



<b>Report to:</b>	Employment and Staffing Committee 28 June 2023
<b>Lead Cabinet Member:</b>	John Williams
<b>Lead Officer:</b>	Jeff Membery

---

## Review of hybrid policy for Employment Committee

### Executive Summary

- Since Covid, hybrid working has become a staple offer from employers in the private sector and public sector alike. It is valued by employees and has become a significant factor in people deciding which organisations they would be willing to work for. Having a version of hybrid working at the Council is therefore important for attracting and retaining staff, and appears to deliver benefits for customers, members and other partners whilst also supporting the green agenda.
- The review of the current arrangements at South Cambridgeshire shows that our policy is still fit for purpose. However, we need to continue to monitor the impacts of the arrangements and ensure that we take action to maximise the benefits of the policy whilst mitigating any potentially negative impacts.

### Key Decision

- No

### Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee;

- **Note** the findings of the review and the resulting action plan.
- **Make recommendations** for any further actions to be added to the plan
- **Agree** for a further update in a years' time, highlighting progress against the action plan and including a further exercise to obtain the updated views of members at that time.

## Reasons for Recommendations

It is considered that the current approach allows flexibility for SCDC to adapt for different aspects of the workforce whilst retaining the flexibility for individuals with the opportunity to achieve the benefits.

## Details

### Objectives and success of a hybrid culture

According to the CIPD its estimated that as many as 4 million people have changed careers due to a lack of flexibility at work, and around 2 million have left a job in the last year for the same reason.

*“Organisations that keep harking back to tradition, versus those that embrace technology and the shift that has been made to flexible working practices, will rapidly lose ground in commercial competitiveness and the battle for talent.”*

Steve Threader, managing director, reward and benefit consulting at Gallagher's Benefits and HR Consulting Division in the UK

When looking at the wider impact of hybrid working, employers, according to the CIPD, are most likely to say it has brought a positive impact for:

- ability to recruit from a wider geography in the UK - for SCDC this means to avoid high cost of living in South Cambridgeshire by recruiting outside area;
- ability to recruit a more diverse workforce - in our recent wellbeing survey both women and employees with a disability or long-term health condition are more likely to say a flexible working pattern and ability to work remotely are important to them;
- attraction and retention of talent - flexible working is pivotal when looking for new roles. Almost a fifth (19%) of employees are currently looking for a new job. When thinking about a new role, 71% say being able to have a flexible working pattern is important to them and 69% say the ability to work remotely is important. Employees also highlight flexible working (53%) and remote working (53%) as key when considering a new job, only overtaken in importance by pay and benefits (77%) (CIPD);
- employee financial wellbeing by reducing travel costs from commuting and attending meetings, a reduction in commuter travel also supports the green agenda
- Increase in net productivity:

**Table 1: Impact of hybrid working on an organisation's productivity and efficiency (%)**

Source of support	2023	2021	2020
Has increased productivity	38	41	33
Neither increased nor decreased productivity	49	41	38
Has decreased productivity	13	18	23
Net productivity score	+25 n=1,209	+23 n=1,209	+10 n=1,209

46% of employees reported feeling more productive working in a hybrid way (CIPD). In SCDC statistical analysis by the Bennet institute for the 4DW did not highlight any statistical variances in performance data over the period assessed (January – March 2023).

- Legislative requirements – there are proposed changes to employment legislation allowing all employees to be able to request flexible working from day 1 of employment (an increase to the statutory current provision.)

## **SCDC staff opportunities and challenges**

The results of the recent wellbeing survey conducted for the 4DW show an increase in wellbeing since its inception and whilst we can't benchmark this against result from before hybrid working was introduced, there are some clear wellbeing benefits to working from home alongside flexibility. We need to ensure that this is not outweighed by considered challenges, highlighted below; and how we overcome these.

Those mostly working in the office scored lowest overall, and had most areas of concern, but this was a much smaller cohort, and so the results are heavily weighted by individuals. They also potentially were going to the office to get social support.

For colleagues declaring a disability, results to the survey were low across the board and despite the introduction of the Disability passport scheme and the work around disability confidence there is still more engagement to be completed to see what further support can be provided.

## **Views of Members**

Members were surveyed to get feedback on hybrid working; nine members completed the survey, with key issues set out below:

Benefits identified:

Flexibility, less travel and petrol, efficiency, wider participation, able to combine caring responsibilities.

Issues identified:

Reliable ICT (teams) and technical training

Considerations of presentations for hybrid meetings and access needs to be equal if meetings are hybrid.

In terms of interactions with officers, members felt that it increased accessibility and allowed officers to spend more time doing their jobs and provided increased flexibility. Issues raised were that more informal conversations can be difficult and harder to build.

78% reported no issues with response times from officers; on occasion there appeared to be issues with calling and getting the right officer; half of members felt the relocation to the first floor for all officers seemed to have helped.

When asked on a scale 1-5 if it was a positive to increase opportunities for recruitment and retaining staff the average score was 3.78 with all councillors thinking it was significant to some degree

## **Customer impact**

Performance data is monitored quarterly, and significant variances responded to in real time; performance data can be affected by external influences as well as internal, so any root causes need to be investigated

Statistical analysis by the Bennet institute for the 4DW did not highlight any statistical variances in performance data over the period assessed. Moving to more digital channels increases flexibility for the customer to contact at a time and place to suit them.

Moving to hybrid working for the contact centre has not resulted in a drop in performance and a recent mystery shopper exercise in the contact centre aligned with performance results of our KPI's. A summary of the mystery shopper exercise is set out in Appendix C.

## **Opportunities /challenges for SCDC**

Areas raised in the CIPD survey are similar to areas identified for SCDC where perceived negative impact for:

- employee connection to organisation purpose - we need to understand and share widely the organisation purpose, shared vision and define our culture/core values and goals
- ability of managers to lead teams effectively - training and toolkit for managers on managing hybrid workers, assess the results of the wellbeing survey to identify any problem areas
- Equality access – ensure equality in access to development – career support, L&D and inclusion and consistency across application of the policy to ensure it meets the needs of different teams

- the culture of the organisation – undertake a review of new starters and how we induct them – place emphasis on what is the SCDC brand and how do they know they work for South Cambs and this should be followed through our performance framework
- Building trust with the people you spend the most time with – how can we collaborate in different ways – what are the new opportunities to work together
- Getting staff back in the office – leadership team have already recommended that teams meet in the office twice a month Isolation issue - continued emphasis on wellbeing and support – the office is now a much more user-friendly experience with teams based all in one area.

## **Policy**

In research from the CIPD only 45% have a formal policy, 24% an informal approach; having a policy that is flexible allows SCDC to adapt for different aspects of the workforce whilst retaining the flexibility for individuals.

The worker profiles have not been implemented organisation wide but still remain fit for purpose should it be helpful for managers or workers to understand how the policy affects them.

## **Options**

1. Note the findings of the review and the resulting action plan.
2. Make recommendations for any further actions to be added to the plan

## **Implications**

- In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk, equality and diversity, climate change, and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered:-

## **Staffing**

This policy impacts the recruitment and retention of staff

## **Consultation responses**

- Member survey

## **Alignment with Council Priority Areas**

### **Being green to our core**

- Reducing commuter mileage contributes to a lower carbon footprint of the workforce

### **A modern and caring Council**

- Having a successful hybrid working policy will contribute to SCDC being an employer of choice

## **Background Papers**

[Flexible and hybrid working practices in 2023 | CIPD](#)

## **Appendices**

Appendix A: Action Plan

Appendix B: Hybrid Work Policy

Appendix C: Summary of mystery shopper exercise in the contact centre

## **Report Author:**

Helen Cornwell – HR Service Manager

Telephone: (01954) 713288