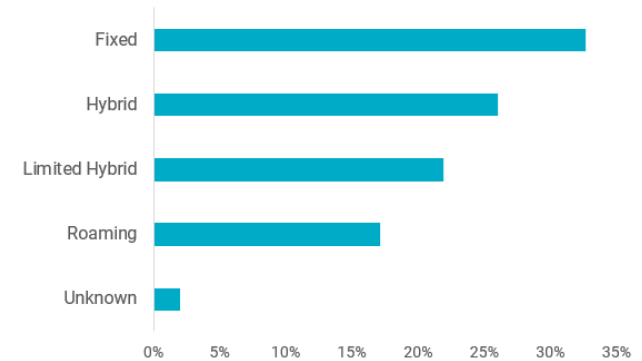


Roaming

A role which requires the post holder to consistently carry out over 50% of their work at various public and private locations across the county.

Inventory of employee types

To gain an estimate of the number of staff within each employee type category we asked each of our corporate services to complete an inventory. It was found that over 65% of our corporate workforce occupied roles that were not fixed to a workplace.



Moving to
New Ways of Working



Our Hybrid Working Model

Our aim is to embed a hybrid working model that gives our people greater flexibility in balancing their work and home lives. We want to build a culture where our people feel trusted and empowered, and will have greater freedom on how, where and when their work is delivered. Focus will be placed on outcomes as opposed to attendance at our offices.

This level of flexibility, due to the nature of some roles, will not be achievable for all of our people. There will however remain a commitment to explore how a level of flexibility can be built into roles across the organisation.

Work is no longer the place we go, it is what we do and how we do it.



Vision

Our vision is to nurture an empowered, resilient and high performing workforce. A workforce which has the skills and equipment to work flexibly to deliver high quality services in an efficient, sustainable and environmentally friendly way, now and in the future.

We will design workplaces with modern, flexible spaces that not only encourage collaborative, cross functional activity but also strengthen our corporate culture, increase engagement with our partners and support a better customer experience.

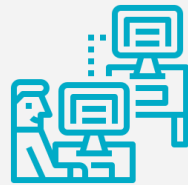
Priorities

In order to achieve our vision we have identified the following 5 priorities.



Workplace fit for our culture and future of work

Workplaces that are fit for our culture, support our new ways of working and are accessible to all



Agile and mobile ways of working

Encourage and support agile and mobile workstyles whilst increasing productivity, cross-functional collaboration and empowerment.



Environmental and financial sustainability

To introduce workplaces and ways of working that reduce our carbon footprint and promote environmental and financial resilience.



Provide a better customer experience

Increase public facing spaces within our workplaces. Provide spaces that are welcoming and accessible to our customers.



Modernise Services

Review the way we deliver our services, ensuring they are delivered in the way which best meets the needs of our customers.

A culture fit for new ways of working

Our people tell us a culture change is already underway as a result of the pandemic. To be successful in adopting a permanent hybrid working model we need to build on this change. We must foster a culture where our workforce feel empowered and trusted in their work, where our leaders and managers place an emphasis on outcomes as opposed to attendance, and are confident at keeping their remote teams engaged and connected. We must develop a workforce which is open to change, is effective at collaborating and has the skills to take a digital by default approach to work. We must also continue to embed a culture which supports employee health and wellbeing, where our people feel physically and psychologically safe in work.

Collaboration – A shared sense of purpose and a culture of collaboration will be nurtured. Knowledge sharing will be encouraged. Our people will be developed to use digital tools to collaborate in a virtual way. Workspaces will be designed to facilitate effective hybrid collaboration.

Leadership and management – Work will continue towards developing empowering and engaging leaders and managers, with a clearly articulated vision of success and positive role modelling. Managers and leaders will encourage digital ways of working and will foster innovation.

Digital by default – Work will continue to leverage technology to streamline our processes and increase efficiency. We will develop digital skills across the organisation and foster a culture where our people embrace digital solutions in relation to the work that they are involved with.

Empowerment – Ways of working will be developed to ensure our employees are provided with tools, opportunities, and support to empower and enable them to maintain high levels of engagement and performance in a supportive and trusting culture.



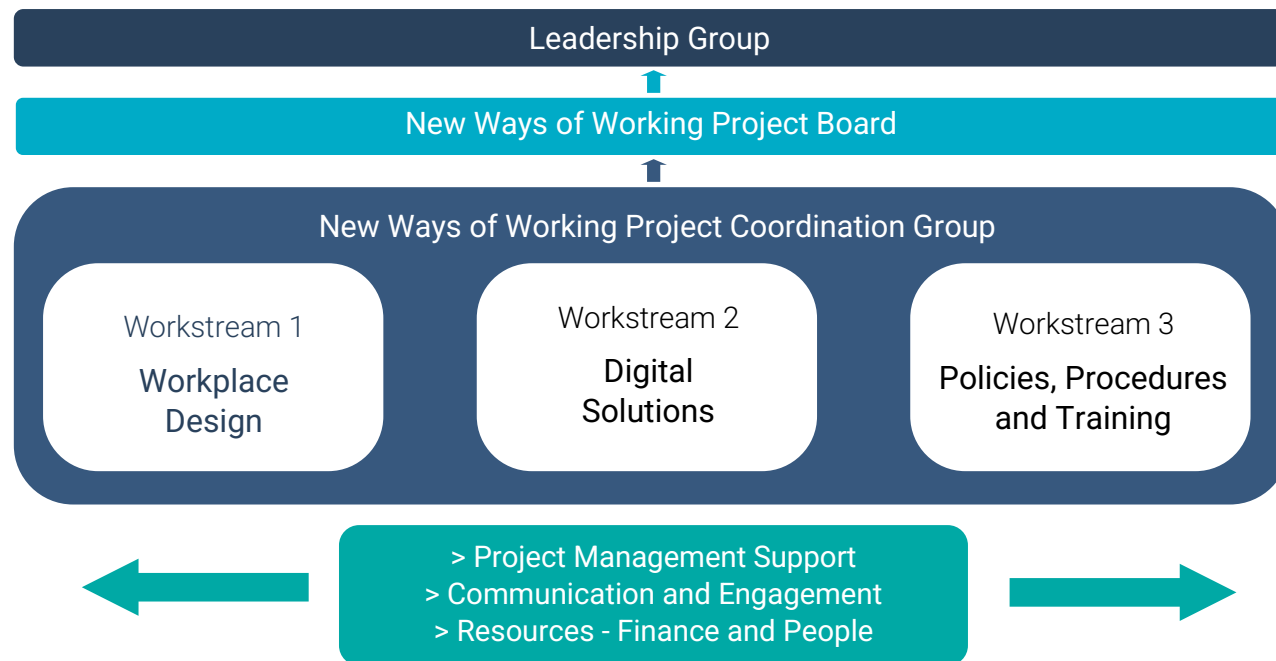
Health and wellbeing – we will ensure our ways of working support physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing. We will build on existing provision, review, and adapt this to reflect hybrid working arrangements and maintain our sense of team within a culture that is physically and psychologically safe.

Implementation

To support successful implementation of our hybrid working model, 3 key workstreams have been identified:

- Workplace Design
- Digital Solutions
- Policies, Procedures and Training

Leadership and strategic direction for implementation will be provided by the New Ways of Working Project Board. The 3 workstreams will report to the project board. Each workstream will have a designated lead officer who will co-ordinate the area of work and will report to the project board on progress.



Ongoing engagement

We acknowledge the importance of providing our workforce with the opportunity to have input into any changes in relation to their work. In line with this, we will continue to engage with our people throughout implementation and encourage them to share their views to assist us in shaping our hybrid working practices and processes. The views of other stakeholders using council buildings and services, including Councillors, partners and service users, will also be sought when designing changes to workplaces and changing the way we deliver our services.



Workplace Design

We will redesign our workspaces to increase inclusivity, flexibility and to ensure they better support our new ways of working. They will be designed in a way as to foster a creative and collaborative culture, improve organisational performance whilst also supporting an excellent customer experience.

In making design changes we will adopt an evidence-based approach to understanding the amount of space needed in the office, and the different of kinds of spaces required by the workforce and our customers.

Data gathered during our staff engagement exercise, including anticipated staff attendance and reasons for returning to the office, will be used to inform interim design changes. Further engagement will be required to understand the scope of storage reduction, and how changes to work processes and technology use will create opportunities for further design changes.



As more of our people become hybrid workers there will be reduced requirement for personal desk space in our offices. In response to this change, space currently allocated to rows of workstations will be changed for:

- spaces to meet customer needs
- meeting and collaboration spaces (meeting rooms, breakout spaces)
- 'touch-down' informal spaces for people working on the move
- spaces for confidential work, virtual meetings and phone calls
- hot-desk workstations
- resource areas

It is envisaged that changes to our workplaces will occur on a phased basis, with Leadership Group determining priority areas across the Council estate. Comprehensive workplace re-designs as well as consideration to the rationalisation of assets, will occur once data regarding occupancy and workplace use has been gained.

Workstream Actions:

- > **Develop Action Plan for COVID-19 secure removal of personal belongings from Council workplaces**
- > **Using existing furniture to implement pilot return in Penmorfa and Canolfan Rheidol**
- > **Using existing furniture to implement interim design in Penmorfa, Canolfan Rheidol and other office buildings**
- > **Evidence based re-design of workplaces to increase public facing spaces, improve the customer experience and support future ways of working**

Digital Solutions

We will continue to review and improve digital solutions to support collaboration, hybrid working and improved customer service.

We will build reusable tools which can be shared across services and indeed the wider public sector.

We will support the review of all council services currently delivered to ensure services are joined up, efficient, simple and effective.

We will ensure the collection of quality data to support better decision making and the continued development and targeting of services.

Paper-dependency is a key constraint of hybrid working. While there are some statutory obligations to retain paper documents, the reasons for using and generating papers are less compelling in an age of electronic based working.



Leveraging digital solutions will be pivotal in enabling our hybrid employees to work effectively from any location. As well as improving processes and data management, technology will be utilised in meeting spaces to increase productivity and to ensure all parties are able to take part and contribute effectively, no matter their location. Technology will be used to book meeting rooms and hot desks, thereby allowing us to gain occupancy trends, which will be used to inform workplace design.

We will look for digital solutions to improve the way traditional face-to-face services and transactional activities are delivered to our customers. We will do this in alignment with our Information Communication Technology and Digital Strategy 2018-2022 which identifies the following key objectives:



Workstream Actions:

- > **Identify ICT equipment requirements for relevant job types**
- > **Review telephone and video call solutions**
- > **Determine workplace ICT equipment requirements to support new ways of working**
- > **Support the re-design of all council services to ensure we offer customer focused, well managed and joined up services which are simple to use**
- > **Develop public ICT facilities / services in order to improve digital customer contact**
- > **Develop paperless working action plan**

Policies, Procedures and Development

It is recognised that implementation of new ways of working will require the revision of existing policies and procedures as well as the establishment of new ones. Any new or revised policies will in turn require supporting guidance, information and training to enable effective implementation.

Hybrid working will likely look very different from one organisation to the next. We at Ceredigion County Council aim to adopt a model which maximises flexibility in terms of where and when work is carried out, whilst never compromising outcomes and service standards. To assist us in balancing these priorities we have identified the following parameters to ensure hybrid is implemented across our organisation in the desired way.

Our Hybrid Working Parameters



Where our staff can work as efficiently remotely or in the office they can choose where they work on any given day



Where **service needs allow** staff may fulfil their contractual hours between a bandwidth of 6am-9pm, Monday to Friday, with at least 4 core hours worked between 9am and 5pm each working day



Our meetings with **colleagues and external partners will be virtual by default**, other than in exceptional circumstances



Our hybrid working staff will have **no permanent personal space** in the office, other than in exceptional circumstances.



Our priority is to work in a **paperless** way. We are committed to investing in systems and resources to support **digital ways of working**.

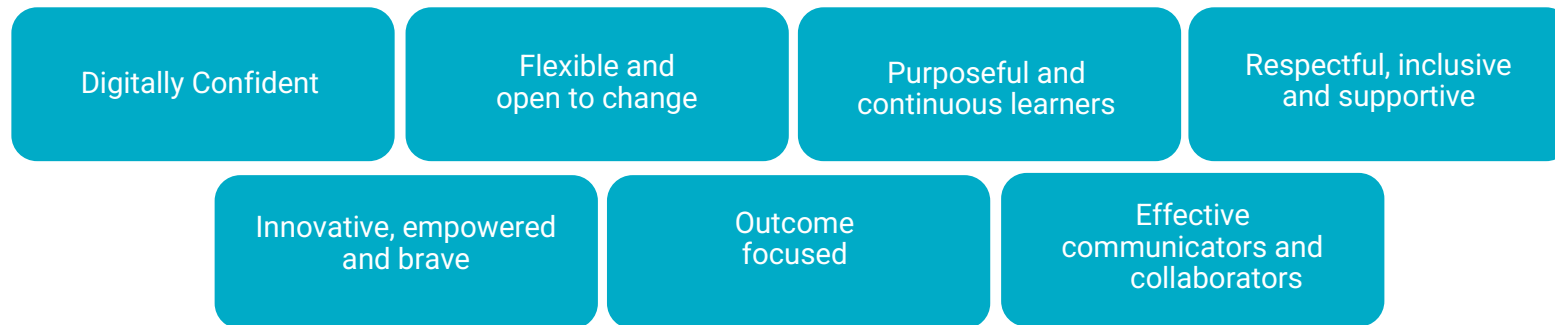
Policies and Procedures

A priority for this workstream will be to introduce an Interim Hybrid Working Policy. This policy will be in place on an interim basis whilst new policies are developed and agreed.

The Hybrid Working Policy will set out which roles are eligible for hybrid working as well as clarifying expectations around hybrid working including relevant health and safety requirements, where remote work can be carried out, virtual meeting requirements, data protection and information security requirements as well as the circumstances around which the offer of hybrid working may be withdrawn.

Development

Learning and development programmes and opportunities will be pivotal in facilitating new ways of working and supporting our change in culture. To support this change following behaviours will be encouraged and fostered within the workforce:



Hybrid working will make new demands on our managers and staff. In response to this, we will review existing learning and development programmes and activities, and where appropriate create new ones to ensure new ways of working and changes to culture are fully supported. When doing so, consideration will be given as to the most efficient and sustainable mode of delivery, whether face to face, virtually or by e-learning.

As a result of the pandemic many employees will have gained new skills in using technology. As further digital ways of working are introduced across our organisation, development opportunities will be put in place to ensure all our people have the skills needed to embrace new digital tools.

Our managers have developed many new skills in relation to managing a remote workforce. Nevertheless permanent hybrid working will bring unique challenges that are different from both predominantly remote and predominantly office-based working.

In response to this, the Ceredigion Manager Programme will be reviewed and reimagined to ensure our managers have the skills they need to foster team relationship building, effective collaboration and engagement. Furthermore our managers will need support in ensuring inclusion, conducting effective inductions and effective performance management of distributed teams.

Workstream Actions:

- > **Develop, consult and introduce interim 'Hybrid Working Policy'**
- > **Develop 'Interim Hybrid Working Policy' Ceri Net guidance**
- > **Review and amend other impacted policies**
- > **Review learning delivery methods and consider if best delivered as learning event, e-learning or Ceri Net support videos/guidance**
- > **Introduce revised Corporate Induction programme to support culture and behaviour goals**
- > **Introduce revised Ceredigion Manager Programme to support culture and behaviour goals**
- > **Explore introduction of Digital Competency Framework**

Measuring Success



Improved Employee Satisfaction



Improved Employee Retention



Improved Employee Health and Wellbeing



Increased Candidate Attraction



Reduced Sickness Rates



Reduced business travel claims



Reduction in workplace costs



Reduced operating expenditure per employee



Improved customer satisfaction



Increased digital transactions