

# Registers of Scotland

## RoS Board

March 2021

### Transition update prior to project closure

#### Purpose

1. To provide RoS Board with a progress update on the Transition project, which was formed at the beginning of May 2020 in response to the COVID-19 impact.
2. To provide a high-level view of the key outcomes achieved ahead of formal project closure in April 2021.
3. To outline the key threat that the extended COVID-19 restrictions and associated uncertainties reduce our ability to the deliver on corporate objectives over the next 2-3 years.

#### Recommendation

4. The board is asked to note progress of the Transition project to date.
5. The board is asked to provide their thoughts and advice on the key risk that remains following project closure.

#### Background

6. A COVID19 transition project was established to provide the necessary planning, co-ordination, governance and monitoring of all the activities that need to take place.
7. The overall goal of the COVID19 transition project was defined as getting RoS back on track and leveraging emergent opportunities to deliver on our vision of being a digital registration and information business.
8. The project identified four critical success factors that are needed to deliver the goal which have now been established as workstreams. A fifth critical success factor was incorporated with the project establishing a workstream in November 2020 to focus on productivity:
  - Ensure our services are resilient
  - Enable the environment to safely deliver our services
  - Enable the right people with the right skills
  - Have financial sustainability
  - Ensure productivity returns to pre-covid levels before end of March (*added Nov 20*)

## **Key benefits of Transition**

- Increasing levels of service resiliency
- Enhanced levels of customer experience in transacting with online services
- Reduced risk by enabling customers to transact digitally throughout the covid pandemic and beyond
- Longer term financial savings through digital submission
- Increased flexibility for colleagues as to how, when and where they choose to work
- RoS carbon footprint significantly reduced

## **Round-up on project activity**

### Our Financial Sustainability:

9. The financial sustainability workstream has worked with business areas to review directorate budgets and reduce forecasted spend as well as working through investment initiatives to take the decision to pause or stop in light of the COVID-19 impact.

10. Enacted on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and successfully negotiated a reduced rate with the high earning temporary contractors that are required for the long term and gave notice to agencies where (due to the introduction of digital submission services) RoS no longer required these temporary, manual/paper based services.

11. Overall, these changes have contributed to a saving of £8.2m for RoS and an increase of £4.6m in our income, enabling the business to become more financially sustainable going forward.

12. Confirmed position on budget with SG counterparts on what is required for FY21-22 as a result of the COVID-19 impact.

### Our Resilient Services:

13. The Resilient Services workstream enabled customers to transact remotely by providing a digital submissions solution for Advance Notices, Land Register applications, Register of Inhibitions, Register of Judgements and the Sasine register. Feedback from customers was positive, expressing a desire to ensure the improved ways of working, resulting from these new services, remain in place post-COVID19.

14. The public consultation on digital submissions concluded with an overwhelming positive response to continue with digital submissions. Emergency legislation extended to September 2021 with a view to permanent legislation being accepted by Parliament through laying of orders in June prior to the expiry of the emergency legislation.

### Our Workplace Environments:

15. To date the Workplace Environments workstream has delivered remote enablement to a large proportion of the workforce through the virtual desktop infrastructure and laptop build and deploy missions now averaging at 1000-1150 online users per day. Over 95% of RoS workforce now remotely enabled.

16. A roadmap for re-entry to Meadowbank House and online booking system to assist colleagues in safe allocation of office space will be delivered as part of the workstream scope.

#### Our People:

17. The people workstream has developed a strategic workforce people database solution that provides key data intel on colleagues' availability, core skills and capability to enable short term resource deployment and longer-term strategic workforce planning.

18. The workstream have established a wellbeing support mechanism. Our working well remotely programme has provided a wealth of information, resources, toolkits and mental health awareness sessions (for managers) to support colleagues with their health, safety and wellbeing. Our working well remotely investment is for the long-term benefit of smart working, in addition to supporting colleagues during lockdown.

#### Our Productivity:

19. The productivity workstream have worked across the business to ensure there is a supporting network there for managers and TL's to enable them to boost productivity in the short to medium term. The team have identified key blockers and issues that were hindering productivity and addressed these via an action plan.

20. To date RoS global productivity currently sits at around 80% of where it was at pre-covid however it is trending upwards despite current restrictions and activities are taking place throughout February and March to boost productivity further. A fuller update is provided in the productivity paper at item 12.

#### **Transition outcomes with longer term strategic impact**

21. A number of transition outcomes will have longer term impacts. These are described below, but it has been agreed by the project Board that fully delivering these additional benefits should not be part of an extended Transition project, rather taken forward as business activities within their own right as part of the work we will deliver in the next year of our corporate plan.

- The move to becoming a smart working organisation has been accelerated as a result of COVID-19. Annex A provides the smart working maturity model and the guiding principles
- To deliver and put in place the necessary legislative provisions which will allow RoS to continue with digital submissions beyond the emergency legislation period.

- To fully transition and enable effective remote working as broadly as possible and ensure that any resulting spare capacity within the estates is then utilised as effectively as possible. Annex B provides high level roadmap for future activity
- To return to being fully productive following now that the emergency response phase has ended to ensure the corporate plan is back on track as smoothly and effectively as can be, but also re-set any priorities in relation to the strategic objectives given where we are now.

## **Residual risk**

22. The COVID transition project has made excellent progress across all workstreams and will have completed all planned deliverables in the near future. It is therefore appropriate to close the project as planned at the end of April 2021. However it is already clear that the longer term implications of COVID (the nature of any ongoing restrictions, the economic impact and how it will affect the housing market and the, as yet unquantified, impact on the mental health and general wellbeing of RoS colleagues will continue to be with us for some time. These longer-term implications present a risk to RoS and will therefore require careful management. We have therefore identified an additional key risk which we intend to add to the corporate key risk register such that the relevant mitigation actions and controls can be incorporated into our plans for the year ahead.

23. We have framed the current issue we are experiencing as a result of these ongoing COVID implications as: Ongoing COVID-19 restrictions, coupled with high intakes through higher than forecasted activity in the housing market, has resulted in the current issue of a lack of operational capacity across RoS functions. This then translated into a risk of: being unable to sustainably flex operational capacity to meet market demand which may ultimately then reduce our ability to the deliver on the strategic objectives outlined in the corporate plan.

24. Foundational work has taken place to form the key risk depicted in annex C below. EMT have agreed the addition to the key register and a treatment plan is being developed. A more detailed opportunity for the Board to discuss and review this risk in detail will be available at the forthcoming risk workshop in May 2021.

## **Conclusion**

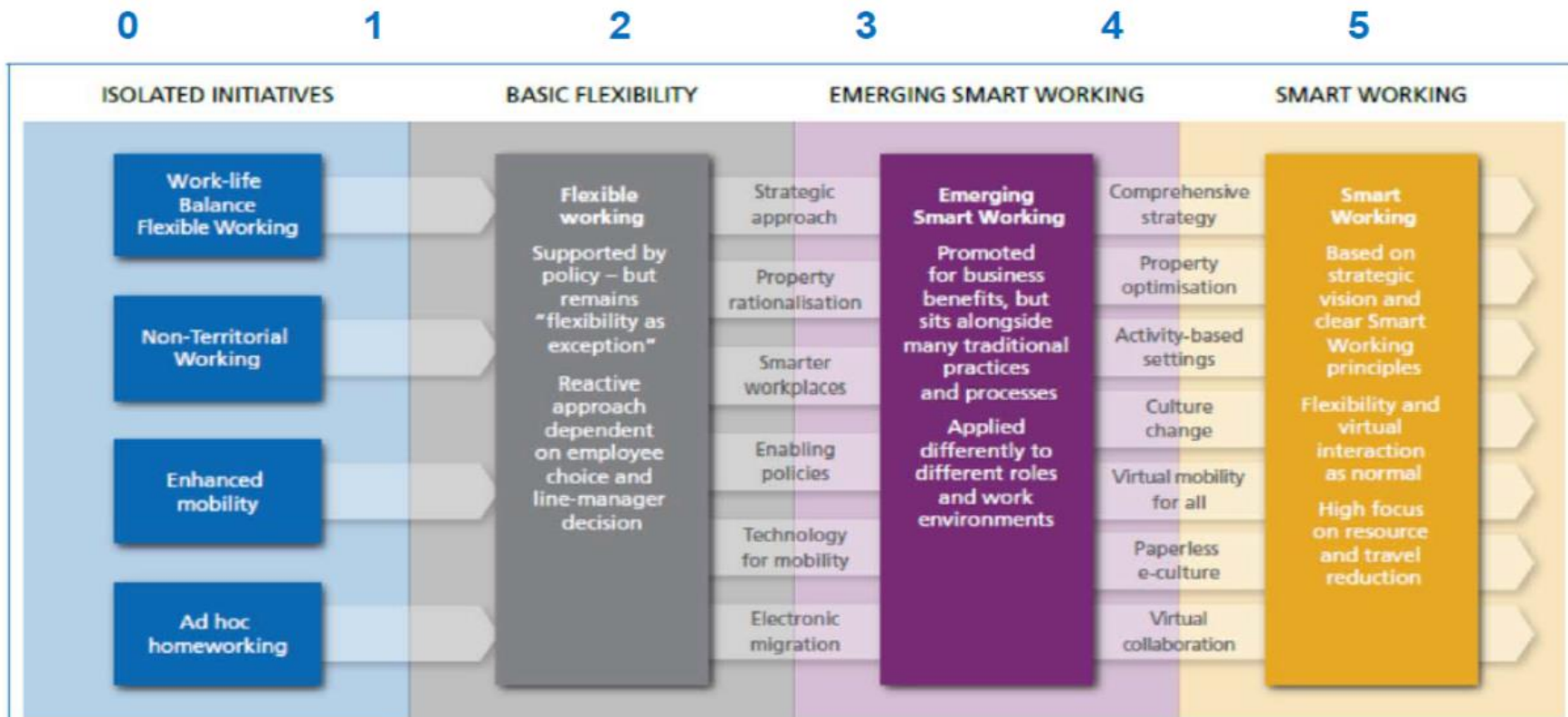
25. A significant amount of work has been delivered to date and the project plan is now nearing completion to move RoS as far as possible back on track with the delivery of our corporate plan. There are significant risks inherent within the transition project, which we continue to monitor and mitigate against as well as many external factors for which assumptions that have been made are being continually reviewed in line with the ever changing landscape and government guidance. Board input and advice will continue to be sought on any key strategic decisions resulting from the work of the Transition Project and the subsequent business as usual work that takes place beyond the life of the project.

26. As part of formal project closure a list of actions and key decision points is being built out to take forward. Any residual risk will also be transferred over to relevant business owners. Lessons learned will be compiled as part of PMO activity to be shared with relevant stakeholders and key governance groups.

27. The Board are invited to note the progress of the COVID Transition Project to date and provide their thoughts and advice on the key residual risk identified and the outcomes that have a longer-term strategic impact noted above.

**Transition Project Manager**  
**22 February 2021**

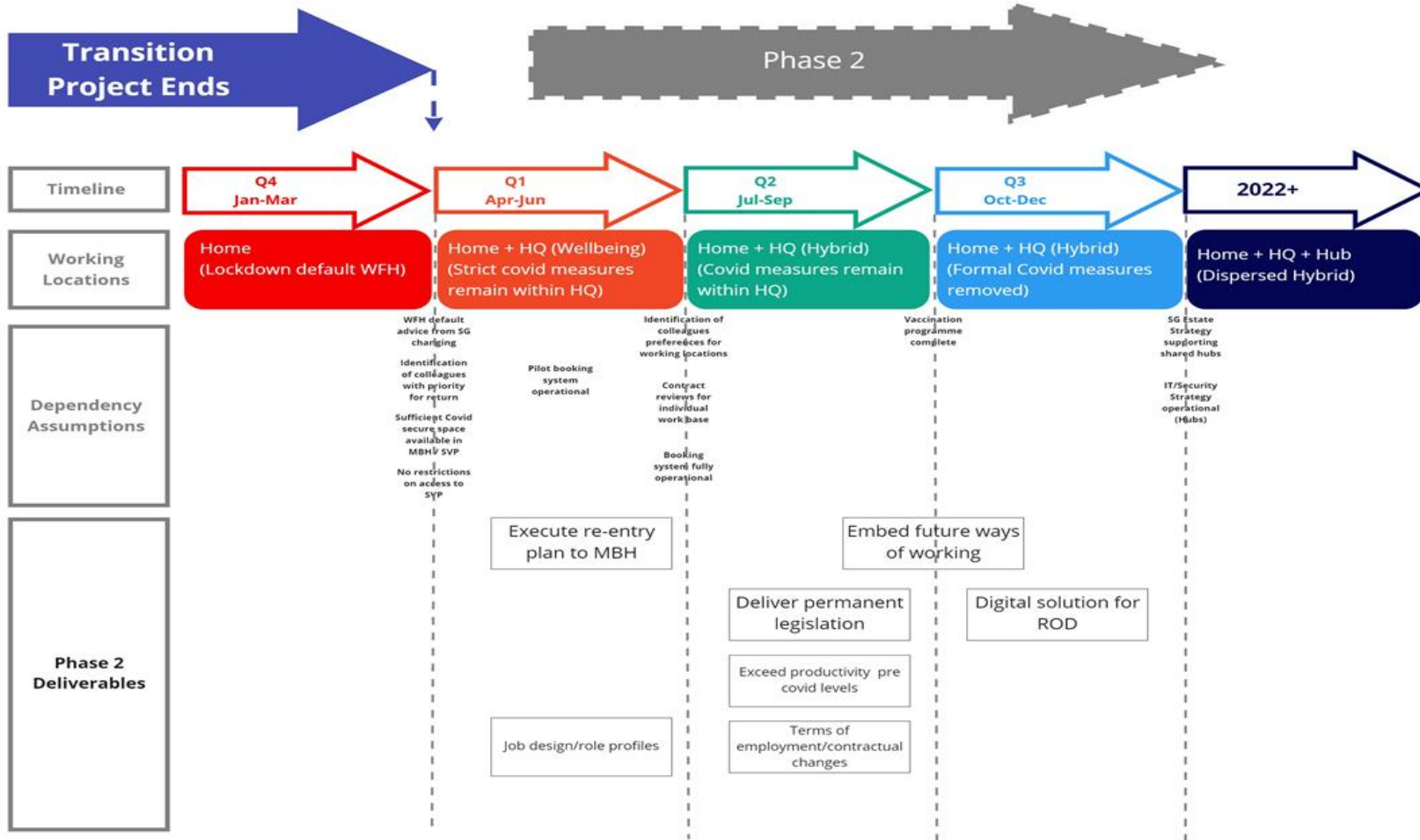
Annex A – Smart working maturity model & principles



[Source: The Way We Work: Smart Working in Government © Flexibility.co.uk Ltd [5]]

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Annex B – Roadmap for future activities



Annex C – Key Risk

