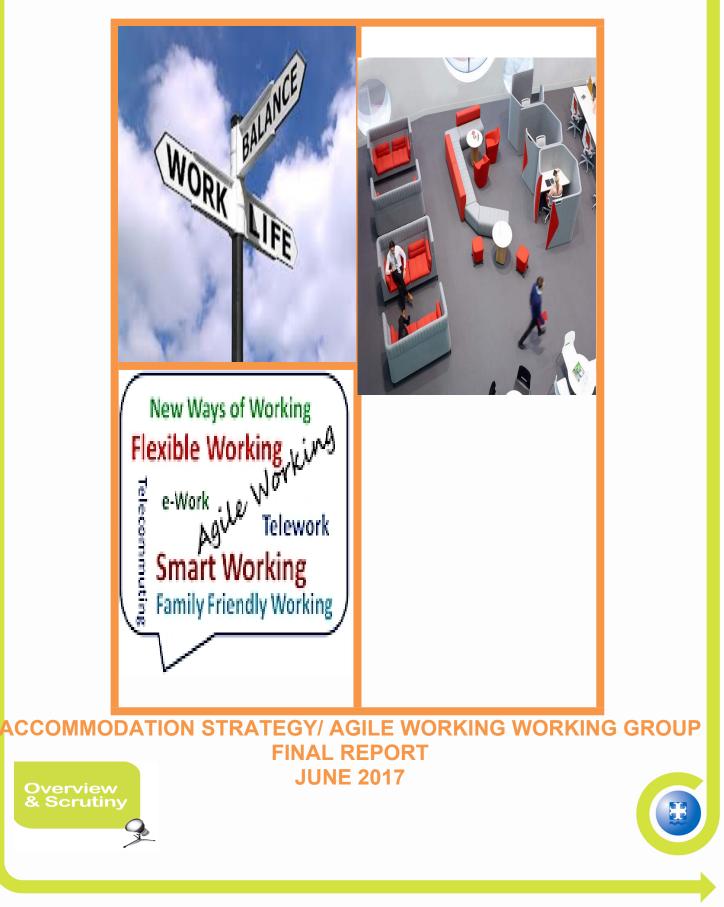
Sefton Council 불

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (REGULATORY, COMPLIANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES)



Overview & Scrutiny

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CONTENTS PAGE

Paragraph and Title			Page No.	
	Lead	Member's Introduction		
1.	Backę	ground	3	
2.	Term	s of Reference and Objectives	4	
3.	Metho	ods of Enquiry	4	
4.	Key Witnesses 4			
	4.1	Stephen O'Brien, ICT Partnership Manager regarding the ICT technical limitations of agile working	5	
	4.2	Paul Cunningham, Human Resources Manager regarding how the flexi-time system would operate in an agile working	6	
	4.3	environment Roy Williams, Chief Executive, One Vision Housing on agile working arrangements in place within his organisation	7	
5.	Site v	isit to Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council	9	
6.	Site V	/isit to Merton House	11	
7.	Justifi	ication	12	
8.	Reco	Recommendations		
9.	Docu	Documentation Considered By The Working Group 1		
10.	Ackno	owledgements and Membership Details	17	

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LEAD MEMBER'S INTRODUCTION

I am very pleased to introduce this Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) Accommodation Strategy/Agile Working Working Group report; the main purpose of which is to agree and confirm the approach to the delivery of the Council's Accommodation Strategy for the period 2016/17 to 2020

The Working Group adhered to its established terms of reference and objectives (see paragraph 2 below) in interviewing witnesses and its drafting of recommendations.

I wish to thank all those people who gave up their valuable time to be interviewed by the Working Group. The input and expertise of interviewees greatly helped the Working Group in the formulation of its recommendations and I am grateful to my fellow cross-party Working Group Members for their commitment and their ideas and contributions. Finally, I am extremely grateful to Paul Fraser for his efforts in servicing the Working Group.



Councillor Michael Pitt, Lead Member, Accommodation Strategy/Agile Working Working Group

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 At its meeting held on 21 June 2016 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services) approved the establishment of a Working Group to review the topic of Accommodation Strategy/Agile Working.

The Council is currently developing its Accommodation Strategy in order to make the most efficient use of the property and financial resources that are available to it and to ensure that staff worked in the most effective way possible in order to meet the organisation's objectives.

A key component of this strategy will be to review not only the accommodation proposals, but also the manner by which staff and Members go about their daily business. This will include the Council's approach to location, office layout and the use of technology. This approach is commonly referred to as 'Agile working'

1.2 Councillors Booth, Byrom, Grace, Jamieson, Pitt and Robinson were appointed to serve on the Working Group.

1.3	At the first meeting of the Working Group Councillor Pitt was appointed Lead	
	Member. Details of Working Group meetings are set out below:-	

Date	Activity
12.09.16	Scoping Document approved
	Consideration of documentation explaining the principles of agile working
27.09.16	Interview Key Witnesses – Stephen O'Brien, ICT Partnership Manager
	regarding the ICT technical limitations of agile working
	Interview Key Witness – Paul Cunningham, Human Resources Manager
	regarding how the flexi-time system would operate in an agile working
	environment
	Consideration of documentation regarding agile working
25.10.16	Consideration of documentation regarding agile working
08.11.16	Site visit to Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council to obtain information about
	the recently introduced agile working arrangements in the local authority
29.11.16	Interview Key Witness – Roy Williams, Chief Executive, One Vision Housing on
	agile working arrangements in place within his organisation
21.12.16	Site Visit to Merton House to discuss the pilot project for agile working in
	Sefton's Health and Social Care Service
10.02.17	Meeting to "sign-off" Final Report and recommendations

2.0 TERMS OF REFERENCE AND OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 The Terms of Reference and Objectives of the Working Group were approved as part of the scoping exercise at the first meeting and are set out below.
- 2.2 Terms of Reference and Objectives
 - 2.2.1 To agree and confirm the approach to the delivery of the Council's Accommodation Strategy for the period 2016/17 to 2020;
 - 2.2.2 To investigate and confirm the principles in relation to 'Agile working' that should be adopted to support the delivery of the Accommodation Strategy;
 - 2.2.3 To confirm the key deliverables that should be considered from adopting an agile working strategy including staff and Member engagement and training; and
 - 2.2.4 To evaluate the resource impact of the proposals made.

3.0 METHODS OF ENQUIRY

- 3.1 Evaluation of current Accommodation Strategy;
- 3.2 Benchmark key metrics from the current strategy with best practice in other local authorities e.g. Wigan/Oldham/Halton/Merseycare;
- 3.3 Understand how 'agile working' has been applied successfully in other local authorities and partner organisations and how the key outputs from that could be applied to the Council; and
- 3.4 Liaise with technology providers, both associated to the Council and external, on the key opportunities that are available to support 'agile working'

4.0 KEY WITNESSES

Members of the Working Group gathered evidence through various methods, including presentations, briefings and receiving reports. Evidence was also obtained when Members had the opportunity to interview key witnesses, various Officers and Partners.

Paragraphs 4.1 to 4.3 provide a summary of the points raised in presentations/discussions held with key witnesses who had been invited to attend Working Group meetings.

4.1 ICT TECHNICAL LIMITATIONS OF AGILE WORKING

Members raised the following issues with Stephen O'Brien, ICT Partnership Manager:-

- 4.1.1 There needs to be an ability for staff to hot desk and use break out areas rather than compartmentalised work spaces. To what extent can Sefton's ICT accommodate this to allow for agile working? Response Information was provided on the progress being made in this area with regard to:-
 - the roll out of corporate WiFi in Sefton's public buildings;
 - access to the corporate network via the virtual private network (VPN)
 - work undertaken on the Public Sector Reform 6 project and the use of Unified Communications which will provide audio, video and instant messaging communication services to Council staff, allowing them to work in a truly agile fashion
- 4.1.2 Is there still a culture whereby staff would want to have both desktop and laptop equipment? Response – information was provided on potential arrangements to allow officers access to all of their Council systems and files at home, on the train and work etc.
- 4.1.3 Can you update us on the integration of ICT systems in Council buildings?
 Response key Council buildings are currently being fitted out with public, guest and corporate WiFi. 300 VPN licences have been purchased to rollout to key officers and this will improve connectivity to Council systems for those officers working offsite.
- 4.1.4 Agile working means staff would spend more time off-site. Have we secure access to protect confidential information?
 Response Yes we have appropriate security measures in place to protect the Council network in relation to remote access.
- 4.1.5 Why does it appear that Sefton has security concerns regarding WiFi when other organisations' systems do not? Response – The Council has chosen to place extra security upon its corporate WiFi access, in terms of good practice and the security measures we have to meet due to the government's Public Services Network (PSN) criteria.
- 4.1.6 In response to a question regarding access to Council ICT systems Stephen O'Brien agreed to provide a briefing note on how the corporate wifi system operates.

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- 4.1.7 The Lead Member indicated that his device would log in automatically when he visited other academic establishments and asked would Sefton reach a similar position? Response – Information was provided on the VPN requirement to access files and systems.
- 4.1.8 Could a VPN licence be used on more than one device? Response no, a separate licence would be required for each device
- 4.1.9 What was the cost and the timescale of the investment needed to implement the new system?
 Response Stephen O'Brien circulated a briefing note regarding the various options as to how IT could support the Council's Agile Working and Accommodation rationalisation aspirations.
- 4.1.10 What was the life cycle of kit? Response – the industry standard for the replacement of kit was 4 years.
- 4.1.11 What was the skill set of staff using the new technology? Response – staff would always be offered in-house training.
- 4.1.12 Could staff use their own domestic ICT kit? Response – yes in theory but there are restrictions imposed by the Cabinet Office relating to PSN. Staff could however currently access the Council's systems via the portal.
- 4.1.13 We need a seamless transition for staff and for this to happen we need simplicity and high end kit for staff.
 Response Information was provided on Sefton's long term model relating to:-
 - The number of Council officers who were classed as IT users
 - Work underway to identify the percentage of Council officers who would be based at home, based at the office or working agile

4.2 FLEXI-TIME SYSTEM OPERATION IN AN AGILE WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Members raised the following issues with Paul Cunningham, Human Resources Manager:-

4.2.1 How would HR respond to the shift away from core office hours for staff to working at home?
 Response – the current flexi system had been in place since 2003 following reconfiguration by the NJC and that the flexi time band widths were coterminous with building opening/closing times; most

office based Council staff were on the flexi system and their attendance at work was simply measured by clocking in/off times; home working could be measured by PC logging in/off times.

- 4.2.2 Regarding clocking in/off are we ready to move from input to output measurement?
 Response This would depend on the category of staff and their suitability for agile working.
- 4.2.3 Is agile working doable in the long term? Response yes because case studies had shown it could work.
- 4.2.4 Is there any information available to show employee satisfaction in agile working environments? Response – the best measures to use were both customer and employee satisfaction and both had increased in agile working environments. A Member gave an example of the positive benefits that he was aware of following the introduction of agile working in the Home Office.
- 4.2.5 With the advent of the Metro Mayor more work would be shared by Greater Merseyside local authorities who were leading on specific areas of work. Was there justification for staff from differing local authorities working from a base in another authority? Response such a situation exists between Halton and St. Helens; and Knowsley MBC were currently investigating corporate working across the Liverpool City region.
- 4.2.6 From a HR perspective, if we asked staff to work from home this would incur additional energy bills/costs. Would additional payments for such increased costs affect the employees' tax liability? Response Specific advice on this would need to be offered; and the Council already has a Homeworking Policy in place.

4.3 AGILE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS IN ONE VISION HOUSING

Roy Williams, Chief Executive of One Vision Housing provided extensive background information on the operation of his organisation and Members raised the following issues with Mr. Williams:-

4.3.1 Our primary focus is on agile working – have you any experience of this in your organisation? Response – we are increasingly utilising agile working. It doesn't really matter what times of the day staff work as long as they are productive and providing value for money services to keep our customers happy. The majority of employees are on flexible working hours; but some staff, for example our Rent Arrears Pursuance Team, can work much later which is more



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convenient to visit tenants in the evenings when tenants are home from work.

- 4.3.2 Could we provide what we do more efficiently without the use of traditional workspaces? Response Yes absolutely. OVH takes 200,000 calls per annum and we could introduce home working for this sector but there would be some set up costs. Our surveyors go straight to site rather than checking in at the office first. Working 9 to 5 may not be the most appropriate time to work for both customers and surveyors. We don't monitor surveyors' work we expect the job to get done to the satisfaction of customers and performance targets. Surveyors can work much more flexibly.
- 4.3.3 Have you any agile working pilot schemes in the pipeline? Response – Yes, the Rent Arrears Pursuance Team and the Service Centre staff can operate in this way with the agreement of line managers. We need to ensure that our staff are working productively and achieving set outcomes.
- 4.3.4 Is there any evidence that unrealistic targets are set? Response No, we try to put in place sensible targets that meet the needs of both customers and staff. Staff are allowed to plan their day around the needs of customers to ensure that appointments are kept which negates wasted visits to customers' homes and has a knock on effect of reducing the overall mileage claims.
- 4.3.5 Did you experience any teething problems with staff adapting to the new system? Response Yes. Some staff still liked the idea of clocking on and off and there was a cultural shift required but most staff are increasingly more comfortable with the new regime. There is less stress at work because the more flexible working arrangement allows staff to plan their work schedules around their own and customers' needs. We also have three Latvian employees based in their home country who manage the OVH ICT systems.
- 4.3.6 Did Human Resources lead with getting employees on board with the new working arrangements? Response - Yes. This took about 6 -12 months and we initially had a pilot scheme in operation. There was some resistance to the new arrangements from various managers concerning letting staff manage their own workloads but the view was taken that so long as staff completed their activities and met targets they should be free to manage their caseloads. We purchased a contracting organisation and their management culture was not as supportive as OVH's. We therefore engaged with the contractor to improve this situation because the aim was to have staff coming to work with a positive attitude.

In 5 years' time it may not be cost effective to run our buildings in the way that we did so changes needed to be made.

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We also encourage our customers to engage with us by means other than telephone. We have to use new technology but we must ensure that our customers are happy with this development. We have lots of young tenants who don't like to use email and would rather use snapchat or other social media to make contact with us. Technology is fundamental to better agile working.

- 4.3.7 A more dispersed workforce can lead to a loss of camaraderie and a loss of workplace based knowledge; staff needed to feel part of an organisation by keeping in touch. Response – we use video conferencing facilities and have staff meetings to discuss critical issues, but meetings should always have a sense of purpose and outcomes.
- 4.3.8 Sometimes it is difficult to work remotely and there is a need to find the right level or balance. Response Yes I agree and we need to come together frequently to catch up. The challenge is to build a sense of relationship and belonging and this can be achieved by meeting up periodically and celebrating our successes.
- 4.3.9 Efficiency is the key measure. As we disperse there is not enough space for all staff to come together. We need to move along with technological and social media times. Response We do bring teams together periodically to discuss business critical issues and to let staff know that their input is valuable for the success of the organisation.

5 SITE VISIT TO WIGAN METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

5.1 Councillors Pitt and Robinson on behalf of the Working Group undertook a site visit to Wigan MBC Town Hall, Library Street, Wigan, to find out information about the recently introduced agile working arrangements introduced in the Town Hall.

Councillors Pitt and Robinson met with Councillor Terry Halliwell, Portfolio Holder - Service Transformation (and the Lead Member on the Project Board that was responsible for the implementation of the agile working arrangements), Heather Coombs, Facilities and Statutory Compliance Manager and Jane Fisher, Facilities Officer.

- 5.2 The following set out the points raised by colleagues from Wigan together with responses to questions raised by Working Group Members:-
 - 5.2.1 The introduction of agile working was triggered by Central Government cuts to the local authority's budget in 2010; a Project Board was established in 2011/12 to drive the proposal forward and physical refurbishment works were completed in 2014; the refurbishment work was undertaken on a floor by floor basis to

enable the majority of staff to remain in the building whilst the building works were undertaken; and the work removed the use of all small, inefficient office space and resulted in the creation of large open plan working areas

- 5.2.2 Once completed the proposal resulted in additional staff relocating to the Town Hall (500 staff now work in the building); there were 8 desks for every 10 members of staff (and the proposal was to reduce this ratio further to 7:10); and no staff, including the Chief Executive, had their own office. Regarding elected Members, the Leader of the Council had his own office, all Cabinet Members shared an office and all other Members, irrespective of political party, shared an office
- 5.2.3 To achieve the successful implementation of agile working, lots of paperwork was eradicated and the concept of the paperless office was introduced; this led to a reduction in the amount of storage space required; and all staff were provided with their own small, individual locker to store what papers they required for their work and personal belongings
- 5.2.4 Elected Members were also subject to the paperless office principle and were provided with ipads to achieve this. This had a resultant reduction in agenda printing costs
- 5.2.5 This was total change management and it was acknowledged that some staff would be territorial about their own space and may resist change; to ensure good staff "buy-in" extensive consultation was undertaken with staff and trades unions; and enthusiastic staff who embraced the change were appointed as "champions" to promote the new arrangements with colleagues
- 5.2.6 Many staff worked out in the community. Under the old system they would have to return to the office to log on and complete their work. Under the new system, investment was made that enabled staff to complete their work at home. This also had the effect of freeing up desk space in the Town Hall
- 5.2.7 Human Resources were heavily involved in the change process. The staff working day was changed to 7.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m.; the core hours of staff were reduced to four hours per day to improve flexible working arrangements; and more staff were allowed to work from home. An incentive scheme was also introduced whereby staff who had not been off ill were entered into a quarterly draw and could win cash prizes. The Council could still measure staff output and the new flexible working approach had created greater loyalty from staff due to the improved work-life balance; and importantly there had been no adverse impact on service provision



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- 5.2.8 IT was a crucial component in the change process. Staff could now log on anywhere and full training was given to enable colleagues to master the new technological changes. Furthermore, staff had been advised of the forthcoming changes well in advance and HR led staff through the process. As a transformational tool, a model office was established prior to the refurbishment being completed; and staff were allowed and encouraged to use this office to find out how the new system would work
- 5.2.9 Phase 2 of the process would see the desk to staff ratio for social workers reduce to 5:10. Heather Coombs agreed to provide Sefton with information on which work areas had what desk to staff ratios
- 5.2.10 Staff were allowed to have personal items on desks but they all had to be removed at the end of the day and placed in the provided lockers. Any personal items left on desks were removed at the end of each day by the cleaning staff
- 5.2.11 Staff car parking was an issue that was created by more colleagues moving into the Town Hall
- 5.2.12 In response to a suggestion that the 8:10 desk ratio was not adventurous enough it was indicated that the Council did not want to be too extreme at the start of the process; and as indicated above, this was a starting point and Phase 2 of the project aimed to reduce the desk to staff ratio
- 5.2.13 Furniture in all of the offices was standardised
- 5.2.14 It was stressed that the make-up of the Project Team to draw up and implement the changes was very important; and even more so was the creation of Task Groups below the Project Group to lead on specific areas such as HR and IT
- 5.2.15 Output based performance management was an essential component which necessitated a trusting approach from management

6. SITE VISIT TO MERTON HOUSE

6.1 Councillor Pitt along with Councillors Booth, Grace, Jamieson and Robinson undertook a site visit to Merton House to discuss the pilot project for agile working in Sefton's Health and Social Care Service.

Wayne Leatherbarrow Service Manager - Commissioning Support and Business Intelligence provided background information and key milestones on agile working in Sefton's Health and Social Care Service; and indicated that 113 social work workers were currently operating on an agile/mobile basis.

Tina Wilkins, Head of Adult Social Care, detailed her positive experience of her staff working with and in Merseycare's office; and stressed that for agile working to be successful, it needed to operate in tandem with enhanced ICT provision. Working protocols and clear guidance for staff should also be produced to ensure that agile working was reasonably controlled and that a mutual trust between managers and staff could be fostered.

Dwayne Johnson, Director Social Care and Health, tabled a Local Government Association <u>report</u> "Transforming social care through the use of information and technology". The report aimed to highlight the emerging role of technology in transforming social care services and enabling care and health integration - including case studies of the introduction and use of technology to deliver improved outcomes for social care service users and, in the context of integration, patients. It also showcased the current and future roles of technology in facilitating demand management, delivering cost efficiencies, and mitigating against systemic risks.

The report, drawing on relevant examples of innovative practice, covered five key themes (outlined below) and enablers for transformation including, strategy and leadership engagement and collaboration with citizens and professionals. The report also draws on findings from our 2016 Social Care Digital Maturity Self-assessment.

- a) Integrating services and information for children, families and adults
- b) Enabling people to interact with care services through digital channels
- c) Promoting independence and wellbeing through the use of digital services and technology
- d) Integrating commissioning through the improved use of information and analysis
- e) Enabling care professionals to work from any base at any time

Mr. Johnson concluded that his staff had reacted positively to the agile working pilot and embraced the changes in working practices.

7. JUSTIFICATION

- 7.1 The Cabinet at its meeting held on 12 January 2017, approved an Asset and Property Maximisation option that identified, via a Budget Planning Assumption, that £3.3m revenue costs would be saved within the medium term financial plan period 2017/18 to 2019/20.
- 7.2 This Asset and Property Maximisation project will consider the property/assets opportunities arising from all other projects and It will look to maximise opportunities to improve operational efficiency, reduce revenue costs and maximise the capital and income potential.

- 7.3 This project will inform the asset-related decisions and maximise capital receipt/revenue saving opportunities arising from:
 - The reduction in the Council's size and consequential physical space requirements as a direct consequence of funding cuts;
 - The reduction in physical space requirements as a result of service re-design arising from the PSR programme;
 - The reduction in space made possible by the adoption of 'new ways of working' with improved ICT systems and infrastructure;
 - The need to do something very different, quickly to maximize our assets
- 7.4 The Council is also gathering, consolidating and spatially mapping business intelligence related to the Council's assets to inform the decision-making process. Such data includes: location; tenure type; break dates in lease; anticipated value; operating costs; current and maximum occupancy; occupancy by partner groups; and anticipated cost of required investment if retained. To date this exercise has been completed and modelled for the corporate estate options, with work ongoing to gather data for the wider estate. As the modelling of the wider estate is dependent on the outcome of the options proposed, then this work will commence, and continue on an frequent basis. Pending the full outcome of the analysis above final options will set out consideration of the available options, likely to include:
 - In-house delivery;
 - Delivery through a contracted partner(s);
 - Delivery through a Joint Venture with the private or third sector;
 - Delivery through a created Special Purpose Vehicle;
 - Delivery through a hybrid model.
- 7.5 The Council has a number of choices in respect of the delivery options and these include the appetite from public sector partners to join the project/or not. The core demand for asset maximisation means that appropriate resources and skills will be needed. Each option presents the next step or logical sequence given the volume and demand to transform and maximise our assets following the re-provision of services.
- 7.6 The overall project fundamentally aims to move towards an agile and lean workforce. This means that the Council will utilise physical, built, ICT and the workforce differently, moving away from fixed locality working throughout the borough to provide a much greater customer focus.
- 7.7 It is anticipated that the outcomes of the project will produce an improved customer experience to citizens, delivered through:
 - An efficient estate which is right-sized, located where needed and fit for

purpose;

- Greater partnership working with buildings facilitating co-location of services and partners from the public and private sector; and
- 'New ways of working', with appropriate ICT infrastructure, space planning and management processes that allow staff to work in an agile manner where they need to be, without a reliance on a fixed-desk place of work.
- 7.8 Work undertaken by the Working Group has mirrored the proposals approved by Cabinet and accordingly, the recommendations contained in section 8 below complement the aims of the Asset and Property Maximisation option.

8. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is noted that the following activity has already commenced within the Council in respect of:-

- Developing a bespoke agile working solution that is tailored to the Council's needs as part of the Public Sector Reform Project 'Asset Maximisation'; and
- Engaging with Senior Management of the Council to ensure that buy-in to the project is maximised as this will be critical to delivering the required cultural change.

In addition to these activities the Head of Corporate Resources is requested to:-

- 8.1 Mobilise an Implementation Team across the following key disciplines in order to support project delivery:-
 - Property
 - Human Resources
 - ICT
 - Communications / Transformation
- 8.2 Develop systems to address the business storage requirements to facilitate a paper-less/paper-lite office and support business transformation
- 8.3 Develop as part of the Asset Maximisation Programme, a full business case taking account of the financial and non-financial benefits for each proposal
- 8.4 Develop a Communications Plan that can be disseminated throughout the Council

- 8.5 Develop a policy and create protocols and engagement with the workforce to ensure operational discipline
- 8.6 Continue to work with and monitor progress in service areas that have already adopted elements of Agile Working
- 8.7 Consider the development of a demonstration area (mock-up of accommodation) that can trial the proposals made and encourage staff to embrace a new way of working
- 8.8 Investigate training for managerial staff in changes of management style required for the new method of working and supervision thereof
- 8.10 Identify areas of benefit / improvement from other corporate environments to:-
 - Continue to explore experience of other organisations including
 Local Authorities
 - Monitor / Measure / Adapt baseline how we work now and review once Agile Working is implemented

9. DOCUMENTATION CONSIDERED BY THE WORKING GROUP

- 9.1 Agile Working A Guide for Employers produced by the Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion <u>click here</u>
- 9.2 HR: Getting Smart about Agile Working produced by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development <u>click here</u>
- 9.3 Property in the Economy Agile Working produced by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors <u>click here</u>
- 9.4 Child and Family Social Work Open spaces, supple bodies? Considering the impact of agile working on social work office practices <u>click here</u>
- 9.5 Working Without Walls an insight into the transforming government work click here
- 9.6 Working Beyond Walls the Government Workplace as an agent for change click here
- 9.7 The Agile Office Experience Report from Cisco's Unified Communications Business Unit <u>click here</u>
- 9.8 Corporate Strategy Driving Workplace Design The changing face of

property <u>click here</u>

- 9.9 Catalyst Changing Workplaces Changing Lives Flex Works <u>click here</u>
- 9.10 Agile Working in Professional Services at UCL click here

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10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND THANKS

In producing this report on the Council's accommodation strategy and agile working, acknowledgements and thanks are attributed to the following individuals for their time and input:-

- Stephen O'Brien, ICT Partnership Manager; Paul Cunningham, Human Resources Manager; Dwayne Johnson, Director of Social Care and Health; Vicky Buchanan, Head of Children's Social Care; Tina Wilkins, Head of Adult Social Care; and Wayne Leatherbarrow, Service Manager – Commissioning Support and Business Intelligence; Sefton Council
- Councillor Terry Halliwell, Portfolio Holder Service Transformation; Heather Coombs, Facilities and Statutory Compliance Manager; and Jane Fisher, Facilities Officer, Wigan MBC
- Roy Williams, Chief Executive, One Vision Housing
- David Street, Assets and Property Manager and Lead Officer of the Review and Sue Crompton, Principal Surveyor, Sefton Council

Thanks must also go to the Members of the Working Group who have worked hard and dedicated a great deal of time to this review, namely:-



Councillor Michael Pitt, Lead Member, Accommodation Strategy/Agile Working Working Group



Councillor Les Byrom



Councillor Simon Jamieson



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Councillor Mike Booth



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