

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee – 1 September 2020

Subject: HROD Update

Report of: Deputy Director HROD

Summary

This report provides an overview of support to staff during the Council's response to the COVID19 pandemic and an update of the work to develop management standards as part of the Our Ways of Working programme.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to note the report.

Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city

Our Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive	

growth	
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Background documents (available for public inspection): Not applicable

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Committee has requested an update on support to staff during the response to the Covid-19 pandemic and in particular around:

- Arrangements to support staff working remotely including ICT support, support around wellbeing and performance management arrangements
- Staff engagement to ensure and maintain contact with our workforce whilst the majority of staff are at home

In addition Committee has requested an update on work to develop management standards as part of the accountability strand of Our Ways of Working

2.0 Support to the Workforce during our response to COVID19

2.1 The current position with the workforce, including support available is included in the SITREP report in the Overview Report and copied into Section 3 of this report for ease of reference.

2.2 In response to the government's decision to move the country into lockdown in March of this year, the Council's workforce moved overnight from being an onsite based workforce to the majority of staff working from home, following the guidance that you should work from home if you able to do so.

2.3 ICT Support

To support the shift to remote working the Council's ICT service have worked hard to provide the workforce with the technology to do so and have delivered over 400 phones and 600 laptops in the first few weeks after lockdown, along with technology to allow up to 5,000 staff to work remotely on either their Council or to log into Council systems securely via Direct Access on their personal devices. The equipment purchased is to the standards required as part of the End User Device Strategy.

With the new telephony contract, new technology was rolled out allowing all key external numbers for Contact Centre and the ICT Service desk to make and receive calls on their Council Laptops from home. This has enabled the re-opening of the ICT help line, working alongside the help desk portal and the Environmental and Revenues and Benefits numbers to re-open in July.

The ability to support the numbers of people to access systems remotely has only been possible due to the work that has continued to migrate to the new data center and to increase capacity on the Council's Wide Area Network. During the migration and whilst capacity has been increased some issues with accessing the systems have been experienced. Whilst not ideal it is worth noting that if the lockdown had occurred 12 months previously it would not have been possible to support this volume of remote working.

ICT developments continue to be rolled out including the launch of the new intranet planned for September and the planned migration to Office 365 scheduled for September to October. The intranet will operate on mobile devices and for the first time be accessible to staff who do not have access to the Council's systems.

2.4 *Communications and Engagement*

There are regular updates from the Chief Executive and the Leader to the whole workforce, previously on a daily basis and now shared three times per week. These include updates on current government guidance, signposting staff to a range of health and well being initiatives, good news stories and a regular Q+A where staff can directly put their questions to the Chief Executive and the Leader.

In addition to the Corporate communications, each Directorate has their own communications which include information relevant to their service areas.

A whole staff survey was carried out in June to understand how the workforce were feeling and how they could be better supported which has helped shape how we continue to support staff. Appendix 1 provides an overview of the results of the survey.

2.5 *Health and Wellbeing*

Health and Wellbeing has been an area of particular focus during the response to Covid-19 and there has been a broad range of support and initiatives with some of the key pieces of work outlined below:

- Three packs have been developed (see Appendix 2) to provide support and guidance around the following topics:
 - Working on site
 - Working from home
 - Health and Wellbeing
- A support group has been set up, facilitated by HROD, for staff who fall within the "Clinically extremely vulnerable" or "shield" category.
- HROD have been supporting the Employee Mental Health group, including facilitating sessions to explore how staff with mental health issues can be better supported.
- The regular communications include a health and wellbeing focus and signpost staff to both internal and external support around a range of issues

3.0 **Current position**

3.1 Fortnightly workforce updates are provided as part of the COVID19 Sit-Rep reporting. The latest update is copied below for ease of reference.

3.2 *Staff Working on Site*

With easing of government guidance more staff have been able to return to the workplace (all in line with government guidance on social distancing and/or PPE (where required)).

Current Position

	Total Staff	Staff on Site
Adults	1,811	1091
Children's	1,117	773
Core	1,765	153
Growth & Development	697	215
Neighbourhoods	1,146	658
Total	6,536	2,890
% of headcount		44.2%

*noting that the figures for onsite staff do not include term-only workers (home to school transport, catering, MAES etc)

Office space available capacity is limited to 30% whilst social distancing measures remain in place.

- Building per building work is in progress to review adherence to corporate guidelines
- Individual risk assessments are in progress for staff with underlying health conditions or black, asian and minority ethnic staff
- Initial proposals for larger scale return to the office in development following engagement with DMTs
- Piloting return from September, and further extended return in October

3.3 *Building Risk Assessments*

Building-by-building work is in progress to review adherence to corporate guidelines. Of 153 confirmed premises (excluding assessments being done in parks) where staff are or plan to be working, 144 risk assessments have been completed and 104 have been signed off as Covid19 secure. This work is ongoing with a tracker in place to show the position for each site and the results of risk based Covid19 Secure compliance visits being undertaken by officers from the Health and Safety and Estates Services.

3.4 *Vulnerable/Shielded Staff*

373 staff fall within the 'vulnerable' or 'living with someone that is shielding' categories who are now able to return to work following Government advice.

Of the 373:-

- 312 have returned to work via the individual risk assessment process

- 56 have been risk assessed and are awaiting occupational health advice

The remaining are either currently on sickness related absence or the service hasn't returned on-site.

HROD continues to monitor this cohort of staff specifically the completion of risk assessments and the number of staff returning to the workplace for corporate assurance.

The Government confirmed with effect from 1 August people no longer needed to 'shield'. There are a total of 343 staff that fall within the 'shield' category:

- 281 are working from home; and
- 62 remain at home but unable to work off site due to the nature of their role.

The 62 staff who are at home but unable to work are all going through the risk assessment process and are being referred to Occupational Health in order to assess if they are able to return to their role. A proportion of these staff may remain off work due to the nature of their illness (e.g. staff undergoing treatment for cancer) and they will continue to be supported by their managers in line with the management of attendance policy. Staff who are able to return to work and their substantive post will be supported by HROD and their managers to ensure this return is managed safely and in line with medical advice and government guidance. There may be a proportion who can return to work but not to their substantive role due to the level of risk, in this instance HROD will work with the individuals to look at alternative roles on a temporary or permanent basis to reduce the level of risk for these individuals.

Understandably a number of staff who were previously classed as "shield" are very concerned about a return to the workplace and HROD and managers are working with individuals to support them through this transition (at the right time).

Health and Safety have developed an Individual Risk Assessments: Assurance Framework which enables monitoring levels of risk assessments which have been completed across the organisation.

3.5 *Future Ways of Working/Return to the Office*

Discussions have been held with the senior management team and Executive Members to agree the approach. Work is now well underway with Directorate Management Teams focussing on when, how and where employees need to work at a workplace to ensure that we have a coherent and deliverable approach. This data collection is now complete and by the end of August services will be testing new ways of working on site to help further develop proposals for the longer term. The first phase is starting across 5 service areas in the Town Hall Extension w/c 24 August 2020. Work is also underway led by the City Solicitor on arrangements for member meetings which involve

additional challenges including participation/attendance of members of the public.

The ambition is that by October all of our staff will be working on site albeit on a much reduced basis to meet current social distancing requirements. This will mean our buildings will continue to hold 30% of their previous maximum capacity and in addition services will stagger start and finish times for staff to try to avoid peak travel times for staff. Continuous feedback will be sought from staff and managers during the pilot stage and beyond about how the workplace supports the type of work they need to carry out on site, how their journey was and how safe they feel in the workplace. Discussions are ongoing with Trade Unions and other stakeholders will be required to support this.

4.0 Strengthening Accountability

As previously reported in updates on the Our Transformation Work, work is underway to revise the offer for leadership and management development. The first part of this is developing a set of management standards, which will be in the overall context of the developing Organisational Development framework for the organisation and will include:

- Setting clear expectations of what managers will and will not do ('hold one to one meetings with staff at least once a month'), for example
- Training and development programme for managers so that they have the capability to carry out the expectations that have been set
- Holding managers to account where those expectations that have not been met

A "Good Manager Guide" to support staff new to and existing managers is currently being drafted and will be underpinned by the values and behaviours of Our Manchester, and related policies and procedures. This is designed to create a shift to managers focusing on how to manage rather than just understanding policy.

A consistent sense of accountability for managers who fail to meet the standards required and recognition of those who are exemplars of good management practice has been missing from previous learning approaches.

An accountability and recognition framework, set within the context of an overarching approach to talent management will be developed. This might include 'spot checks' of managers carrying out return to work interviews, budget management and so on, and highlight where management action may have led to the council being required to pay compensation, and also using examples of good practice in corporate communications. Accountability does not mean necessarily a punitive approach but an interruption of poor management behaviours.

Alongside this, activity is being progressed to simplify, align and clarify decision making and resulting processes around a "How Do I" approach. This will enable managers to be clearer, and feel more empowered, to take steps required to effectively and efficiently manage resources and staff.

5.0 Conclusion:

Members are asked to note the content of this report.