Future workplace and ways of working update
Corporate Committee
7 June 2023

1.   SUMMARY

The Covid pandemic and lockdowns have seen significant changes in working styles in all organisations. People have become familiar with remote working and collaboration technologies, and expectations about working arrangements have changed dramatically. This presents significant opportunities for the Council to modernise how our services work and how we use our workspace.

Our goal is to support the Council's staff in being able to work effectively and efficiently, whatever their role and wherever they are working.

Our approach has drawn on the learning and feedback from across services, including discussions with teams from across all services and staff inclusion groups, and feedback that received from staff during the pilot of new furniture options during autumn 2021.

The Council's Organisational Development team have been leading the 'Right for Hackney, Right for You' initiative, which is supporting services in designing their future ways of working (see further details below).

The future workplace team has also continued work to provide modern, well designed space that supports effective, flexible and collaborative working across the Council's services, and enables efficiencies across the Council's office estate (reducing our office buildings and realising financial benefits). Our priority objectives are:

- Providing a welcoming environment that promotes staff wellbeing and Hackney's ambition to be an employer of choice.

- Enabling productive and collaborative working across the Council's services and partners, supported by modern technology and workspace that supports different working styles.

- Supporting integrated working across a hybrid working style, enabling collaboration between office, remote and home based workers.

- Making efficient use of the Council's workspaces, releasing assets for alternative use / income generation.

This work aligns with the Council's longer term strategic principles for future ways of working and links with the wider support that has been provided for managers and staff.

2. DEVELOPING OUR FUTURE WAYS OF WORKING

The Council's Organisational Development team is supporting services with designing their new ways of working through the 'Right for Hackney, Right for You' initiative.

2.1. Vision: flexible, fair, and focused on the people we serve

We are all working for Hackney, and for most of our staff this means working in Hackney, on a regular basis.

We know that Hackney's staff, jobs and teams are all different, so working patterns will be decided at a local level, shaped by service needs, with managers empowered to work with teams to shape solutions. Our priority will always be our residents and the services they receive. Wherever we work, we will be professional, focused, open, accessible, and where appropriate, visible.

Hackney will ensure that our workplaces are places where our people want to spend time; purposeful, comfortable, safe, well-equipped places with space for learning, collaboration and quiet work. We will manage our spaces to make sure they provide value for money for the Council. We will focus on learning and nurturing talent, recognising that learning through working together is an important aspect of that.

2.2. Principles

This work is based on the following principles:

- We expect all our staff to spend regular time in Hackney, with their colleagues and with partners, and residents.

- We expect all our managers to set clear expectations about attendance in the workplace, based on the needs of our residents and our services, rather than personal preferences.

- Our work patterns will be guided by Ways of working personas which have been developed to support this - based on feedback from CLT and their services. These have been designed as guidelines not rules; with managers asked to plan according to the circumstances of individual teams, and fairly apply discretion for individual circumstances.

- The personas are a management tool NOT a communications vehicle - internal communications will be based around values/behaviours/expectations rather than personas.

- Leaders and managers must model the expectations that we have of staff.

- Where jobs require staff to be present in the workplace, such as frontline roles, their managers must also be present, visible, and accessible to both staff and residents.

- Managers and teams must prioritise learning and development of teams and individuals when making Future Working plans.

2.3. Next steps

Every Head of Service was asked to develop a Working for Hackney plan for their service and to implement these plans from the beginning of 2023.

Heads of Service can use the personas to shape their plan for each team but they should also bear in mind local factors such as team performance and relationships, and learning and development needs (These plan should be regularly reviewed with staff).

The OD team will be following up with heads of service to support them in developing their plans and helping to ensure consistency across the organisation.

Heads of Service have also been asked to identify any unmet needs so that these can be followed up by the accommodation team.

3. OFF-CAMPUS WORKSPACES

Many Council services continue to deliver their services from workspaces outside of the core campus. This includes field based staff, such as environmental operations staff, the parks service, and housing repairs operatives, and also the teams supporting those services. Our off-campus office locations include:

- Parking & Markets: Lower Clapton Road
- Environmental Operations: Millfields depot
- Housing Repairs DLO: Florfield Road depot
- Leisure, Parks & Green Spaces: Springfield House

Where sites such as those listed above are expected to remain in use for the longer term, we are working to deliver a comparable workspace environment to that we are delivering for our campus offices. This includes Google Meet equipment to enable staff to connect to online meetings from meeting rooms at those sites.

A key area of continued focus is network connectivity for smaller off-campus sites such as Parks offices. Following the cyberattack many of these sites have had to work with 4G network connections, which have not provided the performance or reliability that staff require. Network equipment at these sites has now been upgraded and work is in progress to replace older lower speed ADSL connections with modern, high speed fibre links (delivered through the providers working to deliver the Better Broadband programme). These are expected to be delivered in spring 2023.

4. CAMPUS WORKSPACES

4.1. Campus office arrangements

Since the easing of lockdown restrictions we have scaled up the workspace capacity in the Hackney Service Centre and Hackney Town Hall so that all directorates can accommodate their teams within the building, providing more than enough space for staff with office based roles to work an average of 2 days / week in the office. This is based on:

- Allocating each directorate a floor of the building (with Chief Exec's services based in Hackney Town Hall).

- Equipping more of our meeting rooms with video meeting facilities (providing Chromebox workstations for small meeting rooms and Google Meet video equipment for larger rooms).

- Reducing the number of offices reserved to directors so that we increase the space available for any member of staff to use for purposes such as confidential calls / joining online meetings.

- Designing one floor as a pilot for a new workspace design, including different furniture to create interactive co-working space (based on the new furniture approaches piloted in 2021).

- Providing locker facilities that staff will need, including work currently in progress to review arrangements for folding cycles (which have become increasingly popular for staff who travel into London by rail).

### 4.2. Office space allocation and occupancy

We expect to be able to accommodate most staff with office based roles in the Hackney Service Centre and Hackney Town Hall. This will enable further progress in delivering the Council's accommodation strategy, with the opportunity to explore alternative uses for office spaces in other buildings including the Annex (currently on lease to the Department for Work & Pensions, Christopher Addison House and office space in the Technology & Learning Centre. This is led by the Strategic Property Services team.

Space in the HSC and HTH has been allocated as follows:

- HSC, 1st floor: Climate, Homes & Economy
- HSC, 2nd floor: Adults, Health & Integration
- HSC, 3rd floor: Children's & Education
- HSC, 4th floor: Finance & Corporate Resources
- HTH: Chief Executive's directorate

(As noted above, a number of services continue to work in non-campus workspaces such as Clapton Road, Millfields depot and Florfield Road depot.)

There has been a notable increase in the number of staff using the Council's office workspaces as the lockdown restrictions were eased and then lifted. The graph below shows the numbers of staff recorded in the HSC since 1 April 2020.
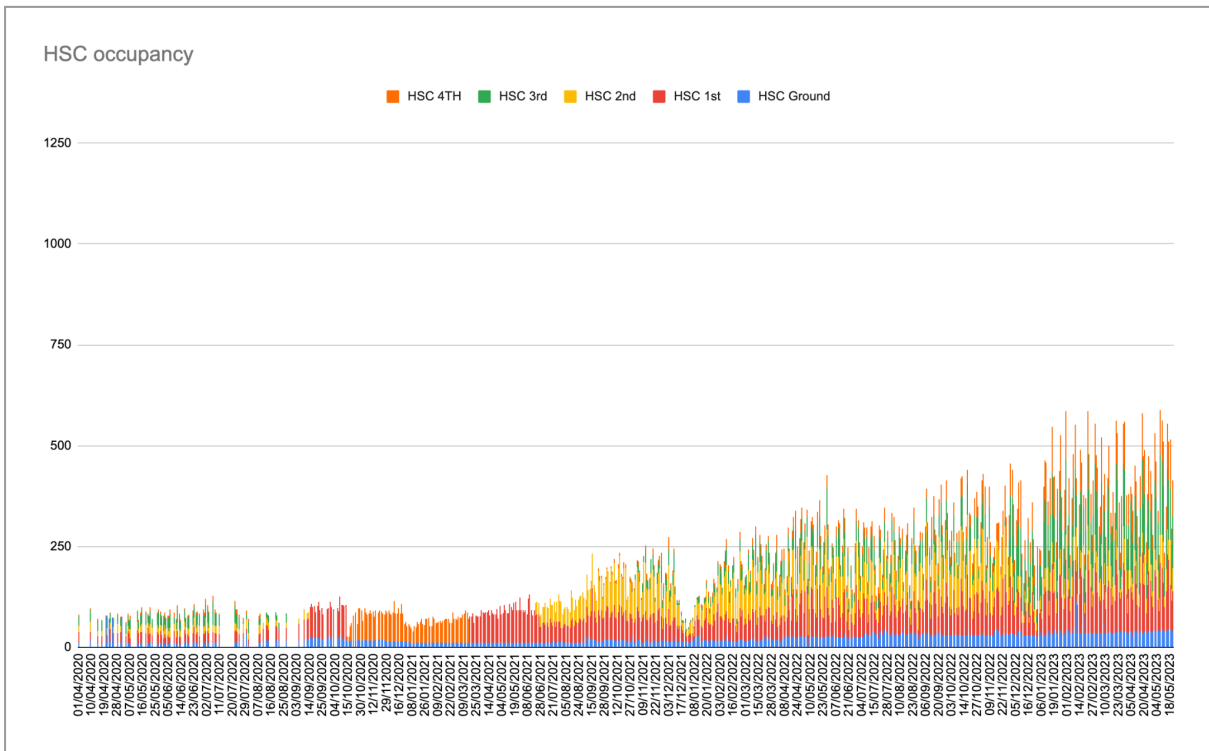
Number of staff counted in the HSC since 1 April 2020.

The current workstation capacity in the HSC is 1,273 desks. The occupancy data we are tracking each day shows that we continue to have significant headroom in terms of capacity and that our assumption that the HSC and HTH will provide sufficient campus office space remains valid.

4.3. Modernising our workspace environment

The workspace team has worked with the Children's & Education directorate as the pioneer directorate to shape our new workspace layout. This has taken place alongside work to bring all of the C&E directorate's services together on a shared floor of the Hackney Service Centre (with the Education teams moving into the HSC from the Technology & Learning Centre building).

The photos below show how the new workspace environment has been designed.
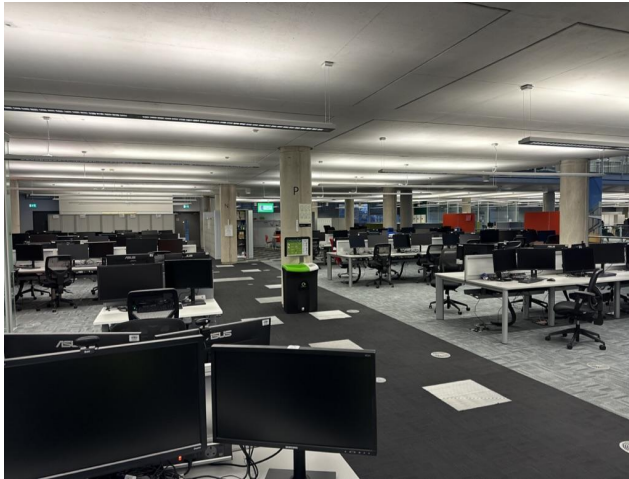
We have returned to the pre-pandemic workstation layouts, with dual screens on all desks and keyboards and mice provided at each desk.

Contact surfaces (including keyboards and mice) are part of the regular cleaning regime, and additional cleaning materials are available for staff to use as needed.

During the lockdown restrictions work took place to renew flooring in the HSC and update ventilation arrangements. Ventilation airflow is in line with Government guidance.
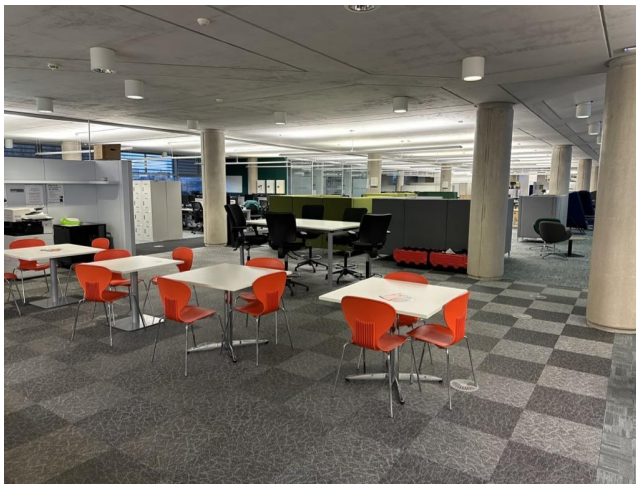

Breakout / eating areas remain available on each floor of the HSC (with similar provision in HTH).

We have reduced the barriers that were created by storage cabinets through rationalising stored papers / materials and relocating storage units to open up the workspace.
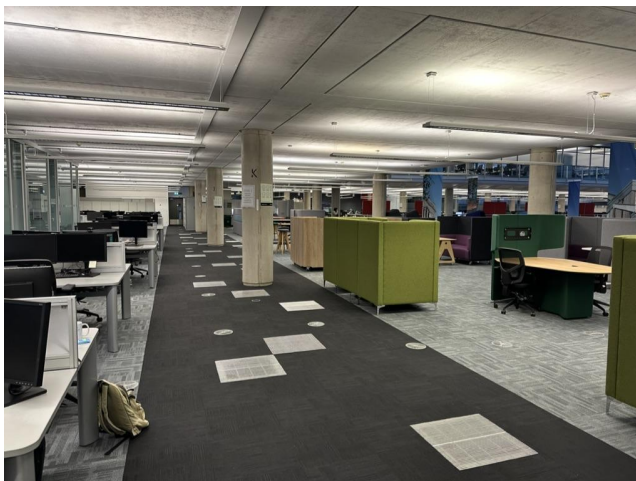
We have created additional collaborative workspace with a range of new types of furniture by reducing the amount of space allocated for traditional workstations.
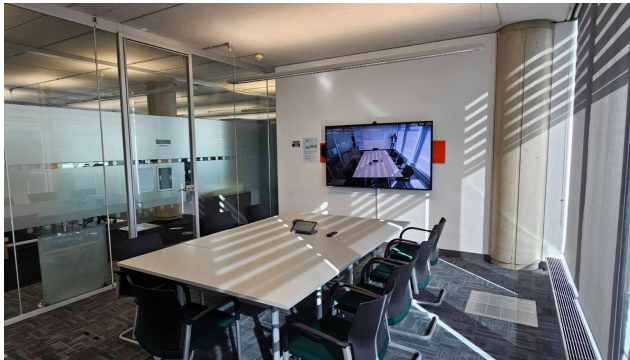
More meeting rooms have been made available by reducing the number of rooms reserved for Directors.

Smaller rooms are equipped with workstations that include webcams so that they can be used to join online meetings (eg where confidential discussion is not suitable for the open workspace).

More of our larger rooms have been equipped with Google Meet video meeting equipment.

The workspace team is working with each directorate to design the workspace layout that best fits their directorate's needs. Our approach includes flexibility to replace flexible working space with additional workstation space if additional desk capacity is needed.

5. WORKSPACE TECHNOLOGY

Alongside the work on our physical workspaces (campus and off-campus), we have also made significant investments in our workspace technology. This builds on our work prior to the pandemic (which included introducing the Google Workspace productivity tools that are used across the Council's services) and covers:

- Further improvements to wifi and network performance - including rolling out secure wired connections for fixed devices (printers, Google Meet kit and Chromeboxes).

  Overall network performance has continued to improve and we are continuing work to achieve a high standard of performance and reliability in all of the Council's workspaces.

  Network equipment at off-campus sites has been upgraded and work is in progress to replace older lower speed ADSL connections with modern, high speed fibre links (delivered through the providers working to deliver the Better Broadband programme). These are expected to be delivered in spring 2023.

- Roll out of devices to replace the equipment that was sent to support home based workers.

  This includes returning keyboards and mice to shared workstations. These are included in the regular cleaning arrangements, with additional cleaning equipment available for staff to use where needed and staff can still use the keyboards and mice that they have been provided individually if they have specific vulnerabilities / concerns about use of shared equipment.

- Refresh of end-of-life mobile phones and transition to a new SIM provider, which will deliver significant savings. Mobile devices are provided to staff whose work involves work outside of the office / home as staff can access Vonage from computers if they need to use the phone service from the office / home.

- Continued support for home based workers, with provision of Chromeboxes, monitors, keyboards and mice where required.

- Increased access to online meetings through webcams provided for each workstation and increasing the number of meeting rooms equipped with Google Meet kit (including off-campus offices).

- This is supported by the training offer for leading hybrid teams and the ICT advice, support and training we have made available. This includes online advice, webinars, bookable 1:1 sessions and 'team talks' to help teams design their new ways of working and build confidence in using our modern productivity tools.