

The background of the slide features a large, faint, light blue watermark of the City of Vancouver coat of arms. The crest includes a crown at the top with four maple leaves, a shield divided into four quadrants (top-left: a ship, top-right: a stag, bottom-left: a ship, bottom-right: a grizzly bear), and a banner at the bottom with the motto 'A NE FOR A'.

## **Agenda Item 6**

# **Recovery Arrangements for Employees Returning to Work**

Falkirk Council

**Title:** Recovery Arrangements for Employees Returning to Work  
**Meeting:** Emergency Executive  
**Date:** 11 June 2020  
**Submitted By:** Director of Corporate & Housing Services

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report provides Members with an update on the plans being put in place to support employees in their return to work over the different phases of the lifting of the lockdown.

**2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 The Emergency Executive is asked to note the work being done to support employees returning to work in line with Service Recovery Plans and that a further update will be provided following the summer recess.**

**3. Background**

- 3.1 Over the period of the Covid-19 lockdown, a number of essential services have continued to operate. Some of these have been delivered in very different ways due to lockdown restrictions. A number of employees in non-essential services have also continued to work from home and some have been providing support to essential services.
- 3.2 To provide Members with some context, there are currently, c3,200 employees who are self-reporting to be working from home to varying degrees. c720 employees are reporting that they are fit to work but unable to do so for a variety of reasons, e.g., caring for a dependent, workplace closure, pregnant/have an underlying health condition and unable to carry out their job at home. It should be noted that these figures do not include those employees who are currently working but not from home, e.g., social care employees, some teaching employees, a number of manual workers, etc. There are also employees who are currently on sick leave or off due to normal annual leave arrangements. We are also aware that not every employee is recording their current status and reminders continue to be issued in relation to this. This will become increasingly important as we start to assess how we return employees to the workplace.
- 3.3 Given the recent announcements by the Scottish Government on the phased lifting of the lockdown, plans are now being developed to support a return of employees to the workplace in line with Service recovery plans. An extract of the phased lifting arrangements, as they apply to workplaces, is attached as Appendix 1. Delivery of services may however, require to be different, to ensure all national guidance is taken into account. This will include ensuring appropriate physical distancing, risk assessments have been carried out,

protective equipment is provided as required, and other such measures to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our workforce.

#### **4. Considerations**

- 4.1 The first phase of the lifting of the lockdown enables some workplaces to be opened up subject to safety requirements and national guidance being followed. Risk assessments will be prepared for all workplaces in advance of them opening to ensure these requirements are met.
- 4.2 For this first phase, working from home is to remain in place as the default position for those who are able to do so. Indeed, this guidance remains in place through phases 1 to 3 with it still being encouraged in phase 4. Guidance is also being prepared to enable outdoor workplaces to resume, with appropriate safety measures. The implications of this for Council services will be considered once such guidance is made available. Consideration is also being given nationally to the construction sector and how this can get back up and running.
- 4.3 Significant work is required to ensure the Council complies with this guidance and any further guidance issued in each of the 4 phases.
- 4.4 A Group has been established, chaired by the Head of People, Technology & Transformation, to oversee this work and to support services as they implement their recovery plan. This Group has cross-Service representation and representatives with specialist skills to support this work. The Group will report to CMT. A terms of reference for this Group is provided at Appendix 2.
- 4.5 All work done by this Group will be in line with Service recovery plans. Services are due to report these plans to a future meeting of the Emergency Executive Committee. An update report on employees returning to the workplace will also be prepared following the summer recess, by the Group overseeing this.
- 4.6 As part of this work, the wellbeing of our workforce must be supported. This has been a very difficult situation for our workforce. In returning to work, we could have employees with a range of issues affecting their physical and/or mental wellbeing. This could result for a range of reasons such as concerns about their safety, concern for their families, caring responsibilities and issues, financial wellbeing issues, to name but a few.
- 4.7 A wide range of information is currently available for employees and managers at the following link: <https://www.falkirk.gov.uk/employees/coronavirus/#wellbeing> Further work is being done to supplement this information and to support managers in ensuring good wellbeing across their teams. This work is essential and will continue as the return of employees to the workplace progresses. The Council is also participating in a nationally established Workforce Wellbeing Champions Network which is providing additional support mechanisms. These are being linked to those already provided by the Council.
- 4.8 It is also worth highlighting that throughout the period of the lockdown, a Trade Union liaison group has been set up to ensure continued dialogue over key issues. Initially this Group met 2 or 3 times per week, depending on the areas

that required to be considered, and now continues to meet on a weekly basis. This group has worked very effectively, ensuring good collaborative working in the development of the wide range of support and frequently asked questions that are now available for employees and managers on the Councils website at the following link: <https://www.falkirk.gov.uk/employees/coronavirus/> All of this guidance was newly developed in a short space of time to ensure appropriate support in these very different circumstances which have never been faced before.

- 4.9 The Trade Union liaison group has also ensured effective communication and resolution of issues arising in the workplace as a result of covid-19. The group agree that this has worked well and should continue, to ensure on-going collaboration on the process of recovery with employees returning to work. Trade Union representatives will also be invited to attend the cross Service Group overseeing the return of employees to the workplace.

## **5. Consultation**

- 5.1 The return of employees to the workplace and the establishment of a Group to support this work has been considered by Corporate Management Team. Discussions have also taken place with Trade Union colleagues.

## **6. Implications**

### **Financial**

- 6.1 As this work is implemented, there will be a requirement to purchase additional PPE (e.g., hand sanitisers, screens, etc), equipment (e.g., furniture, IT, etc) and/or other items (e.g., signage, etc), to support the return of employees to work in a safe way, following national guidance. There may also be additional costs where rotas and shift patterns require to change. Such costs will be incurred where essential to enable a safe return to the workplace.

### **Resources**

- 6.2 The establishment of a Group to oversee the return of employees to work will require those officers and Trade Union representatives involved in this to free up time to ensure the tasks are undertaken effectively. Managers will also be required to ensure they have sufficient capacity to develop new working arrangements which implement the guidance provided by this Group.

### **Legal**

- 6.3 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

### **Risk**

- 6.4 If effective work is not undertaken to support employees in their return to work, there could be significant health and safety risks to our workforce with liability risks to the Council. In addition, if employees are not provided with a safe working environment and support for their wellbeing, it could result in an increased risk of higher absence levels.

## **Equalities**

- 6.5 There is no requirement to undertake an equality impact assessment as a result of this report.

## **Sustainability/Environmental Impact**

- 6.6 There is no requirement to undertake a sustainability assessment as a result of this report.

## **7. Conclusions**

- 7.1 Good work has been undertaken to ensure the delivery of services, as far as possible, during the period of the lockdown. Given the lifting of the lockdown, it is now essential that we focus on the return of employees to the workplace in a safe way, ensuring their wellbeing. A Group is being established to oversee this work to ensure appropriate guidance and support is in place as Services implement their recovery plans.

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Director of Corporate & Housing Services

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## **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Scottish Government Covid-19 Routemap for returning to work  
Appendix 2: Terms of Reference for Anytime Anywhere Employees Returning to Work  
Working Group

## **List of Background Papers:**

The following papers were relied on in the preparation of this report in terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973:


- None

# Scottish Government COVID-19 Routemap



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
gov.scot

## Appendix 1

	Lockdown	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
	Lockdown restrictions:	As with previous phase but with the following changes:	As with previous phase but with the following changes:	As with previous phase but with the following changes:	As with previous phase but with the following changes:
 <p>Working or running a business</p>	<p>Closure of non-essential workplaces.</p> <p>Social distancing requirements for essential businesses.</p> <p>Remote working is the default position.</p>	<p>Remote working remains the default position for those who can.</p> <p>For those workplaces that are reopening, employers should encourage staggered start times and flexible working.</p> <p>Non-essential <b>outdoor</b> workplaces with physical distancing resume once relevant guidance agreed.</p> <p>Construction – Phases 0-2 of industry restart plan can be implemented. Industry to consult government before progressing to phase 2.)</p> <p>Preparing for the safe reopening of the housing market.</p> <p>Workplaces resuming in later phases can undertake preparatory work on physical distancing and hygiene measures.</p>	<p>Remote working remains the default position for those who can.</p> <p>Non-essential <b>indoor non-office-based</b> workplaces resume once relevant guidance agreed – including factories &amp; warehouses, lab &amp; research facilities – to re-open with physical distancing.</p> <p>Construction sector to implement remaining stages of phased return.</p> <p>Relaxation of restrictions on housing moves.</p>	<p>Remote working remains the default position for those who can.</p> <p>Non-essential <b>indoor office</b> workplaces can open, once relevant guidance agreed, including contact centres with physical distancing.</p>	<p>Remote and flexible working remains encouraged.</p> <p>All workplaces open with improved hygiene and in line with public health advice.</p>

## **ANYTIME ANYWHERE - RETURNING TO WORK WORKING GROUP**

### **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The lockdown has provided an opportunity to test new ways of working. Many obstacles have been overcome and a number of lessons have been learned. Buildings have been closed, a number of employees are working from home and services are being delivered in different ways. There has also been a level of service disruption due to the health and safety restrictions of the lockdown.

The Anytime Anywhere Returning to Work Working Group (the Group) will consider how it can support Managers to get services back on line with some of these being delivered in different ways by our workforce.

#### **Scope of Work**

The Group will provide guidance and support to all Services to get services back up and running, and employees back to work in line with national guidance. The return of service delivery may not be in the same way as that in place prior to the lockdown. Support will also be put in place to maintain the wellbeing of our workforce as service return and beyond.

The Group will consider the lessons learned from the Covid-19 experience to help inform the Council's approach to new ways of working and office requirements post the restrictions from the lockdown being lifted.

#### **Membership of Group**

The Group will have the following membership:

Representatives from each Service  
Representatives from the HSCP  
Representative from the Community Trust as appropriate  
Representatives from the Trade Unions

Sub-Groups will be established as required to support the delivery of the work by this group.

#### **Framework for the Return to Work**

The Group will consider the following principles when supporting services to get their workforce, and in turn their services, back up and running:

- All national guidance will be followed.
- Where service delivery can still be achieved, working from home will continue to be the default position with the aim of employees working from home for a minimum number of days per week (ideally 3 to tie in with the aspirations of the SPR and HQ projects). This will not be possible in all service areas and will be dependent on service requirements.
- Buildings which are closed should remain closed until all building checks have been completed and sufficient safety assessments are in place, in line with guidance from the Facilities team.
- Appropriate safety arrangements will require to be made in each building prior to them opening. This will include risk assessments, availability of PPE (if required), screens where required, availability of appropriate cleaning materials, relevant

signage, and consideration of office layout. This list is not exhaustive and should be in line with guidance from the Health & Safety team.

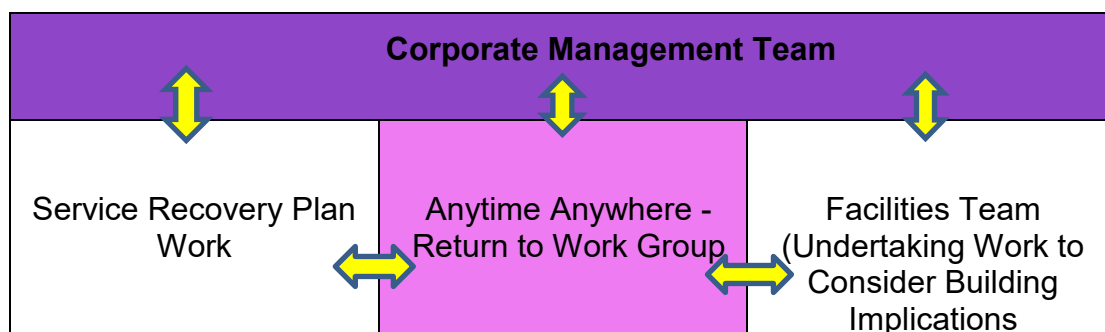
- A specification for appropriate 'kit' (both furniture and IT) will be developed and available to ensure any home working arrangements can continue safely in the longer term.
- Where employees use public transport, discussions will take place on options for them to continue working from home (where this is possible), particularly where the use of public transport is causing them anxiety.
- Employees should not be asked to attend the workplace unnecessarily.
- Changes to shifts, start and finish times, rota changes and redeployment should be considered to flexibly accommodate the new ways of working.
- Appropriate physical distancing must be maintained as per national guidance.
- Only essential face to face meetings and home visits should take place. Options will be assessed on a service by service basis, with the use of technology to support this as appropriate.
- Canteen facilities should remain closed for the time being for the serving of food/drinks. Canteen areas can be used for eating packed lunches provided physical distancing is maintained.
- Appropriate cleaning arrangements must be in place for buildings that are open.
- Hand gel should be available at entrances of buildings which are open.
- Pool cars and other vehicles should contain anti-viral wipes for cleaning prior to and after use.
- Hot desking will be temporarily suspended until such times as appropriate cleaning and safety arrangements can be put in place.

Until the necessary arrangements for buildings to open safely and for employee safety are in place, employees who are currently working from home should continue to do so. CMT will provide specific instructions for the opening of different buildings. This may mean that employees who are required to attend work may be required to operate from different buildings in the first instance.

Employee Wellbeing will be a key consideration. Work will be done to expand the support package already in place. This will consider both physical and mental well-being.

## Governance

The following sets out the governance arrangements for the Group:



This framework sits within the wider recovery framework for the Council, as presented to Members at the Emergency Executive on 14.05.20. The Group will call on support from a number of different teams across the Council, who can support the recovery of services.



## **Communication**

To support the work of the group, regular communications will be issued to employees to update them on the work being done to get services up and running and to enable them to return to work.

Initially a review of the working arrangements for each employee currently working from home or unable to attend work will be undertaken. This will help inform recovery plans which will provide the direction for the Group.

Work will also be done to involve employees in identifying the lessons learned from the Covid-19 experience. This may include surveys, links to the employee survey, and listening forums.