

Committee Efficiency and Performance Sub Committee – For Information Establishment Committee– For Information Digital Services Sub (Finance) Committee – For Information Corporate Asset Sub Committee– For Information	Date: 16 September 2020 17 September 2020 16 November 2020 18 November 2020
Subject: Guildhall Complex – Road Map for Return to the Office	Public
Report of: City Surveyor, Chamberlain (IT), and Town Clerk (HR)	For Information
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Summary

COVID-19 has had a profound impact on the world of work and particularly on the use of offices and the workplace. Mass working from home has meant that the way people and organisations consider and do business has shifted significantly, with the realisation that people can work remotely and still be productive and stay connected due to current technology.

Lessons learnt and workplace analysis has predicted that this end of fixed workplace attendance will help unlock productivity growth and personal creativity, and that in future nearly all employees will become more mobile and require a network of locations to make them as productive and engaged as possible. Overtime it will also help organisations make cost savings as they seek to address the financial challenges arising from this pandemic.

With the change in Government guidance around returning to the workplace, the City Corporation must take this unique opportunity to further re-shape our current work practices, interaction preferences and attitudes toward technology. This should also take into account that many workers will still need to come into the workplace regularly because of the nature of their roles. Some staff have been doing so throughout the lockdown period.

This report summarises the work being done in the immediate short term – Road Map to return to the workplace; the medium term – capturing and embedding the ‘new normal’ ways of agile and flexible working; and the long term aspirations – to deliver better utilisation and financial savings as a result of moving to a more flexible and agile workforce requiring a smaller footprint of workspace as part of the City’s Corporate Asset Management Strategy, that will support our Corporate Plan and outcomes, new Target Operating Model and help to embed positive culture change.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Note the content of this report.
- Await until the outcome, the impact and lessons learnt of the return to workplace becomes clear, noting that the financial implications of the long-term return to work has yet to be assessed and quantified.

Main Report

Background

1. In 2016 the Accommodation and Ways of Working programme began. Its aim was to modernise working practices, based around the needs of our internal and external customers, better optimise our use of buildings and facilities to provide focus for improvements to our culture, business processes, skills and assets as well as positively enhance the experience and wellbeing of our staff.
2. During the time of this programme, space utilisation surveys of the Guildhall. These identified an average desk utilisation of 44% (pre Covid 19), with a maximum peak utilisation of approximately 65%-70%.

Current Position

3. The COVID-19 pandemic had an instant and unprecedented effect on working patterns all over the country, with the enforced lockdown and the resultant increased working from home.
4. The vast majority of City Corporation colleagues were suddenly expected to work from home. In the recent staff survey, 80% of colleagues felt that their experience of significant remote working has been positive.
5. Officers from across departments have been working collaboratively (through the Smart Working Group) to prepare for more staff return to Guildhall and other Corporation locations in a safe way, whilst introducing new ways of working that supports a future agile workforce. This is subject to ongoing Government and Public Health Guidance at the time, and is covered in 3 key principles as set out by the Chair of Policy and Resources at Court. These are:
 - Our staff safety is paramount
 - Our workplaces are Covid secure
 - Our new flexible ways of working are embedded.

Short Term - Guildhall Road Map for Return to the Office

6. For the Guildhall complex, a process has continued for the safe phased return to the office as in the following summary and timeline:

Action Required	Criteria to Meet	Status
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Carry out risk assessment	a. To address specific COVID-19 risks b. To identify control measures c. Share risk assessment with workforce	Completed
Establish office capacity	d. To meet the social distancing guidelines e. Floor Plans	Completed
Plan for staff return	f. Volunteer-based process g. Identify who can continue to work from home and who needs to work in the office h. Returning staff to complete personal Risk Assessment i. Assigned desks j. Continue to offer on-site support k. To meet business needs	Completed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A COVID-19 Returning to the workplace toolkit has been published on the City Corporation intranet. • Departmental COVID Coordinators nominated and meeting regularly.
Establish and communicate new office protocols	l. food & beverage m. visitors n. deliveries o. maintenance	Completed
Return to office	p. reinforce new behaviours q. monitor new protocols and make changes as necessary as we work to new normal	September onwards

7. Phase Zero – March 2020 to June 2020

- a. In order to adhere to the Government guidance in relation to travel and social distancing, Guildhall complex offices closed with effect from late March 2020.
- b. Some key workers were given access during this time.

8. Phase 1 – June 2020 to September 2020

- a. North Wing re-opened on 22 June 2020 for:
 - i. staff in critical roles requiring access to the office, and
 - ii. those who required access to specialist equipment.
 - iii. Temporary Member IT room located in North Wing.
- b. West Wing remained closed.

9. Phase 2 – Proposed September 2020 onwards

- a. With the recent change in Government guidance, employers now have more discretion to work with employees on returning to the workplace.
- b. North Wing and West Wing are both being made ready and COVID secure, with interim space plan changes being made for the next phase of opening from September.
- c. Control of staff return remains a high priority and it is therefore proposed that North and West Wing will support an approximate 40% capacity (see

table 1.) to meet business needs and ensure COVID secure spaces and appropriate social distancing.

Table 1 - Guildhall NW & WW –Road Map for Return

Guildhall Office	Existing Total Desks	Return to Workplace Desks to meet 40% Capacity
North Wing	951	410
West Wing	370	174
Total	1321	584

- d. For Guildhall, the meeting room booking system Condeco is being updated to allow individual desks to be pre-booked. This means capacity can be monitored and track and trace information captured. The arrival and departure times can be staggered to avoid any crowding at building entrances. This system will be available for use by end September.
- e. City Surveyor Officers have reviewed both North and West Wing environmental systems and can confirm that at 40% occupancy, the correct levels of fresh air/ventilation will be provided.
- f. All departments have nominated a **Workplace COVID Coordinator**, who will be responsible for related issues and cascading information to and from staff.
- g. Chief Officers are also considering:
 - i. Teams working in non-overlapping shifts
 - ii. Staggering work hours to help relieve congestion at peak hours
- h. The HR department will continue to support departments and staff.
 - i. **Culture**: by providing guidance on COVID-19 matters and wellbeing of staff e.g. a dedicated COVID [Staying Mentally Healthy](#) toolkit and resource is available for all staff, aimed at encouraging anyone who is struggling to talk and connect.
 - ii. **Behaviour** – by supporting how work has changed and providing an [individual risk assessment](#) to be completed with their Line Manager prior to return to the office; and supporting work styles eg
 - **Fixed Worker** - staff required to work in a fixed area
 - **Flexible Worker** - staff that can use a wide variety of workspace settings
 - **Free Worker** - staff spend most of their time out of the office and only come to the office for touchdown space or a meeting
- i. The IT Division are currently supporting the return to work by;
 - i. Installing additional Audio-Visual equipment (camera, microphone, speakers and control units) to Corporate Meeting Rooms, which will allow the use of Microsoft Teams.
 - ii. Rolling out the same equipment to other office meeting spaces.
 - iii. Supporting the City Corporation with new telephone solutions. It is likely that officers will move back to our offices without the universal provision of desk phones with staff using the Teams software and mobile phones as they have been using since working remotely during the period of lockdown.
 - iv. Reducing print devices. The need to print has been dramatically less than pre-lockdown. To discourage staff from gathering near the

Multi-Function Devices we have reduced the numbers from 4 per floor to two per floor. This approach will support the agreed printing policy that was signed off by Summit Group earlier this year.

10. Whilst this report does not specifically focus on arrangements for Members returning to Guildhall, comprehensive arrangements are in place to support a return to Guildhall by Members. The Town Clerk's department worked closely with the City Surveyors and Chamberlains departments over the summer recess to consider how hybrid meeting arrangements could be introduced to allow some Members to meet physically at Guildhall and "attend" formal committee meetings. In addition, officers have assessed how, noting the requirement to ensure that the Members' areas on the 2nd and 3rd Floors, West Wing remain Covid-19 safe, a phased return for members could be rolled out as of 7th September.
11. New processes and procedures have been developed to ensure that all Covid-19 safe measures across the complex are not compromised and the Member return to the complex is carefully managed and supported. Detailed guidance about those arrangements, which cover on-going use of the Drop-Down IT Zone in the North Wing, Ground Floor; the North Wing training rooms (where hybrid meetings will be facilitated for the foreseeable future); the 2nd and 3rd Floor, West Wing areas including the Members' Reading Room, the Members' Bar and the Guildhall Club, has been provided to all Members. The arrangements will be regularly reviewed, in consultation with Members and relevant officers. A complete refurbishment of the Committee Rooms, West Wing is not expected to conclude until late November 2020, at which point further consideration will need to be given to the future operation of hybrid meetings and wider physical attendance by Members, officers and the public subject to advice from Public Health England and the Government at that point..

Medium Term – Future Phase 3 Aims

12. To retain 40% workspace capacity and in line with any Government/ Public Health Guidance at the time but provide a full space plan reconfiguration to create different work zones e.g. additional collaboration/ project areas and increased types of desk layout.
13. Phase out dedicated offices.
14. For this phase there will need to be strong leadership and support to prevent a return to the old ways of working. The opportunity is there to embrace new shift working, greater flexible working and a hybrid of remote and office working that will be better for staff. In some cases, staff may opt for a shorter working week, which they had not considered before, potentially reducing costs as well as improving their wellbeing.
15. These new ways of working will support breaking down any current silos and continue to encourage collaborative working across departments.

Long Term – New ways of working to meet corporate and strategic implications by delivering financial savings.

16. A key element of the City's Corporate Property Asset Management Strategy (currently under review) is to better utilise our assets and release those where they are under-utilised or entirely surplus, either by leasing out to third parties or in some cases disposing on a long lease/ freehold basis. The current version of the strategy is currently being reviewed by Corporate Asset Sub Committee members, and is proposed to focus on the following:-
- a. **Efficient** - to seek to further improve the efficiency and sustainability of operational assets. New Ways of working will support modern working practices and move to more flexible and agile working, which in turn will require less space and opportunities to reduce our portfolio.
 - b. **Effective** - Drive the Digital Agenda benefiting from emerging technology- 'smart building technology and flexible working post COVID-19.
 - c. **Energy** – achieve more energy savings as a result of reduced workspace footprint and utilising the portfolio more effectively, supporting the proposed Climate Action Strategy currently under consideration by Members.
17. New flexible ways of working will support;
- a. Our new Target Operating Model and help to embed positive culture change.
 - b. The Guildhall Masterplan, offering flexible workspace for an agile workforce and creating an exemplar sustainable building reducing our estimated annual carbon emissions to circa 750 tonnes per year. (currently 38,000 tonnes)

Financial Implications

18. The short term costs associated with adapting Guildhall for the return of staff has to date been absorbed by the City Surveyor's local risk budget, and has in part been helped by the reduction in other costs such as lower energy consumption. Longer term financial implications are yet to be assessed.

Conclusion

19. The future of work and ways of working are complex and multi-faceted issues. To support new normal working practices will require aligning **people** (culture and behaviour), **workspace** (for a future agile workforce) and a robust **technology** backbone with a suite of digital tools to enable the work to be done in a variety of settings. The pandemic has provided a unique opportunity to accelerate change for the organisation.

Appendices

- None

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