

# Somerset County Council

## Human Resources Committee

– 24<sup>th</sup> January 2023

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### Somerset Council Dynamic Working Strategy for Approval

Executive Member: Cllr Liz Leyshon, Deputy Leader and Lead Member on Finance and Human Resources

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<i>Please complete sign off boxes below prior to submission to Community Governance</i>			
	<b>Seen by:</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Report Sign off</b>	Legal	Tom Woodhams	13/01/2023
	Corporate Finance	Jason Vaughan	13/01/2023
	Human Resources	Chris Squire	12/01/2023
	Executive Member	Liz Leyshon	10/01/2023
	Monitoring Officer	Scott Wooldridge	13/01/2023
	<b>Summary:</b>	This report provides details of the new Dynamic Working Strategy for Somerset Council, which is ready for consideration and if appropriate, approval, by the HR Committee.	
<b>Recommendations:</b>	<b>The members of the HR Policy Committee are asked to:</b> <b>Formally approve the new Dynamic Working Strategy, as detailed below, for use in the new Somerset Council with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023.</b>		
<b>Reasons for Recommendations:</b>	To adopt new ways of working to ensure that a consistent approach to where and how people work is agreed and in place for the new Somerset Council on 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2023.		
<b>Links to Priorities and Impact on Service Plans:</b>	Part of the People Workstream for Local Government Reorganisation.		
<b>Financial, Legal and HR Implications:</b>	<b>Financial</b> – There are some financial implications, for example continuing to offer standard equipment to work from home. There may be additional equipment required for those who need reasonable adjustments, but this is separately budgeted for. Contracts of employment remain unchanged mitigating against increasing travel costs. Enabling a flexible approach to where people work will free up office space, which could lead to a		

	<p>rationalisation of the building estate across the County.</p> <p><b>HR</b> – Having an embedded Dynamic Working Strategy will support line managers and employees and help define the organisation’s culture and values regarding our workforce. It will help with recruitment and retention and embed the aim of the new Council to be an employer of choice.</p> <p><b>Legal</b> – There are no changes to terms and conditions, and a work base will continue to be on every employee’s contract of employment. The request to work in a dynamic way will be agreed with the service/line manager and is a temporary arrangement.</p>
<b>Equalities Implications:</b>	The Council’s duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 is to have “due regard” to the matters set out in relation to equalities when considering and making decisions. A full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for the new Dynamic Working Strategy and is attached as an appendix to the strategy document.
<b>Risk Assessment:</b>	N/A
<b>Scrutiny comments / recommendation (if any):</b>	N/A

## 1 Background

- 1.1 Under Local Government Reform the five Councils have come together to agree a unified way of working for the new Council. For Somerset County Council this replaces the previous Smart Working Strategy and the Hybrid Working guidance.
- 1.2 The new way of working follows trends, best practice, and recommendations from industry experts such as the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development and Time Wise.
- 1.3 Most employees across all five councils recognise the benefits of dynamic working practices and are keen to continue to work flexibly in the new Council. Consistently over 90% of employees feel levels of trust have increased due to more home and hybrid working. See Appendix A of the Dynamic Working Strategy for the full range of benefits and background data.

- 1.4 Some of the broader organisational benefits include:
- Greater access to talent/improved talent pools by overcoming geographic limitations
  - There is a global trend towards dynamic and hybrid working opportunities that the new Council wants to keep pace with for attraction and retention
  - A reduction in commuting hours
  - Alignment with our climate emergency and green agenda
  - Saving on asset expenditure and premises costs
  - The ability, as an employer, to attract, support and realise the benefits of a more diverse and inclusive workforce, including those with a wide range of disabilities and caring responsibilities, but offering more flexibility

## **2 Options Considered**

- 2.1 An alternative option was to continue with hybrid working arrangements, which is a split between home and office working. Hybrid working can involve taking a more formal and rigid approach to the number of days spent in the office or at home. Each of the five councils were also using similar terms interchangeably, for example: hybrid, flexible, agile. Analysing feedback from employees and managers this option was discounted for the more flexible approach that Dynamic Working allows. Dynamic Working is not just about where employees work, but how they work. The term Dynamic Working is new and distinct from all previous strategies, policies or informal arrangements which exist in the predecessor organisations.

## **3 Consultations Undertaken**

- 3.1 The Dynamic Working Strategy has been consulted on with key stakeholders: union representatives, HR, Property, IT, Facilities Management, Customers and Partners, colleagues involved in the SCC Ways of Working project, Employment Equalities Officers, employee networks and workstream leads. The strategy was taken to the LGR JNF (Joint Negotiating Forum) on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2023 for formal approval.

## **4 Implications**

- 4.1 The recommendations are made to ensure a fair and consistent approach to ways of working in the new Council. If approval is not achieved for the Dynamic Working Strategy, there is a risk to employee retention and recruitment and the reputation of Somerset Council as an employer of choice.

## **5 Background Papers**

### 5.1 Dynamic Working Strategy

Appendix A – Background data and strategy rationale

Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix B1 – Section from Dynamic Working Strategy – Appendix A

Appendix B2 – Culture & Behaviour Workshop information

Appendix C - Team Charter