8th April 2020

SMARTER WORKING FOR A SMARTER WORKFORCE

The way an organisation responds to challenges is testament to its values, its planning and its employees.

Covid-19 has gathered pace which has been unprecedented – and is a situation that the majority of us could never have anticipated.

Facing this pandemic and being prepared has been a challenge for all tiers of Government – but Pembrokeshire County Council's capability to reposition its workforce is thanks to embracing the Smarter Working approach.

Our investment in technology has enabled the organisation to have more than 750 staff working flexibly to keep vital services running.

Introduced in the summer of 2018, the Smarter Working project is about harnessing the potential of flexible working in a strategic way, to deliver benefits both for employees and the business.

It is well-recognised that the principles of Smarter Working acknowledge that technology and flexible working patterns are changing the way we work for the better.

Councillor Neil Prior, the Council's Cabinet Member for Transformation and IT said: "The Council's employees understand that we are in a fast changing communication and technology world.

"Culture and behaviour change has enabled us as an organisation to benefit from the advances in IT and an improved flexible use of our estate.

"I'd like to thank the IT team who have been working incredibly hard to support our Business Continuity planning. The investment we have made in technology over the last couple of years has meant that we've been able to see a greater number of staff work from home, which is exactly in line with the Government's advice to 'work from home where possible'.

"I would also like to thank staff who have adjusted their working patterns and are going over and above in their efforts to prepare our County to respond in the best possible way to the current situation."

The world of work is changing and people no longer need be tied to a desk. Pembrokeshire County Council can now work smarter, in a way that saves money, time and improves productivity.

As part of the Council's approach to smarter working and refining the estate – two key changes were implemented.

The conversion of Haverfordia House - which previously accommodated staff - into a reablement centre also enabled the Council to list the Cherry Grove building in Haverfordwest as surplus to requirements, ensuring cost avoidance over the next 10 years stretching into millions of pounds.

Regarding the response specifically to Covid-19 – the stats are impressive. They include:

- 95 per-cent of IT department working remotely
- Skype – average unique users logged in: 1,200
- almost 14,000 one-to-one skype sessions – this equates to more than 1,200 conferences and in excess of 60,000 audio and video minutes used
- figures showcase the Council's ability to enable its staff to work flexibly and keep vital services running
- Community Hub has received more than 700 calls
- the Council's Cabinet is continuing to meet via video-conferencing.

Councillor Prior added: "We take pride in the relationships that we are building with our communities – and I am extremely proud of the work that has gone into the planning and the commitment shown by the Council's staff.

"Pembrokeshire County Council has a history of positive relationships with our colleagues within health, third sector agencies and emergency services – and we are all working together to support each other through this challenging time."

#StaySafeStayHome #COVID19 #WeCareWales #Pembrokeshire