Workplace Strategy

2021 to 2024

"To provide a high quality, modern, fit for purpose workplace for all staff that enables mobility, flexibility, productivity, and collaboration across the councils whilst supporting behavioural and cultural change to adopt new ways of working'

South Ribble Borough Council | **Chorley** Council

WORKING TOGETHER

Introduction

The purpose of the Workplace Strategy is to support the Councils to deliver change to effectively provide a working environment and a working model that is designed to best meet the needs of the organisations and our employees, makes the most out of available technology and assets as well as ensuring a positive organisational culture to ensure the Councils continue to provide high quality services to the residents of Chorley and South Ribble.

Our Workplace Strategy aims to create attractive and inspiring work environments to support new work styles including office/onsite, mobile, home and hybrid working, increase adaptability of space, increase business performance, and improve staff morale. We will be looking to maximise the benefits from our office accommodation assets through increasing space utilisation and consolidating facilities to utilise as commercial and regeneration opportunities.

This strategy, supported by the ICT, Joint Digital Strategy, Organisational Development and Transformation Strategy will help us to be fit for the future, and transform how both Chorley and South Ribble Councils operate, fulfilling our promise to modernise our Councils by transforming where and how we work in order to better serve our customers as well as improving the work and personal life balance of our employees.

Current ways of working

Smarter working principles have been adopted in recent years and continue to be developed further. These principles are the building blocks that were put in place to begin the transformation of how we work to be more efficient and flexible.

Smarter working principles include:

- Creating the right working environment, standardising offices
- Making sure employees have the right tools and technology to fulfil their role
- Employees encouraged and enabled to work in smarter and more efficient ways, seamlessly across locations
- Space based on activities rather than individuals and not based on seniority
- Information held centrally and electronically, digitising processes
- Reduced desk space
- The move towards paper light offices and streamlined digital processes.

The reasons for adopting smarter working principles include:

- Increasing flexibility for both employees and the organisations
- Create a more professional and standardised working environment
- Designed to improve health and wellbeing of employees
- To ensure technology is used to its fullest extent taking advantage of available progression in technology
- To enable staff to access information from any location
- To streamline and automate processes to improve how we deliver services to our customers
- To enable business continuity

Current ways of working statistics, including results from latest staff survey

99.9%
of computer-based staff at both Councils main working location within an office setting.
(pre COVID-19)

3 main office locations at Chorley Council

2 main office locations at South Ribble Borough Council

94%
Staff engaged and motivated at work

£236k
Net operational costs per annum for the Civic Centre, Leyland

£100k
Net operational costs per annum for the Union Street building

£85k
Annual income through lease of offices at Chorley Council

£63k
Annual income through lease of offices at South Ribble

88.5%
Staff feel they have influence over the way they work

91%
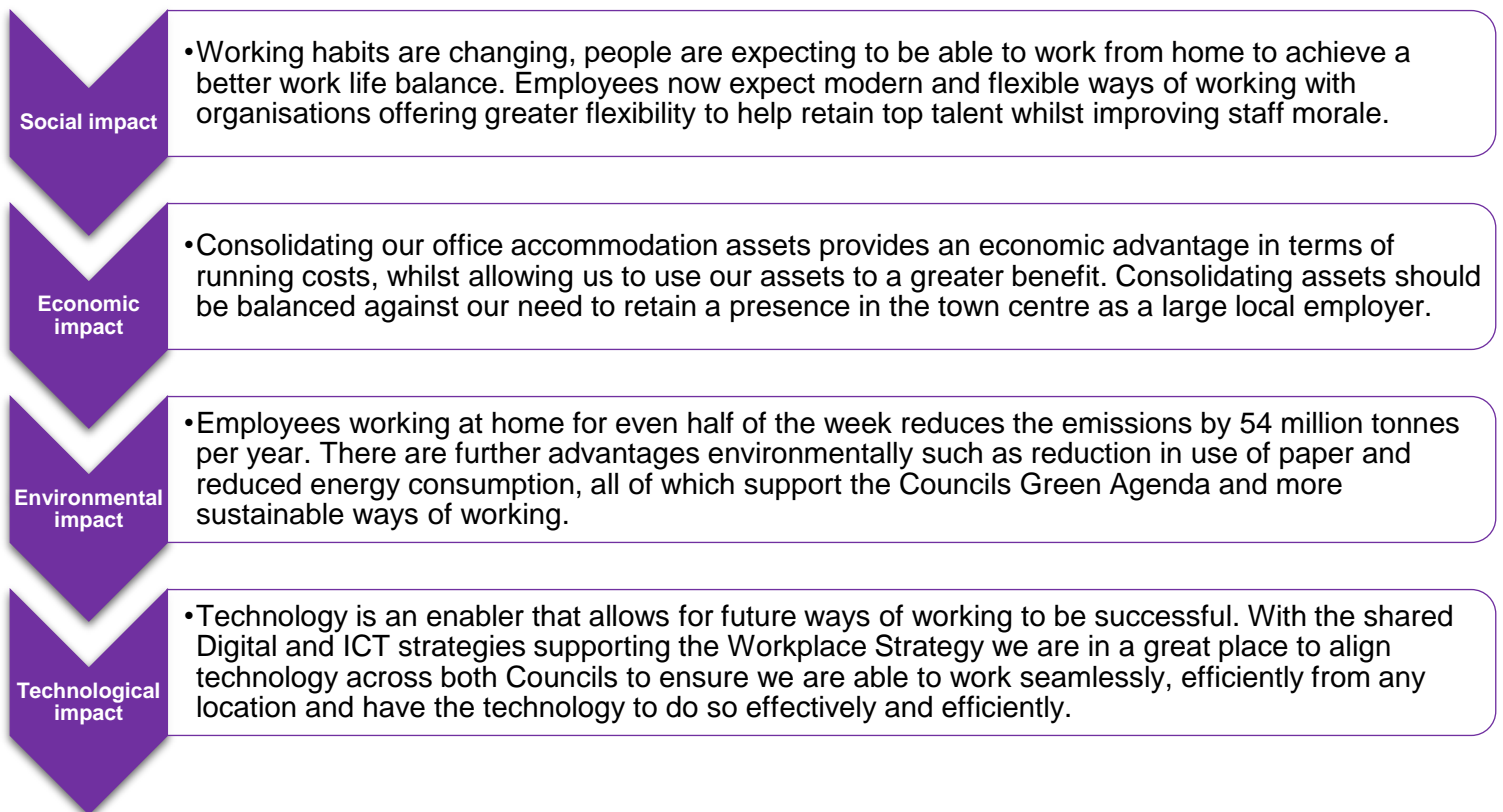Staff feel they have the correct tools and technology to efficiently fulfil their role

Future working - vision and models

The period of home working in response to COVID-19 restrictions has meant that we tested out the approach to home working and found it to be a success, with employees sustaining productivity and service delivery, as well as staff being able to reap the benefits that home and flexible working provides.

A pulse survey has been carried out to assess and understand employees' thoughts and feelings towards home working over the last 12 months.

- **93%** of employees state if there was the opportunity to work from home for some or all the time post COVID-19, this would be something they would consider
- **93%** of employees stated that their health and wellbeing whilst working from home was either fair, good or very good
- **89%** of employees stated their mental health whilst working from home was either fair, good or very good
- The main advantage of working from home was not having to commute at **58%**
- The main disadvantage from working from home was technology at **48%**, improving technology to support new working models forms part of the Workplace Strategy

The way we work is changing and has to change fast enough to keep pace with the current challenging climate. We need to review our current working spaces and workplace culture and define our requirements and needs over the next three years. There are multiple reasons for why a change in the way we work is the right thing to do both for the councils, for our people and for the residents we serve.

Social impact
- Working habits are changing, people are expecting to be able to work from home to achieve a better work life balance. Employees now expect modern and flexible ways of working with organisations offering greater flexibility to help retain top talent whilst improving staff morale.

Economic impact
- Consolidating our office accommodation assets provides an economic advantage in terms of running costs, whilst allowing us to use our assets to a greater benefit. Consolidating assets should be balanced against our need to retain a presence in the town centre as a large local employer.

Environmental impact
- Employees working at home for even half of the week reduces the emissions by 54 million tonnes per year. There are further advantages environmentally such as reduction in use of paper and reduced energy consumption, all of which support the Councils Green Agenda and more sustainable ways of working.

Technological impact
- Technology is an enabler that allows for future ways of working to be successful. With the shared Digital and ICT strategies supporting the Workplace Strategy we are in a great place to align technology across both Councils to ensure we are able to work seamlessly, efficiently from any location and have the technology to do so effectively and efficiently.
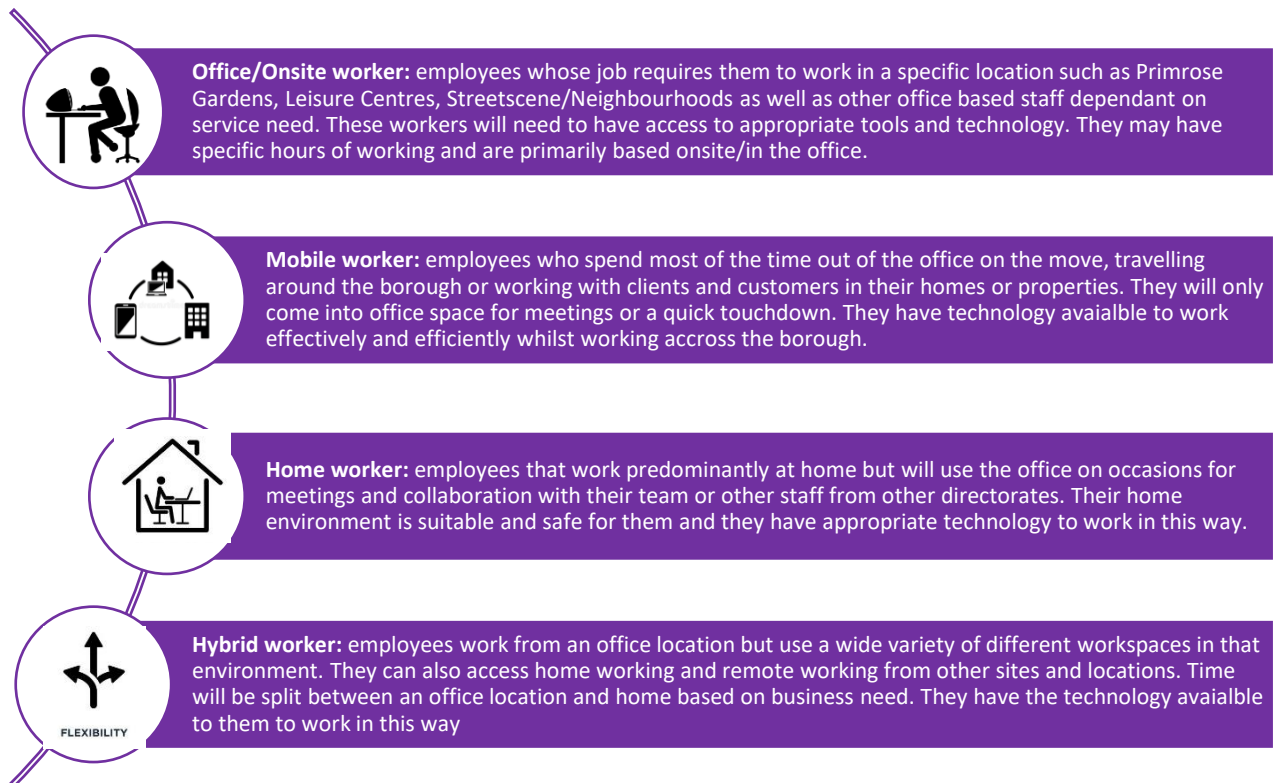
Work is now seen as a thing we do, rather than a place we go. We aim to empower employees, whenever and wherever they work. Enabling and encouraging our staff to enjoy their workspace wherever that may be. Change in the way we work will present opportunities for greater productivity, efficiency and improved morale and wellbeing of staff.

Our future working models will be based on the following principles and are supported by the Workplace Strategy:

- A quality, modern working environment that will support a range of working practices and encourage collaborative, integrated, and cross functional activity.

- 50% of our office-based workforce will be accommodated for at any one time within a more flexible and agile office setting, with home, mobile and hybrid working increased and encouraged based on business need.

- Staff will be available to work and respond in line with service need, whether they are working from the office or at home. This means answering the phone and responding to emails, attending meetings and appointments.

- Staff will maintain expected levels of individual performance, productivity and positive working relationships with their team, service and line manager.

- Staff will be enabled to work seamlessly with the right technology and standardised equipment.

- All services will have a minimum workplace presence on normal working days to be managed locally.

- Any variation to formal working patterns or arrangements (e.g. a non-working day, regular childcare or permanent home worker) would need to be requested in line with HR policies.

- SMT will be accountable for ensuring that working practices are effective and managers will be responsible for maintaining oversight of their teams and services.

- We will have four future working states to identify different types of staff, how they will work and the different support they may need.

- A mixture of different zones within the office environment; quiet zones, hotdesking (interactive and collaboration) zones, meeting zones and social zones, working with services to ensure all their needs are met, focusing on future working habits rather than previous or current working habits.

- Staff will be enabled to work seamlessly with the right technology and standardised equipment. as well as ensuring new modern offices have the technology to allow them to thrive.

- Ensure the environment for home workers is safe, suitable, and effective following the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations and the Health and Safety (Workplace) Regulations

- Further digitise and streamline processes that currently rely on office-based locations for them to be completed.

- Transformation of the way we deliver services to our customers, improving the customer experience and making use of technology to encourage self-service and less reliance on the more expensive channels.

- Policies to support the transformation of the way we work, such as the home working policy and flexible working policy which form part of the work life balance policy family.

- Organisational development to support all staff throughout the changes, embedding the new ways of working into the Councils culture whilst supporting managers in effective ways to manage their teams within the new work settings.

We have looked at the type of work that people do in the councils and have identified four working states of the future.

Office/Onsite worker: employees whose job requires them to work in a specific location such as Primrose Gardens, Leisure Centres, Streetscene/Neighbourhoods as well as other office based staff dependant on service need. These workers will need to have access to appropriate tools and technology. They may have specific hours of working and are primarily based onsite/in the office.

Mobile worker: employees who spend most of the time out of the office on the move, travelling around the borough or working with clients and customers in their homes or properties. They will only come into office space for meetings or a quick touchdown. They have technology avaialble to work effectively and efficiently whilst working accross the borough.

Home worker: employees that work predominantly at home but will use the office on occasions for meetings and collaboration with their team or other staff from other directorates. Their home environment is suitable and safe for them and they have appropriate technology to work in this way.

Hybrid worker: employees work from an office location but use a wide variety of different workspaces in that environment. They can also access home working and remote working from other sites and locations. Time will be split between an office location and home based on business need. They have the technology avaialble to them to work in this way

FLEXIBILITY

A day in the life of….

We anticipate that these employees will be able to work in the following types of way:

Peter works in the **Transformation and Partnerships** service and is a **hybrid worker**.

Peter lives a 45-minute commute from Chorley and South Ribble. Peter splits his time working in the office and working at home based on the need of his service and job role, making him a **hybrid worker**.

At home he has access to a Council laptop and headset as well as all the Council systems he requires including an iPad to access Council meeting agendas and minutes.

Peter usually works at home 2 days a week saving time with him not needing to commute, as well as this being more cost effective for him, doing this also reduces his carbon footprint. Peter feels like this makes him more productive and less stressed not having to worry about a drive to and from work, his mornings and end of days are much more relaxed for him, allowing him to focus better on his work.

Peter does also work in the office at either Chorley Town Hall or South Ribble Civic Centre, usually in a set pattern. Peter has flexibility around where he works in order to best carry out his role.

Peter books out space in the office as and when he requires. He does not have a set desk within the office he finds suitable space to allow him to work as he needs.

Peter communicates with his team and other colleagues across both Councils using Microsoft Teams but does attend face to face team catch ups every 2 weeks.

Brian works in the **ICT** service and is a **hybrid worker**.

Brian splits his working week between both Chorley and South Ribble offices and at home. Cover is always required in the offices to support hardware issues and other tasks that cannot be done at home.

At home Brian is still able to support staff with ICT issues through Microsoft Teams and remote assistance in the same way he would if he were in the office. He is also able to carry out system upgrades and software installations from home as this is all carried out on a virtual system so there is no need to be in the office to do this. Brian prefers working at home when he needs to concentrate and focus on a piece of work without distraction. He finds it more beneficial to do this when working from home as there is more distraction for him when working in the office.

Brian can attend team meetings from wherever he is; at home, at South Ribble or at Chorley using Microsoft Teams and virtual meetings rooms. This saves Brian and the rest of the ICT team time not having to travel between locations for meetings. The team does however meet every 2 weeks for an in-person team catch up.

Within the office the ICT team have their own office space separate from other services as the nature of their work is often confidential and needs to be a secure space. They do not all have a set desk as they are not often all in the office at the same time, they do however have set workstations for certain tasks. Brian has a locker for personal belongings as well as work equipment, as well as storage facilities for the whole service, specifically hardware.

When in the office Brian uses the social zone during his breaks, he enjoys this time as he can catch up with colleagues across the council, it is a good vibe and a hub at lunch time

Steve works in the **Neighbourhood Services** team as a team leader. He is a mix between **hybrid** and a **mobile worker**

Steve has young children under the age of 3. Being able to log in from home early for an hour before the children wake up is a benefit to Steve. He can plan his day and complete admin tasks at home, clocking out to sort the children out and get them off to nursery before then going into the office, making Steve a **hybrid worker.**

Steve works in the office once the kids are at nursery where he completes admin tasks, however his role requires him to do site visits throughout the day. The way Steve works makes him both a **hybrid** and a **mobile worker**. He uses the office during the day as his base in between his sites visits.

The processes Steve follows are mainly paper free. He has access to a council smartphone to allow him to receive his jobs, respond to emails as well as accessing Microsoft Teams to communicate with his team wherever he is. He does occasionally need to print paper plans which he is able to do when he is in the office.

The flexibility Steve has, mainly being able to log in to work in the morning from home helps him manage his workload and improves his work life balance.

Other colleagues within ground maintenance teams are slightly different to Steve, their roles are always based out and about within the borough working on site and do have set hours. This makes them a mix between **mobile** and **onsite workers.**

Francesca works in the **Commercial Services** team between **Primrose Gardens** and **Cotswold Supported Housing** with **Tatton Gardens** due to go live in March 2022.

Francesca is an **office/onsite worker** due to the nature of her role which is providing a front facing service meaning she in unable to carry out duties at home.

Francesca works in the office everyday with her main base being at Primrose Gardens, however she does sometimes work at other sites when cover is required.

Francesca has a set desk where she works daily at Primrose Gardens, however when at other sites she uses hotdesking free space that is availble to use whilst she is providing office cover.

She works core hours Monday to Friday 9am till 5pm, however does sometimes stay later and start earlier if needed and does also attend out of hours if there is an urgent need.

Francesca has dual screens in the office and uses Microsoft Teams to communicate with other colleagues as well as having access to a council mobile phone. Microsoft Teams is very useful for Francesca and the team as it means they can hold meetings virtually without having to travel to different sites to meet in person. This saves time and is much more efficient for them, whilst also allowing all members of the team to attend as nobody needs to stay on site for office cover.

Francesca also attends staff matters virtually meaning less time is spent travelling from Primrose Gardens to the Town Hall whilst still being able to provide input into the meeting.

Francesca accesses the information and data she needs online as all processes are digitised making access to information easy from a centralised place for the whole team.

Eileen works in the **Customer Services** team in the front office and in the contact centre.

Eileen is a **hybrid** worker. She works from the office on her assigned days which is based on a rota, on these days she sees customers face to face. Customers are occasionally seen in private areas to help maintain customer privacy.

Eileen and her colleagues also support members of the public to self-serve when in the office using the digital access points available for the quicker tasks that can be completed online, educating customers how to self-serve. This allows the team to spend more time on the more complex and vulnerable residents' cases.

On the days that Eileen is assigned to be within the contact centre, on the phones, Eileen takes this opportunity to work from home as there is no need for her to be in the office to fulfil her role on these days. When at home, Eileen uses a council laptop to access all the systems she needs.

Eileen has dual screens at home also which helps with efficiency, due to the nature of the role and all the different systems Eileen requires at once, dual screens really help but maybe not essential for everybody, however Eileen does know that not all members of the team have space at home for dual screens.

Eileen communicates with customers through emails, the website or over the phone, using the contact centre online solution, she can communicate effectively with customers wherever she is. The team have a Microsoft Teams chat group so everybody can keep in touch throughout the day and share information wherever they are to support each other which is a really important tool for the team.

Shannon works in the **Strategic Housing** team and is a **home worker** due to personal health needs.

Shannon has had a neurological spinal disability since she was 16 which affects her health, with her often needing to previously take time off work sick for long periods.

Working from home massively helps and reduces Shannon's absences. She finds it much better for her health working from home, she feels better mentally and physically and finds she can manage her day better which has a positive impact on her work and productivity.

Shannon often struggles with the morning routine, getting up and into the office for 8am due to her disability. Working at home helps as she can be flexible on the more difficult days, logging into work later and working later to ensure she fulfils her hours and completes everything she needs to do. Home comforts also help throughout the day as she has everything she needs at home.

Working from home has not only improved Shannon's health and wellbeing it also has had a positive impact on the whole family with the whole family life improved.

Previously Shannon did work in the office, however due to her disability she was based on the ground floor as she is unable to manage the stairs and the lift was often broken, so for safety she based herself on the ground floor. This was a separate space to colleagues in her team, with Shannon often feeling isolated. Working from home separate from her colleagues is no different, she communicates with her team in the same way, using Microsoft Teams, however at home she doesn't feel isolated as she is working in a space, she is comfortable with.

Additional personas for other services can be seen at Appendix One

How we will deliver the vision

Our future working vision and model should not only focus on the redevelopment and modernisation of office buildings; our people, processes and technology also need to be considered. Therefore, there are four key elements to the strategy and our future working model, each having their own individual objectives, projects and programme of work that together form the Workplace Strategy and support the Councils to adapt to new ways of working and to create an office environment and working practices for the future whilst supporting staff along the way.
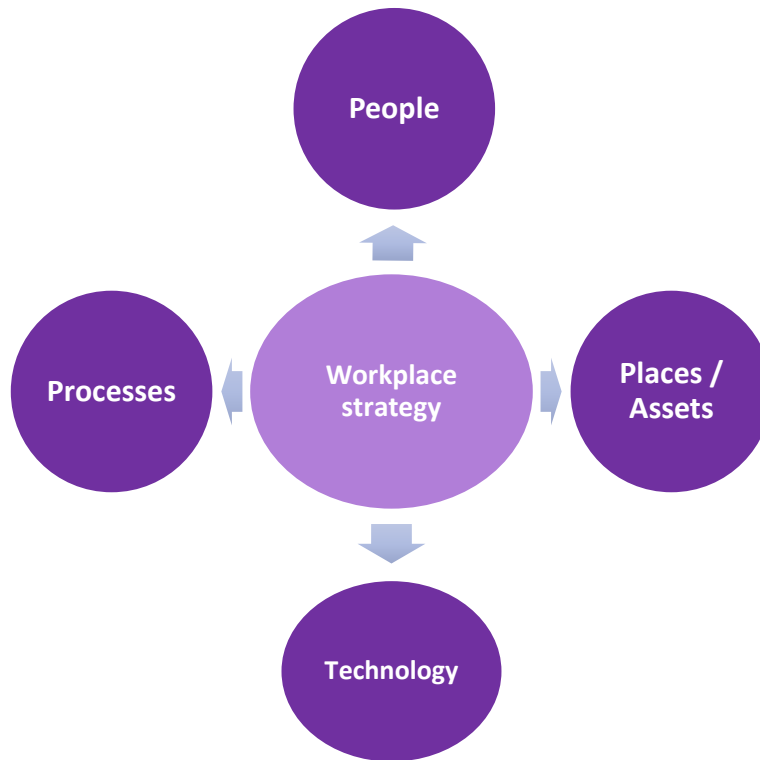
People

Objectives and projects to support the workforce through transformation of the way we work. Linked to behavioural and cultural change to support staff as well as policies to support new working models.

- Encourage senior leaders to lead by example and fully utilise new spaces and adopt new working practices.
- Work with staff to shape working environments and models, support managers and staff through the change and ensure benefits are documented and realised to aid cultural change. Establish change and engagement champions to explain and reinforce new behaviours and attitudes and utilise organisational development initiatives to do so.
- Improve job satisfaction and work/personal life balance by providing greater flexibility for our employees and ensure the models meet the workforces needs.
- Ensure working environments at home are safe and suitable for employees to work.
- Consult and engage with customers to help improve the customer experience and increase of self-service with Digital Champion staff supporting customers to self-serve, educating them on digital skills.

Place/Assets

Objectives and projects to ensure that our assets are suitable and meet the needs of our workforce and future working models.

- Develop working environments that promote and facilitate a collaborative culture, encourage integrated and cross functional activity and provide a consistent level of quality of workspaces.
- Develop the Town Hall into the main council working location at Chorley, with the creation of different working zones and a quality, modern, well designed space fit for the future.
- Review spaces within the Civic Centre, ensuring quality, modern, well designed space fit for the future
- Develop commercial and redevelopment opportunities through consolidation of Council office accommodation assets and reduce operating costs and increase income generation opportunities including The Lancastrian.
- Relocation of and transformation of customer services delivery at Chorley Council
- Collaborate with partners and local stakeholders to develop our spaces and other local environs into office space, meeting, and conferencing space both for council and other stakeholder use.
- Ensure remote locations within the borough are set up for staff to work if required, such as community centres etc.
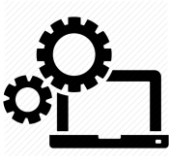
Technology

We will need to ensure that technology is in place and fit for purpose to allow for new working models to thrive as well as ensuring staff have the correct technology to do their jobs whenever and wherever they are.

- Digitise and streamline additional services such as archiving, scanning, mail, and printing.
- Ensure meeting and conferencing space to have the technology to enable them to be utilised to their full potential and explore monitoring tools such as online booking, space utilisation and attendance recording.
- Ensure all employees have the technology and tools required to efficiently carry out their role without relying on a set location, enabling them to work anywhere with no reduction in productivity or service delivery.
- Develop self-service in the customer services area, improving the customer journey and reducing the reliance on face to face and telephone contact, increasing automation so we can focus more on the more complex cases and vulnerable residents.
- Refresh of information security framework to reflect new ways of working.
- Training for staff on technology to support and benefit home working

Processes

New working processes to allow staff more flexibility on where and when they work for an improved work life balance.

- Development of policies and principles to support the workplace changes and the Workplace Strategy
- Embed as part of the Council DNA new working models and work as a thing we do rather than a place we go.
- Further processes to be adopted to assist with the successful transformation of working models.
- Review processes both internally, such as managing working patterns, office capacity and automating processes, and externally such as the way front facing services are delivered.
- Ensure we embed and monitor workplace behaviours such as adhering to clear desk policies and reporting health and safety issues
- Work more sustainably, responsibly and reduce our carbon footprint supporting the Councils Green Agenda

Delivery and implementation

Each Council will have their own separate implementation programme that reflects the position of each organisation and progresses activity to deliver the future way of working vision by 2024. The objectives of each element of the Workplace Strategy will be met by the delivery of the projects as shown in in Appendix 2.

Appendix 2 shows a proposed programme of works for Chorley and South Ribble Councils as well as shared projects for both Councils.

Outcomes and monitoring

It will be important to monitor the progress of the Workplace Strategy to ensure that both councils are meeting the objectives and outcomes that we want to achieve from this strategy.

We will implement regular monitoring of outcomes and benefit realisation sessions to ensure that the future working models are meeting expectations, as well as ensuring the way of working is having a positive impact on the organisations, services and employees whilst maintaining the delivery of quality services to our residents.

Monitoring and evaluation measures will be developed for each council based on their individual programme of work.

Quarterly reports will be fed into the reporting processes for each council, which will provide an opportunity to recognise progress made, highlight key issues or risks, and ensure that both councils are on track for an aligned approach.

Outcome	Evaluation Monitoring
Enhanced employee and organisation productivity	Performance Management Data
Improved employee satisfaction, motivation morale and loyalty	Staff survey
Improved health and wellbeing of the workforce	Staff survey
Improved talent acquisition and retention	HR processes and data
Improved staff perception of the working environment within the office setting	Staff survey
Increase in staff feeling they have an influence on the way they work	Staff survey
Increase in staff feeling they have the correct tools and technology to fulfil their role	Staff survey
Reduction in the percentage of the workforce working within an office setting	Analysis of data from booking and attendance technology
Increase in staff working at home and in a more hybrid way	Staff survey Analysis of data from booking and attendance technology
Increase income stream from utilisation of assets for commercial purposes	Analysis of income stream from lease or redevelopment of office space
Reduced travel and commuting to work to reduce carbon footprint in support of the Green Agenda	Staff survey Data on travel and commute into an office environment
Further technological advances implemented to support new ways of working and modern office environment	Analysis of technological advances implemented and their benefits
Further digitsation and streamlining of processes and automation	Analysis of technological advances implemented and their benefits
More efficient, effective, and improved customer experience for front facing and customer service delivery	Customer Service performance monitoring Customer satisfaction survey