Scrutiny Report

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Part 1

Date: 19th February 2020

Subject   Responding to the New Normal

Author   Overview and Scrutiny Officer

The following people have been invited to attend for this item:

Invitee:	Area / Role / Subject	Page Numbers
Rhys Cornwall, Head of People and Business Change	**To support the committee discussion**	N/A

Section A – Committee Guidance and Recommendations

1   Recommendations to the Committee

The Committee is asked

1. Consider the information contained within the report

2. Discuss the potential opportunities, disadvantages and considerations with regard to potential changes to the Council's operating model

3. Feedback views to Cabinet for consideration

2   Context

Background

2.1   As a result of the first lock-down in March 2020 the Council has had to adapt the way it operates. Whilst front line services have been protected and enhanced for the most vulnerable, office-based functions and the staff who support them have been asked to do this from home, wherever possible.

        The Council's investment in IT in recent years, as it develops the Modernised Council agenda, has enabled the Council to continue functioning. Home working station assessments have been

undertaken and additional kit provided to support a safe work environment. As a result, many services have been able to develop remote operational models.

There are some very clear benefits to continuing with this approach – work/life balance, carbon reduction, reduced congestion on our roads, opportunities for utilising our buildings. However, there are challenges. For staff working from home there may be isolation, increased energy costs and a lack of team development, for example. There is also a challenge around visibility.

The Council will need to weigh up the opportunities but also potential impacts when determining how it will proceed beyond the current situation into a longer-term operating model.

Newport City Council has been an active contributor to the University of Southampton/Institute for Employment Studies research in to work after lockdown. A copy of the initial findings and considerations is included with this report.

Previous Consideration of this item

2.2   The principles of agile or remote working were established in the Council's Digital Strategy, which is also referenced in the Corporate Plan. Scrutiny has previously considered the Modernised Council agenda when it has scrutinised the Corporate Plan.

3   Information Submitted to the Committee

3.1   A discussion paper is attached to this report that gives background and areas for consideration, summarised below.

3.2   Data on Civic Centre occupancy rates (pre Covid) (appendix A)

3.3   Anonymised data on staff travel to work areas (appendix B)

3.4   Work After Lockdown, first report, led by University of Southampton (appendix C)

4.   Suggested Areas of Focus

Role of the Committee

The role of the Committee in considering the report is to:

The Committee is asked to review the paper before it (and additional information) and consider the potential opportunities and disadvantages presented by changes to the way the Council operates. The views of the Committee will be presented to Cabinet when it considers any long term changes to the organisation's operating model.

- Discuss and describe the benefits and dis-benefits of the previous way of working compared to the changes that have been made during the pandemic and the likely model for the future

- Assess and make comment on specific areas of concern, challenges with policy or operation, giving particular consideration to any welfare concerns that may need to be addressed

- Conclusions:
    - What was the overall conclusion of the Committee?
    - Is the Committee satisfied that it has had all of the relevant information to base a conclusion?
    - Do any areas require a more in-depth review by the Committee?
    - Do the Committee wish to make any Comments / Recommendations to the Cabinet?

Suggested Lines of Enquiry

4.1   You can add here any specific questions that the Committee might want to address.

The Committee may wish to consider the following:

- How will issues around staff leadership, development and organisational values be upheld?
- How confident are we that the technology will meet our needs?
- What concerns are there over staff welfare and how should these be addressed?
- How do we ensure that service users can access the services they need, whether these are face to face or through a different channel?
- What are the implications for our estate?
- Environmental impacts and the wider benefits for the City

Section B – Supporting Information

5   Supporting Information

5.1   Included within the attached discussion paper

6   Links to Council Policies and Priorities

- The main Corporate Plan focus is on the Modernised Council theme but, dependant on decisions taken, will also positively impact on Thriving City and Aspirational People.

Well-being Objectives	Promote economic growth and regeneration whilst protecting the environment	Improve skills, educational outcomes & employment opportunities	Enable people to be healthy, independent & resilient	Build cohesive & sustainable communities
Corporate Plan Commitments	Thriving City	Aspirational People		Resilient Communities
Supporting Function	Modernised Council			

Other council strategies and plans that link closely with this work are the Carbon Management Plan 2018-22 and the Sustainable Travel Strategy (Air, Noise & Sustainability Action Plan). Both of these plans are looking to reduce business and staff travel. The Council is also signed up to the Gwent Travel Charter (below).

7 Wellbeing of Future Generation (Wales) Act

7.1 General questions

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 came into force in April 2016 and is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act is designed to support and deliver a public service that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. As one of the 44 bodies named in the Act, we must consider the Act in everything we do.

Seven well-being goals give clarity of the shared purpose of the public bodies listed in the Act for the long-term well-being of Wales. The council's approach to supporting members and staff to work remotely must support the well-being goals.

The Act also puts in place a sustainable development principle, which sets out the way we must go about meeting our duty under the Act. There are five ways of working that must be considered when developing and implementing the "New Normal" programme.

7.2 The Well-being Goals and the Sustainable Development Principle

The "New Normal" Programme will have **long-term** and **preventative** benefits to the health and well-being of staff and the wider community by contributing to the improvement of air quality and the reduction of carbon emissions in the area. Stakeholders including staff should be **involved** in a meaningful and effective way to help shape the programme as it is developed.

As stated above the programme takes an **integrated** approach by supporting many of the well-being goals namely: *A Prosperous Wales; A Resilient Wales; A Healthier Wales; and A Globally Responsible Wales* and does not adversely affect any of the others. The programme also support three of the council's Corporate Plan well-being objectives

2. To promote economic growth and regeneration whilst protecting the environment;

3. To enable people to be healthy, independent & resilient;

4. To build cohesive & sustainable communities.

In addition, the council is working with partners in a **collaborative** way through the One Newport Public Services Board (PSB) and the implementation of the Local Well-being Plan Well-being

Objectives. The PSB as a whole has pledged to "become champions of sustainable travel, leading by example and reducing the public sector's contribution to air pollution".

To support this work the council along with 22 other public and third sector organisations across Gwent has signed up to the Travel Charter.

The Charter commits to supporting and encouraging staff to reduce travel and travel in a sustainable way. Through 15 ambitious commitments, the charter promotes walking, cycling, agile working and the use of public transport and ultra-low emission vehicles.

The public sector in Gwent employs almost one in three working adults. By working together, public sector organisations across Gwent aim to increase sustainable journeys made to and from workplaces, reducing the impact on the environment and improving health in Gwent for current and future generations.

The "New Normal" Programme supports this work along with the following Local Well-being Plan well-being objectives:

1) Everyone feels good about living, working, visiting and investing in our unique city.
2) Everyone has the skills and opportunities to develop, prosper and contribute to a sustainable, thriving city.
3) Everyone belongs to friendly, connected resilient communities and feels confident and empowered to improve their well-being.
4) Newport has healthy, safe and resilient environments with an integrated sustainable travel network.

8.   Background Papers

Include all additional documents that are referenced in the report, and those that you have used as background reading. Hyperlink to online versions of them if available.

- The Essentials - Wellbeing of Future Generation Act (Wales)
- Corporate Plan
- Carbon Management Plan
- Sustainable Travel Strategy (Air, Noise & Sustainability Action Plan)
- Gwent Healthy Travel Charter

Report Completed: February 2021

Discussion paper on the New Normal

Introduction

The Covid 19 health emergency has posed a significant and unprecedented challenge to the way in which we deliver our services and our way of life. Since March 2020, the Council's focus has been to preserve life, minimise the spread of the virus, and support our communities and the vulnerable.

The impact of the virus has brought about systemic change, pervading every aspect of society. At Newport City Council, material changes to where and how we work have been swift. From day one of the health emergency, Council staff have shown enormous stoicism. Those delivering front line services, often to the city's most vulnerable people and communities, have been altruistic in their dedication. Whilst others have quickly adapted to a remote and dispersed way of working using technology to work from home to minimise the spread of the virus.

Elected Members have also had to adapt, blending their work within their communities with the remote meeting arrangements that have been put in place to ensure the on-going functioning of the democratic process, whilst adhering to Covid regulations and keeping individuals safe.

Whilst the on-going response to the pandemic remains the number one priority for the Council, it is also an opportunity to consider the changes that have been made a begin a discussion about the long-term benefits that may be gained from some of these enforced changes.

This paper seeks to begin that discussion and to support this covers the following areas:

1. How was Newport City Council positioned prior to the first lock-down in March 2020?
2. What changes have we made to continue operations?
3. What are the current and future drivers for change?
4. What opportunities are there?
5. What are the challenges?
6. Potential future model?

To note, this paper covers some broad topics regarding the operations of the Council and there are inevitably differences across the organisation regarding the way in which we deliver our services. There are also some very clear distinctions between front line delivery and office-based activity. For the main part this paper looks at arrangements specific to office-based activity, although we should note that many of the points made are also applicable to many administrative functions and attributable to front line delivery and how we generally organise our workforce and estate.

It should also be noted that this is not intended to be a review of the Covid 19 response – it specifically relates to our people and our buildings and how we have adapted to the challenges.

1. How was Newport City Council positioned prior to the first lock-down?

One of the four themes within the current Corporate Plan is Modernised Council. The overall aim of Modernised Council is to ensure that we operate as a modern, 21st century organisation, changing the way we work and creating a healthier and greener environment across the city. Some of the specific elements of Modernised Council that directly impacted on our ability to respond to the health emergency are:

- Creation of neighbourhood hubs.
- Integrated technology improving efficiency and/or outcomes.
- Improving and growing new opportunities to access services online.

A comprehensive package of strategies including digital, people, regeneration, evidenced based working, active travel and property asset management are at various stages of implementation with some in place and progressing and others in the process of being developed. However, as a direct result of the work of Modernised Council, at the beginning of the pandemic the following were in place:

1. Invested in laptops and a high proportion of our PC fleet (85%) were laptops in March 2020. This has meant that remote working was straightforward with regard to hardware. This was in line with the Digital Strategy which had established agile and remote working practices for a wide range of staff
2. Invested in the licensing for and implementation of Microsoft Office365 (O365). This has meant that access to email is done through an internet connection to the Cloud via multi factor authentication and therefore has not been dependant on staff or Members being on the Council network.
3. O365 has also given us access to TEAMS. This has enabled us to enhance remote communications, undertake virtual face to face meetings and reinstate Council Committee meetings (which are also being broadcast live to the public).
4. Moved some of our biggest systems to the Cloud. This includes WCCIS (joint social services and health system), My Council Services (our customer relationship management tool) and iTrent (our HR system). There are also a number of other, smaller systems.
5. Put in place Newport Intelligence Hub which enabled us to provide more resilient services and also ensured we could undertake critical matching work under the shielding scheme across Wales to support provision for those who were at a significant, clinical risk.
6. A mobility solution (NetMotion) which enables users (staff) to access Newport City Council systems on our network from a Council device whilst in remote locations in a secure way.
7. Development of agile working policies and a range of discussions with staff groups regarding the Modernised Council agenda, with staff able to work from a range of locations
8. Developing our HR system to provide significantly more employee and manager self-service options, for example, on-line annual leave authorisation and 1-2-1 reviews
9. Developed an on-line performance and risk management tool (MI Hub)
10. Developed alternative channels for citizens to remotely accessing support/services

Our approach to flexible places of work prior to the March 2020 lockdown was ad hoc and limited in scope, for a number of reasons:

- there were limitations on technology before O365 was in place.
- A home working policy is not in place because appropriate support was not accessible for anything other than occasional home working in limited circumstances. Our flexible working policy does not include the option to request home working for work/life balance purposes.
- Management practices and adoption of flexible working was mixed, often based on service requirements but also due to organisational culture
- Given the success of providing continued services to residents during the pandemic this approach may wish to be reconsidered in the medium to long term.

2.   What changes have we made to continue operations?

In response, Newport City Council Strategic Recovery Aims have been adopted by Cabinet in reflection of the work undertaken by the Council in response to the crisis while also considering the Council's long-term aim to 'build a better Newport' and supporting the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015. These are:

Strategic Recovery Aim 1 – Supporting Education & Employment

Strategic Recovery Aim 2 – Supporting the Environment and the Economy

Strategic Recovery Aim 3 – Supporting the Health & Wellbeing of Citizens

Strategic Recovery Aim 4 – Supporting Citizens post Covid-19

Summary of the current position

•   The Covid 19 health emergency remains a real challenge to the way we live and work. Whilst there is a significant 'light at the end of the tunnel' as a result of the vaccination programme, we are all subject to lock-down restrictions.

•   Workplace rules require people to continue to socially distance and work remotely where they can. To support this we have rolled out TEAMS as a tool to enable remote meetings, chat and calls. We have 2580 users of O365 and since March 2020 there have been 77,252 meetings, 87,286 calls and 817,270 messages through TEAMS. We are also developing the ability to have meetings with a mix of remote and face to face attendance. This includes new interactive large display screens with camera/microphone arrays that have been installed and set up in committee rooms since the beginning of the pandemic. Facilities in the council chamber are also currently being reviewed.

•   Since Monday 23 March 2020, when the UK Government imposed the lockdown, an estimated 1200 Newport City Council employees (excluding school-based staff) are able to, and have been, working from home.

•   The issue of laptops and introduction of O365, Teams, and supporting digital processes ensure staff working from home have the means to perform duties in a remote and dispersed way.

•   Performance management is accessible remotely as it is a new feature of the iTrent functionality we have maximised during the period of lockdown. Managers and staff can hold performance conversations remotely, with each able to access documents and comments about performance independently.

•   In a survey 168 staff working from home were asked, via their manager, about the intensity of the work being undertaken at home using display screen equipment, and what equipment they have at home to do their work. The results of the survey clearly demonstrated a need for home working assessments and provision of safe working equipment and these are now in place.

•   Equipment to support staff working from home in a safe way has been procured. Home Working Assessments have been undertaken and equipment has been distributed to staff working from home, providing staff with the means to perform their duties safely from home. Items include desks, office chairs, monitors, monitor arms, keyboards, mice, footrests and wrist rests.

•   Whilst there is a clear mandate to work from home where possible, there are still staff working from other Council buildings including our main Council building, the Civic Centre. This is happening where there is a business essential requirement and risks assessments are in place, with the appropriate mitigations.

- Where working from home is not possible the workplaces should be risk assessed and mitigations put in place to protect staff and service users. Health and Safety have supported managers and staff throughout the pandemic to ensure we have safe working environments.

- An assessment of the Civic Centre has taken place and in areas deemed to be high risk for transmission, mitigations have been put in place. These mitigations have been constantly reviewed to ensure Member and Officer safety are reflective of local and national knowledge and guidance on Covid-19.
- We have had to adapt some of our HR policies in relation to flexible working, on-call payments and overtime. The Council's flexi time system has been suspended during this period as we recognise the importance of having as many people available in work as possible. With a generous annual leave entitlement the added pressure of some staff taking up to 2 flexi days per month due to working beyond their contracted hours could cause workload pressures on others to cover during those flexi days, whilst other staff may need support to juggle home schooling during periods of remote learning for children. Focusing on outcomes instead of the clock enables the workforce to be more flexible in their working day, yet continue to achieve their objectives. However, where overtime has been required to maintain critical services, enhanced rates have been agreed in recognition of the willingness of staff to go above and beyond in challenging circumstances.
- Regular communications have been issued to keep staff updated on any changes using email and the intranet. Managers have team meetings using the TEAMS techology
- Access to occupational health and counselling services has continued, as have mindfulness sessions and signposting to services via the staff newsletter.
- Expanding the functionality of iTrent has enabled staff to use employee self-serve to a greater degree. Staff are able to submit timesheets for additional hours worked via their online accounts from any location, 24/7 for their manager to approve. Equally, managers can approve these submissions remotely at a convenient time of their choosing. We have enabled the recruitment process to be completed entirely remotely, from the initial advertisement of a role through to the selection process. Managers can log into their accounts and view applications at any time, all scoring is held in iTrent and can be completed by multiple managers on a recruitment panel at their time of choice. We have issued guidance to managers on how to interview via TEAMS and new starters receive electronic offers of employment with all of their pre-employment checks conducted remotely.
- Led by our Health and Safety team, to support our shielding and vulnerable workforce each individual with vulnerability has had a Covid 19 risk assessment completed with their manager to assess whether their duties can be carried out safely.

We are all dealing with an unprecedented situation that is ever changing. As an organisation we need to remain flexible, adaptable and responsive in our support of the people of Newport. This will remain a challenge

3.   What are the current and future drivers for change?

Beyond Covid 19 we have many challenges and drivers for change. It is important to remember that Newport City Council does not operate within a vacuum. Businesses and organisations that operate within the city, the people who live and work here, will all potentially be looking at ways in which they will change their activity and behaviours as a result of the pandemic.

Within this context, for us some of the key things we need to address within any future arrangements are:

1. How we manage our assets
2. How we undertake workforce planning in a way that attracts and retains talent, improves representation and creates a workforce capable of meeting the future challenges

3. How we respond and adapt to climate change and carbon reduction as a leader within the city and region
4. How we continue to support the regeneration of the City, given the potential changes we may see in the short and medium term
5. Responding to and meeting the requirements of the Local Government and Elections Act (specifically about remote meeting access)
6. How we support the Welsh Government commitment for 30% of Welsh workers to work from home or close to home?
7. How we support the new draft Wales Transport Strategy Priority 1, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by planning ahead for better physical and digital connectivity, more local services, more home and remote working and more active travel, so that fewer people need to use their cars on a daily basis?
8. How we support the South East Wales Transport Commission recommendations which include workplace travel planning and flexible office hubs?
9. How we deliver on the 15 commitments set out in the Gwent Healthy Travel Charter.

The Gwent Healthy Travel Charter has been endorsed by 27 public sector bodies across the region and commits to each employing organisation increasing the numbers of staff who work from home 1 day a week or more from 14 to 25%

This commitment is reflective of many public sector organisations considering the environmental impact of commuting to a workplace, and as such Welsh Government has published its' long term ambition for 30% of the workforce to work from home.

4. What opportunities are there?

1. Creation of an agile and flexible workforce.
Employees of Newport City Council have shown throughout the pandemic that they are flexible, agile and responsive. They have taken to working in different ways, taking on new challenges and focusing on delivery of services. Working with our Unions we have been able to re-allocate resource to priority areas in social services and contact tracing. Some services have had reduced performance as a result of the pandemic but this agile and flexible working has been very positive and is an opportunity for the future.

2. Opportunities with recruitment and retention
If as an organisation we retain at least an element of this distanced approach to work (working from home, other locations, or a combination) for posts where it is practical to do so this will prove attractive to many people within the labour market and could attract back to work people who need a flexible approach to work/life balance.

3. Changing demands on the IT infrastructure, hardware and software
Changing the way we operate in a very short period of time placed a unique challenge on our IT Services and Digital Team. Our preparedness proved a great asset but on-going developments have proved challenging on times. What is has shown is that we need to continue to improve our infrastructure (Cabinet Report link) and the move to 'cloud type' solutions will continue to lessen our reliance on physical sites.

4. Alternative uses for our buildings and other assets

If we have a more dispersed work-force there is an opportunity to review our assets and look for alternative uses. These could be commercial opportunities and/or an opportunity to offer space to partner, voluntary and community organisations. This is particularly relevant for the Civic Centre where our occupancy was fairly low prior to the pandemic. As the centre for civic activity within the city we could work to bring more of our communities into the asset to work alongside us and others.

5. More bespoke support services for front line delivery functions that enable them to operate more efficiently

If more of our back office functions are being delivered remotely then we have more opportunity to provide enhanced space and facilities for those services and staff that need a base, equipment storage, places to work with service users and flexible access to transport (this could be car parking or access to electric fleet vehicles)

6. Reduction in the Council's carbon footprint

A reduction in staff travelling to work and a reduction in business miles will reduce carbon emissions and air pollution created from council travel.

Analysis of the grey fleet expenses incurred in both 2019 and 2020 show a significant drop in the cost to the Council in reimbursing the workforce for business mileage incurred as part of carrying out their job role, and over 235,000 miles saved in journeys, whilst maintaining levels of service.

	31-Aug-19	31-Aug-20
No. of Journeys	68,914	28,014
Cost of Mileage	£ 146,967.00	£ 43,702.00
Miles Claimed	326,593	91,238
No. of Claimants	1,613	562
Journeys Over 100 Miles	256	22
Cost of Mileage Over 100	£ 9,896.00	£ 589.00
Miles Claimed Over 100	21,995	1,310
No. of Claimants Over 100	88	7

Occupancy of a smaller office area would inevitably equate to lower energy consumption and a smaller carbon footprint. In the Civic alone over the last year there has been an average monthly decrease in electricity usage of around 31,000 kwh. This equates to just over £5,000 per month. If the Counci were to occupy a smaller office area, then these savings would be even greater. Currently Newport Norse is conducting an estate rationalisation exercise that will allow the Council to make better decisions around which assets will make up their operational estate. One of the main aims is to reduce the costs associated with the repair and maintenance of a large estate. However, we do need to consider the knock-on emissions that could be created by staff working from home (heating, lighting, etc.).

8.   **Support those with long term health conditions to remain in work**

Retaining a distanced approach to work will enable those members of the workforce with a long-term health condition to remain in the workplace where their condition might ordinarily mean they have to be absent from work for long periods due to their condition preventing them from attending a workplace, through to having to cease work prematurely. As an employer that seeks to support the vulnerable and encourage long term employment, continuing to offer an element of distance working will both retain colleagues who currently suffer with such a condition, and attract new talent to the organisation who may previously have dismissed any consideration of applying to join us, in the knowledge that we are an employer who will support those with long term health conditions to demonstrate their skills and remain in long term employment.

9.   **Promote a healthy work/life balance**

Feedback from staff who have been working remotely since March 2020 has been mixed in whether a greater degree of work/life balance has been achieved. For those with commutes to a Council office there has been not only the environmental impact saving on predominantly car journeys, but the time saved from not commuting. This has been spent in other ways that benefit family life, e.g. being able to take children to and from school, being more able to visit an elderly relative around the working day, or using that commuting time to exercise. Whilst we have suspended the flexi time system to account for the challenges that exist with working remotely this has led to some staff feeling that the boundaries between work and home are more blurred and as a result there will need to be an in depth analysis on how to properly structure the working routines in order to meet demand of the business with personal demands.

5.   What are the challenges?

The way in which we are currently operating is significantly different to our pre Covid normal. As restrictions continue and guidance remains to work from home where possible, cultural barriers will diminish. However, they will still be a factor:

1. Organisation and Service Area culture
2. Service accessibility
3. Staff and Member wellbeing
4. Remuneration
5. Impacts on the city

The Council is not alone in having to consider the way we will work once all restrictions are lifted. The private sector is also in the same position and we are aware that they are going through similar considerations. We do not anticipate there being any significant decrease in demand for office accommodation as, similar to the Council, there is likely to be some form of hybrid working arrangements for the private sector. Conversely there has been increased interest in the creation of co-working hubs offering flexible working space and Welsh Government are also exploring this type of facility as part of their Transforming Towns programme. It is important to the vitality and viability of the City Centre and our businesses that people live, work and visit the City Centre and this will be an important issue going forward.

Whilst remote working has clear advantages for staff seeking a work/life balance there are also disadvantages that have been identified through our staff surveys during the pandemic. Feelings of isolation are common and lack of direct contact with teams in a more informal manner is a struggle for some, as has the lack of available workspace, particularly for young people living in shared accommodation.

Whilst recruiting has been able to continue throughout due to the digitisation of the process, the experience of new starters is vastly different to pre-Covid as there is little opportunity for 'on the job' training or the shared experiences of colleagues in an office environment. This means that new starters may not feel the culture of the organisation in the same way as previously.

Our staff surveys throughout the pandemic have shown that whilst the workforce who responded felt supported by the Council and their manager during the year, the areas with lower satisfaction scores were being able to switch off from work and having the tools they need to work effectively from home.

230 respondents feel they are able to effectively switch off from work

Boundaries between work and home are difficult – find self-logging on at weekends

Never feel satisfied with what I've done – too much to do

Hard to switch off when laptop in view

Proved harder than I thought it would be

If not working evenings, weekends it is felt you're not busy

299 respondents stated they have the tools they need to work effectively from home

Waiting for equipment

Slow response to IT issues

Lack of space at home

The comments above were taken from the September 2020 survey, and the next quarterly survey will be run shortly. Whilst we can repeat promotion of the DSE assessment available to staff and the kit checklist for them to discuss with their manager to enable appropriate workstations to be set up at home, we do need to consider in more depth what the new working week looks like whilst in this period of remote working. There is a growing anecdotal suggestion that replicating the office environment at home is not conducive to positive health and wellbeing. The HR team are currently working on suggested guidance for CMT that suggests some amendments that might be helpful in the current feeling of fatigue that the structure of the working day/week could be causing.

6.   Potential future model?

There are two basic options: firstly, we could return to the way in which we operated prior to the pandemic; secondly, we could adopt a new operating model that takes advantage of some or all of the opportunities that present themselves.

For the purpose of looking at a potential future model, we'll assume that second option is the favoured one.

To continue to operate with some degree of flexibility, as we are at present, between work being undertaken in multiple locations then the organisation would need to decide where it would like to place itself along a continuum – on the far end we contract with staff to work from home where possible, and at the other end we offer the opportunity for staff to work from home where needed. Clearly, we could place ourselves at any point along this continuum but the extremes will require different approaches and actions.

We also need to define who this would apply to.

For example, staff undertaking transactional, process or system-based work could be required or enable (depending on where we place ourselves) to work from home full time. Staff who are required to undertake collaborative work (either internally or externally) may be afforded less flexibility and we would need to re-look at how we utilise the space available to us so that they can do this in more innovative ways. This would also apply to managers and leaders. Staff who primarily deliver front facing roles would clearly have less flexibility.

Demand from employees for permanent flexible working pattern changes that include a portion of home working is likely to increase and the Council must be ready to meet that demand with a defined position on what flexibility parameters might be available to every job role. Given that evidence will be readily available to the workforce to demonstrate how and why their job role can be done from home, the business reasons for refusal would need to be clearly evidenced. In addition, the competitive labour market may highlight other employers that offer increased homeworking post-Covid that could lead to a talent drain from NCC if the Council did not consider a similar position.

The views of the Scrutiny Committee are being sought in relation to the potential future work place arrangements and these will be combined with the views of staff, prior to a report being taken to Cabinet.

The Committee is asked

1.   Consider the information contained within the report

2.   Discuss the potential opportunities, disadvantages and considerations with regard to potential changes to the Council's operating model

3.   Feedback views to Cabinet for consideration

Appendix A - Newport Civic Centre Building Utilisation:

A desk utilisation exercise was undertaken in March and April 2017, then updated in June 2018 to reflect changes made to room layouts and desk numbers. This exercise demonstrated the following:

- Across the Civic Centre, on average desks are empty 61% and utilised 39% of the time in core office hours
- Maximum utilisation across the survey period was 54% (Floor 6) and the lowest 29% (Level 4 East)
- The day to day pattern range was similar across the week, Wednesday PM highest, Friday PM lowest

Results by floor (%)

Whole week AM/Pm