

**Manchester City Council
Report for Resolution**

Report to: Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee - Human Resources (HR) Subgroup – 22 November 2018

Subject: Our Ways of Working - OWOW

Report of: Director of HROD

Summary

This report provides an update and overview of the Our Ways of Working (OWOW) programme.

Recommendations

To consider and comment on the information in the report.

Wards Affected: All

Alignment to the Our Manchester Strategy Outcomes (if applicable)

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	As a modern, flexible, employer the Council will be leading by example in promoting quality employment for Manchester Residents.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	OWOW will support the attraction and retention of skills into the workforce
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	Promoting flexibility in employment will ensure the organisation is truly equitable in its offer to current and perspective staff.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	OWOW will reduce staff travel and associated carbon reductions.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy please contact one of the contact officers above.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Our Ways of Working (OWOW) is a fundamentally different approach to how, when and where we work. It seeks to support employees balance their responsibilities in and out of work and, at the same time, increase performance and productivity in delivering excellent services to the residents of Manchester.
- 1.2 The drivers for change are broad and include:
 - The rationalisation of our estate
 - Reduced carbon emissions through less staff travel
 - Modernising the organisation as an employer to attract and retain talent which responds directly to staff feedback through Bheard
 - Supporting our employee wellbeing and equality priorities (including working carers)
 - Supporting the employment of our social value priority groups.
- 1.3 Through delivering on this agenda the Council will be 'Walking the Talk' in providing the progressive, modern and supportive employment offer as an exemplar to other organisations in the City in support of our Work and Skills Strategy. In progressing this work, support has been provided by Timewise, a social enterprise who champion flexibility in the workplace. The Council is currently progressing through the Timewise Councils' Programme to provide external accreditation of its approach and is currently awaiting the outcomes of this process.
- 1.4 The approach will be underpinned by a refreshed framework of workforce policies, an ambition to rethink and refocus our office design and a commitment to take full advantage of technology to enable smart and improve working.
- 1.5 Whilst the commitment is organisational wide, the offer will look and feel different across services, recognising the different models of delivery. For example, how OWOW works in frontline delivery teams will be very different to back office services. However, the commitment is for all staff to have access to part of the offer, this could include greater use of technology, ability to change work locations or the ability to work from home.
- 1.6 OWOW is not about looking at policies in isolation but rather is underpinned by ICT HR and Estates working together to support a modern employment offer which promotes flexibility for all staff whilst prioritising business delivery through a shift in organisational culture. OWOW is not a project or programme but rather the culmination of a range of interconnected strands of action.



2.0 Activity to Date

2.1 Leadership

- 2.1 To be truly successful OWOW must be led from the very top of the organisation, with Leaders not only supporting this way of working through their words but demonstrating their practical support through their actions.
- 2.2 An important first step in this process took place in December 2017 with the relocation of the Council's Senior Management Team (SMT) from individual offices within the Town Hall to an open plan office space on Level 3 of the Town Hall Extension. A session with the Council's Senior Leaders Group (SLG) (which includes the organisation's top 100 Leaders) has also taken place to set-out the OWOW ambition and encourage Leaders to make a personal and a Service pledge to support this. Further engagement took place at the Leadership Summit in October, which included all managers at Grade 10 and above.
- 2.3 There is strong leadership support for the OWOW ambition. However, leaders have highlighted a range of practical challenges to enabling both a shift to a culture of management by outcomes and in enabling leaders to embrace this way of working themselves. There is a clear overlap here to work in support of the new Employee Health and Wellbeing Strategy and in response to low levels of wellbeing at a senior level in particular, with SMT currently considering the outcomes of a recent SLG session on this theme.

2.2 Service and Manager Engagement

2.2.1 Our Ways of Working is reinforcing a more agile and flexible way of working - reducing our estates costs and moving to a more modern approach to working through having clear desk policy, a minimum of an 8:10 staff:desk ratio and encouraging greater staff flexibility - reviewing our approach as an employer to where, when and how we work.

2.2.2 An OWOW Programme Team which includes HROD, ICT and Estates have been undertaking intensive engagement at both DMT and team/service level which is having a significant impact on introducing, embedding and sustaining Our Ways of Working. - The approach is truly flexible and acknowledges there cannot be a fixed approach to OWOW - our services are diverse and the way those services are delivered are fundamentally different. Excellent service delivery must always come first but, beyond this, there are significant opportunities to support each service to operate in a more flexible way. This will mean different things in different services but can vary from the location staff work from, hours worked, the working pattern staff have etc.

2.2.3 Whilst we continue work with services to explore what OWOW will look like at a service level, there are minimum expectations in terms of our estate; an 8:10 desk ratio across all of our estate and a clear desk policy. In addition, as far as possible to support the desk ratio we need to move to hot desking arrangements, however accepting this will not work for all service areas. This not only enables more flexible use of desks but also supports data governance, increasingly important with GDPR, and for ensuring greater cleanliness.

2.2.4 Through engagement with individual services many services have already adapted OWOW principles, working with their staff to agree service specific working arrangements which include; reviewing office space, adopting ICT solutions and adopting formal and informal working arrangements to support colleagues with their work life balance.

2.2.5 Examples of what has been achieved to date include:

- Policy Research and Intelligence - adopted flexible approach including the majority of staff working away from the office 1 day per week, hotdesking
- ICT - adopted flexible approach to work with staff working away from the office and using technology to support this (e.g. dialling in or video calling into meeting), hotdesking. Maximising office space by relocating pods and re-purposing unused facilities such as the old printer hub
- HROD - Staff working away from office 2 x days per month supported by purchasing a pool of mobile devices available to all staff, creating a range of office work space including hot desks, touch down areas and informal meeting spaces. ,
- Legal - piloting new working arrangements including a bespoke flex scheme developed in consultation with staff

- Estates - review of work space, adopting new flexible working arrangements

2.3 Estates Rationalisation & Improvement Strategy

- 2.3.1 From an estates perspective, Our Ways of Working sets out the principles, activities and behaviours required to transform the way our staff think about their work space to get the most from the office estate. This means thinking differently about work space and challenging traditional assumptions about offices – embracing the idea that work is what we do, not where we go.
- 2.3.2 More flexible working practices are at the heart of OWOW, and from an estates perspective they include adopting principles including the 8:10 desk ratio and adopting a clear desk policy as noted above as well as moving from individual offices to open plan working; reducing our reliance on paper records to reduce waste, print costs and storage; recycling more, taking responsibility for office tidiness, reporting issues through the FM Helpdesk and preventing tailgating through security doors.
- 2.3.3 The Council has been using the principles above to transform our office estate since 2010. The transformation has seen the Council dispose of poor quality offices such as Belle Vue and Wenlock Way, and refurbish the retained estate starting with the Town Hall Extension and including buildings such as Harpurhey District Office, offices at the Abraham Moss Centre in Crumpsall, Longsight District Office, Bold Street Offices in Moss Side and Etrop Court in Wythenshawe. Projects currently in design or delivery include the Our Town Hall Project, converting the former Hulme Library into a District Office, refurbishing Alexandra House, and developing the Gorton Hub, as well as refurbishing Hammerstone Road Depot, improving office space there.
- 2.3.4 The approach to office design, underpinned by OWOW, includes moving to open plan office accommodation from cellular offices; removing managers' offices, encouraging them to sit with their teams; providing dedicated kitchen and brew areas; providing a greater choice of work spaces, including touch-down space, bookable focus rooms, break-out areas and pods as well as traditional desks and meeting rooms; encouraging flexibility and supporting people to work from other floors, other buildings, on the go or at home as long as service delivery is maintained; improving welfare, cycling and shower facilities; encouraging a clear desk culture when work is finished, which promotes a tidy work place, helps the cleaners clean and improves information security; investing in better quality furniture, including better seating and providing lockers.
- 2.3.5 A key driver for this work has been to provide a more pleasant and efficient working environment for our staff, acknowledging the fact that more modern, quality workspaces increase staff satisfaction and productivity, and are an asset in recruitment and retention of staff.

The other driver has been to secure revenue savings through the more efficient use of our estate, including increasing capacity in our freehold

buildings to reduce lease costs. Our Ways of Working is at the heart of this. The last tranche of transformation that saw the disposal of Wenlock Way and Chorlton District Office (which was leased) saved around a million pounds in running costs. This saving would have been significantly reduced without the adoption of flexible working practices.

- 2.3.6 Alongside bigger refurbishments, the re-invigorated approach to Our Ways of Working, and continual developments in ICT mean office spaces are under continual review. Small changes can often make a big impact. For example, as a result of the ICT implementing smaller, more efficient printers, the large print hubs in many buildings are no longer required, and can be repurposed with bench desks, pods or soft seating to create informal meeting or work areas.
- 2.3.7 Working in partnership, the Estates, HR and ICT teams continue to conduct office layout reviews with each service's individual needs at their core; review & refresh meeting rooms and communal spaces; and continually review how our workplaces can promote employees health and wellbeing.

2.4 ICT Improvement and Development

2.4.1 ICT is a significant enabler of OWOW. ICT is committed to help staff become more mobile, agile and connected through the deployment of secure, fit for purpose technology underpinned by a stable and robust ICT infrastructure. Over the past two years there have been several ICT projects that have supported OWOW from the roll out of new printers to the provision of a new type of collaborative meeting room on level 7 of the Town Hall Extension.

2.4.2 The ICT Strategy outlines the vision and the ICT capital plan identifies how ICT will deliver on this over the next three years. Examples of recently completed and upcoming OWOW ICT projects are:

- Roll out and rationalisation of the MCC printing estate - COMPLETE.
- Removal of Blackberries and roll out of new smart phones and tablets - COMPLETE
- Transition away from Lotus Notes email to a Browser based email (GMAIL) - COMPLETE
- Supplying staff with an appropriate device to fit the way they work and to remove the end of life Wyse terminals from the estate. Delivered 19/20.
- Design and configure a new Corporate wifi that will support mobile devices, agile working and working with partners. Delivered 20/21.
- Update the end of life meeting room ICT equipment with robust, secure meeting technology that will support agile working and the roll out of assistive video technology within health and social care. Delivered 20/21.

2.4.3 Universal Access is a project that is designed to enable and equip all Manchester staff with the ability to receive, send and find Council information online. Prior to the delivery of Universal Access approximately 1400 employees did not have access to Manchester County Council online services such as email, intranet or services such as SAP for holiday bookings and

therefore it was increasingly difficult to communicate in a timely and consistent manner with all staff.

2.4.4 Throughout 2017 and 2018 over 1000 staff have been fully trained and been provided access to ICT equipment at their place of work through a combination of existing ICT equipment and new hardware. Further phases of the Universal Access project are detailed below:

- Phase 2 - This is to give intranet access to 350 staff who do not have a site base.
- Phase 3 - Roll out Manchester.gov email addresses to all MAES staff
- Phase 4 - This is to enhance access to MCC systems by providing all 1400 Universal Access staff with a G-suite account and approximately 100 managers access to SAP.

2.4.5 Phase three is being funded by MAES and is in delivery. Phases 2 and 4 are subject to business case approval. A business case is currently being developed.

2.5 HR Policy review

2.5.1 Whilst, as noted above, OWOW is not about policy, an effective and clear flexible working policy framework is an important dependency on success. Significant engagement has taken place over recent months and feedback has indicated that, on the whole, the Council's policy framework here is fit-for-purpose. There are however some areas for potential improvement and, in particular, there is a need to strengthen and clarify policy guidance and present the full range of associated policies together clearly and concisely. To support this, the intention is to take a report for endorsement to the January Personnel Committee including the following four key areas. This will be supported by strengthened guidance on the intranet which will also include the existing information in relation to **career breaks** and **flexible retirement** within the new flexible working policy pages.

2.5.2 *Special Leave*

The CIPD and Acas view is that when properly utilised special leave is part of a wider toolset of flexible working options that as a whole leads to a better work/life balance. - The current policy is being reviewed to improve the language and more explicitly emphasised the facility to support carers and foster carers with special leave where appropriate. The policy and guidance is also being strengthened in relation to disability related special leave (DRSL).

2.5.3 *Flexible Working Policy*

As part of OWOW and flexible working communications/workshops there has been a renewed focus on considering requests for flexible working. Following a benchmarking exercise and consultation, assurances can be given that the Council's Flexible Working Policy aligns with current good practice and is fit for purpose.

2.5.4 However, as the most recent policy was published in 2010 the language is being refreshed where appropriate to improve accessibility through the use of plain English. This refreshed policy will form part of the communications to raise awareness of flexible working arrangements ensuring that (as stated in the current policy): *‘requests to work flexibly should be viewed with the presumption that they will be granted, unless there is a genuine business reason for not doing so’.*

2.5.5 As OWOW becomes embedded, this policy will also support an increased focus on the way in which the Council recruits and advertises for new employees with the aim of building flexibility into this process from the very outset.

2.5.6 Ad hoc Working from Home

As part of the drive to embracing OWOW, staff in a broader range of areas are being encouraged work away from their usual location (where appropriate) on an occasional basis. Whilst there is no intention to develop a formal ‘policy’ on this area as existing policy provision is seen as appropriate, guidance for staff and managers is being developed to confirm the corporate message which incorporates the ‘three Ps’ as described below:

Planned	Present	Productive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working away from office should be planned in advance with managers approval. Employees need to be flexible about when they work away and avoid following a pattern. Individual circumstances should be looked at on a case by case basis, however employees must attend work at the office if required. Working from home days recorded in a google team calendar. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use dial in / google hangouts to join meetings. Be contactable during your working day. There should be a clear understanding of when the employee should work and be contactable. Work phones should be forwarded to mobile where possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expected outcomes of work agreed with manager beforehand. Should not be used as an alternative to other commitments, such as childcare. Can be used to work around commitments, such as picking up children from school. Individual arrangements for Working from home may be reviewed if productivity reduces.

2.5.7 Flexible Working Hours Scheme (flexitime)

A policy review has confirmed that the current flexible working hours scheme remains fit for purpose, since its establishment in circa 1993 a range of local variations have been agreed and the range and volume of these have increased in recent years. Feedback from services that have introduced variations, from the organisation as a whole following consultation exercises,

and from engagement with the Trade Unions has informed the development of a plain English, accessible version of the current scheme with a clear process for agreeing local variations.

2.6 Associated Workstreams

2.6.1 As noted above, OWOW is not a project or programme but rather the culmination of a number of interconnected strands of action. Before summarising the next steps in taking this work forwards it is worth highlighting four further separate workstreams which will ultimately contribute to the success of OWOW.

2.6.2 *Leadership and Management Development*

Effective line management and visible leadership are perhaps the two most essential success criteria for OWOW. As part of the review of the Council's Leadership and Management programme planned for the coming five months, thought will need to be given as to how managers are effectively supported to manage a more flexible workforce and, in turn, how they are equipped to work more flexibly themselves.

2.6.3 *Workforce Equalities*

A report on workforce equalities was presented to this Committee's last meeting. As this report noted, the independent review undertaken of employee attitudes to equality emphasised that staff often felt stronger about the need to recognise and support individual flexibility as opposed to providing equality specific interventions. OWOW will clearly therefore support the organisation's ambition here

2.6.4 *Staff Travel*

Work is underway to review the Council's full range of support and discounts for staff travel. OWOW will see a wider variety of working patterns and movements for staff and a strengthened source of guidance and discounts here will help enable success and also support the overall carbon reduction agenda.

2.6.5 *Being Our Best Selves: Our Employee Health and Wellbeing Strategy*

The Strategy notes the strong connection between 'good' work and wellbeing. OWOW, in seeking to provide increased flexibility for staff whilst continuing to prioritise business need, will be crucial in supporting the 'high quality working life' strand of this Strategy.

3.0 Conclusion

3.1 As noted above, the Council is awaiting the results of its application to become a Timewise accredited Council. This accreditation process has included the development of an action plan to take forward OWOW activity which focuses on the main work areas summarised in section two above. Central to this will be ongoing engagement and communication with staff and managers to understand the extent to which OWOW is being felt across the organisation.

Having rolled out a number of successful initiatives in the Town Hall Complex, the ambition is to roll this out across all the estate and across the entire workforce. Perhaps the first indication of the effectiveness of this work this will be available at the end of this year when the results of the 2018 BHeard Survey are published. This survey will be key to informing the next phase of OWOW action.