Registers of Scotland

RoS Board

15th September 2021

People & Workspace Project Update

Purpose

1.   To provide the RoS Board with a progress update on the People and Workspace project and consider key risks and opportunities as we move towards a hybrid working approach.

2.   To discuss key measures of success and desired future state of the business driven through key deliverables.

Recommendation

3.   The board is asked to note progress, the projects intent, the overarching principles and key measures of success.

Background

4.   The People & Workspace project has been established to provide the necessary planning, co-ordination, governance and monitoring of all the activities that need to take place as we move from the current default position of remote working to an effective hybrid working solution.

5.   The vast majority of RoS workforce have now been working at home for the last year and beyond since the Covid-19 pandemic began.

6.   A survey carried out in March 2021 with a response rate of 96% (1238 staff) showed that 70% would prefer some form of hybrid working, with 20% fully remote and only 10% wanting to return to office buildings. *Source: Transition project - Learning organisation return to work survey 2021*

7.   The overall goal of the project is 'to transition the organisation from the current fully remote working environment to a more flexible approach by identifying hybrid options that will enable RoS colleagues to perform at their best, ensures RoS continues to meet its strategic objectives and deliver the highest quality service for our customers.'

8.   From now until end of March 2022 we intend to deliver the project plan taking a cautious risk-based approach to people returning to our buildings due to continued uncertainty around Covid-19 and the potential risk of restrictive measures coming back into play which would invoke re-exit plans.

9.   In line with Scottish Government guidance, we will begin a phased return of a small number of colleagues who have indicated a desire to return to the office sites from mid-September. These colleagues flagged wellbeing and performance related issues through previous survey intel. We will look to monitor their return to ascertain whether this has had a positive impact on their wellbeing and levels of performance.

10.   Working on the assumption that the necessary legislation remains in place we anticipate that most roles in RoS will be digital enabled and could be performed remotely.

11.   The project has identified the overall scope and a set of overarching design principles *(Annex A – Hybrid Design Principles)*

12.   The key objectives are as follows:

> To safely transition colleagues to new ways of working with a view on returning colleagues identified as priority based on their health & wellbeing
> To lay the foundations and provide the environment that will enable RoS to run a series of experiments to aid the further development and delivery of an optimum hybrid working model embedding key design working principles and practices
> To create the conditions that will provide increased organisational capacity that leads to improved performance of the workforce by providing flexibility and choice to colleagues in how, where and when you work. This choice will be subject to business needs and being mindful of our aim to serve the customer
> To agree the purpose of working in the office when you would go there and how you would work.
> To inform key decisions for the future of the RoS estate

Progress update

13.   The project has identified the following 3 workstreams and developed a high-level plan to deliver the projects key objectives: *(Annex B - Project Timeline)*
Our Workspace

14.   The workspace workstream has set up the physical environments. To date the bulk of the project work has been completed by this workstream remotely enabling the remainder of colleagues with laptops, reconfiguring the workspace, implementing the desk booking system in both sites whilst continuing to carry out the heightened cleaning regime and onsite health and safety inspections that were put in place under the Transition project.   The workstream has also removed large quantities of paper and excess furniture from the wings within MBH making it a much smarter and cleaner working environment.

Our People

15.   The people workstream has been established to deal with all colleague related aspects. The current focus is the phased return of 'early returning' colleagues to both

office sites. There are several business change elements to consider in this as well us undergoing the necessary risk assessments. The focus is ensuring colleagues wellbeing by building on the established wellbeing support mechanism and ensuring colleagues are kept well informed. The workstream will regularly 'survey' the organisation to test key critical intel on colleague's intent to utilise the office-based workspace which will help inform future design.

Our Hybrid design

16.   To gain a better understanding of what the optimum model of hybrid working might be a number of experiments are planned over the remainder of the year. The focus is to ensure we meet our corporate plan ambitions, maintain wellbeing of colleagues, and provide excellent service for our customers whilst embracing the opportunities that hybrid working can provide. Using an evidence-based approach to understand the options within a hybrid workforce model, it will evaluate aspects such as workplaces, technology, culture and working norms, policies and practices and the wider civil service landscape. A user experience panel has been created from a cross section of colleagues (~70 people volunteered to date), whose insight has enabled the creation of personas to understand people's needs, goals and views of hybrid working.

Key measures of success

17.   The board are asked to note the key measures of success below and consider as part of the workshop observations: (Annex C)

Key measures of success	Supporting evidence/indicators
Cost	✓ Total Cost of Ownership of physical estates decrease ✓ Reduction in unit costs ✓ Increase in space utilisation
Performance	✓ Increased levels of performance & productivity ✓ Healthy balance of turnover/retention ✓ Quality maintained ✓ Financial performance
People	✓ Increase wellbeing ✓ Increase work/life balance ✓ Reduced absenteeism ✓ Improved scores in CSPS
Environmental	✓ Carbon footprint reduction ✓ Travel reduction ✓ Paper/waste savings

Project outputs with longer term strategic impact

18.   The project has identified key risks and challenges due to the pandemic, ongoing restrictive measures and continued remote working. Hybrid working remains a project and directorate level risk.

19.   However, the move to hybrid working is a unique opportunity to reset the entire business culture and all that that entails.

20.   As part of the future hybrid working model certain policies may no longer be fit for purpose. Experimentation channelled via the hybrid workstream will inform and shape future policies around increased flexibility and choice of when and where to work.

21.   The future use of buildings and the longer-term estates strategy are being further developed to consider how we utilise the two buildings and provide a strategic view for the future estate.

22.   RoS is in dialogue with Scottish Government to explore options around sharing space in Meadowbank House and transitioning to a centralised office hub. Options also being explored around the future use of the SVP Glasgow office.

Key priorities for next phase of project

23.   The key priorities for the People & Workspace project include:

- Safely re-open both sites to enable colleagues to return to the office
- Run experiments to inform future hybrid design
- Establish a set of guard rails for effective hybrid working which will then inform future policy
- Work with Estates and IT on the physical estates as well as the remote technology to provide the appropriate platform for hybrid working
- Embed and deliver hybrid working

Conclusion

24.   As the project moves into the experimental hybrid design phase, we plan to test key assumptions which will help inform what will be most effective for RoS in a hybrid working environment. As part of the delivery the project will continue to assess the ongoing risks associated with bringing colleagues into the office workspaces and proceed with a cautious approach.

25.   The Board are invited to note the progress of the People & Workspace Project to date and provide their thoughts and advice to the questions posed in relation to the project direction, key risks and opportunities around hybrid working.

Questions to consider as part of the workshop exercise (1hr)

Board members may look to draw on experiences and observations of other organisations in advance of the exercise which will help inform discussion.

Question 1: Based on the design principles (Annex A) and delivery of hybrid working, what do the board see as the top 3 key risks and opportunities as we move towards a hybrid workforce in RoS?
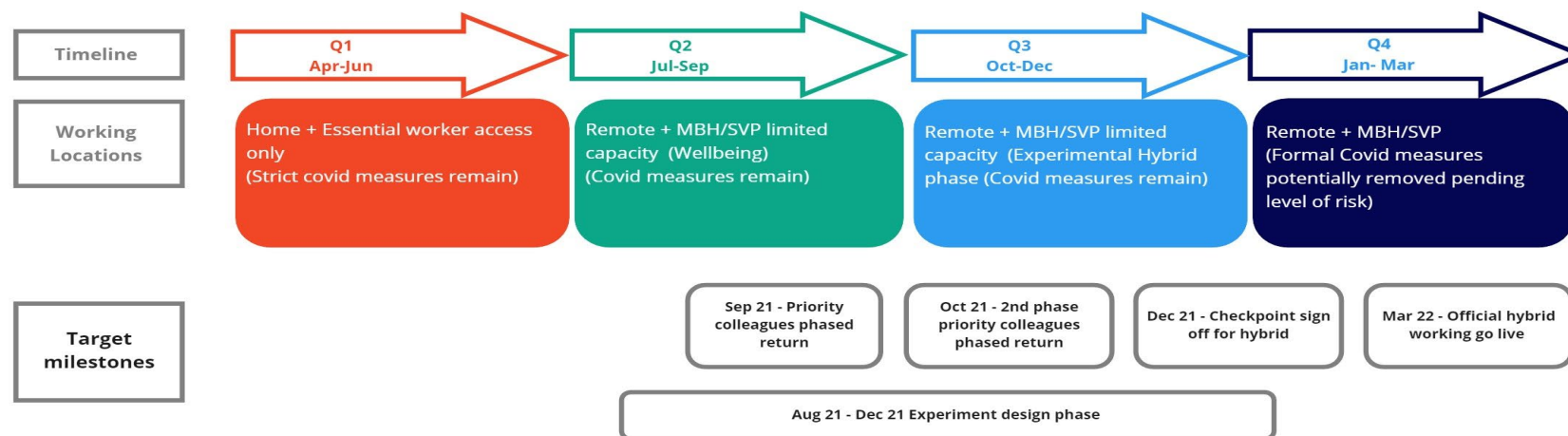
Question 2: How do we best mitigate these potential priority key risks identified and realise the key opportunities that may arise?

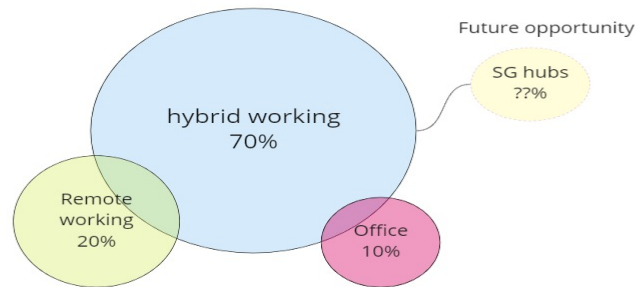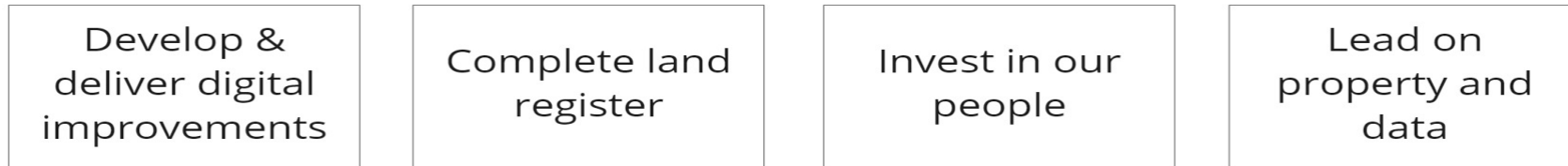**People & Workspace project**
August 2021

Annex A – Hybrid design principles

Provide safe and secure environments for people to work in
Ensure we promote productivity & performance
Safeguard good business practice and manage risk i.e. The essential services that can only be performed on-site will continue to operate from a building
Continue to provide the wellbeing support for colleagues
Promote diversity & inclusion
Ensure that colleagues have a parity of experience no matter where they work.
Work in partnership with our recognised trade unions and other key stakeholders
Engage in open honest dialogue with colleagues
Enable colleagues to work from a range of settings, providing job opportunities across Scotland

Annex B – Project timeline

Timeline	Q1 Apr-Jun	Q2 Jul-Sep	Q3 Oct-Dec	Q4 Jan- Mar
Working Locations	Home + Essential worker access only (Strict covid measures remain)	Remote + MBH/SVP limited capacity (Wellbeing) (Covid measures remain)	Remote + MBH/SVP limited capacity (Experimental Hybrid phase (Covid measures remain)	Remote + MBH/SVP (Formal Covid measures potentially removed pending level of risk)
Target milestones		Sep 21 - Priority colleagues phased return	Oct 21 - 2nd phase priority colleagues phased return	Dec 21 - Checkpoint sign off for hybrid Mar 22 - Official hybrid working go live

Aug 21 - Dec 21 Experiment design phase

Annex C – Measures of success

Develop & deliver digital improvements	Complete land register	Invest in our people	Lead on property and data

Future opportunity

hybrid working
70%

SG hubs
??%

Remote
working
20%

Office
10%

Hybrid working model

Benefit

Cost	Performance	People	Environment

Measures

| TCO running physical estates
Unit cost reduction
Utilisation of office space
Opportunities space sharing | Increased productivity & performance
Healthy balance in turnover & retention
Quality maintained | Increased level of engagement & wellbeing
Increase work/life balance
Less absenteeism | Carbon footprint reduction
Cross site travel reduction
Commuter travel reduction
Paper savings
Sustainability |