A Hybrid Return to

PKC Offices

Guidance (version 3) @ 31 January 2022

Contents

1. Purpose of the Guidance

In line with Scottish Government guidance, Council offices have reopened on a wider scale, taking a cautious approach, from 31 January 2022. This Guidance sets out:

- how the workplace and our ways of working have changed
- how we will keep employees safe and
- what employees need to know and do

Everyone should familiarise themselves with the changes and restrictions in place to ensure a safe, pleasant and productive workplace for all in 2022 and beyond.

2. Taking forward New Ways of Working

A great deal of work has been done over the past 2 years to enable and support employees who found themselves working differently, often from home, as a result of Covid-19.

Focus has been on supporting effective working, managing mental and physical health and wellbeing, and promoting a positive work-life balance. We have listened to what you have said and continued to update our processes and guidance based on the needs of our employees and managers.

Once again, we enter a new and unexplored chapter as we try to regain some type of normality as COVID-19 moves towards endemic status. Feedback to date indicates a high demand for continued flexible working arrangements. Some employees are keen to continue working remotely, enjoying reduced commutes and improvements in work/life balance, whilst others seek the space and collaboration of working from a Council building. Many are keen to find a balance of the two. The Council will therefore be continuing to encourage a **Hybrid** approach to office working where this fits the needs of all stakeholders.

It will take time for individuals, teams and the Council as a whole to adapt and **Hybrid Working may be only one of several new ways of working that we trial**. Some changes may happen quickly whilst others will develop over time.

The next chapter is an opportunity to leave old working habits behind and commit to,

- A range of safe and secure working environments for our employees
- Wellbeing support to match employee needs
- Promotion of diversity/inclusion and parity of experience
- Focus on best practice to increase productivity/efficiency and manage risk
- Open/honest dialogues with recognised Trade Unions and other stakeholders

Taking time to listen, reflect and improve as we trial new ways of working will allow us all to move forward together and adapt quickly. If we need to go back a step or change our direction, then we can.

It is expected that any formal changes to working arrangements will not be made until this initial period is reviewed later in 2022.

3.   A Hybrid Return to offices

From 31 January 2022, subject to current Scottish Government advice, we have begun to see an increase in the number of people working in Council buildings, however working from home or in another location will continue to be a key part of how we work for many.

3a.   Planning for a Safe Return

All employees should have a discussion with their line manager regarding a plan for them to attend a Council building for all or part of their working week, looking at:

- what the reopening of offices means for you, (taking into consideration business needs and individuals current circumstances)

- the different **working styles** and which best fits your role and your current circumstances

It is not an entirely new concept that teams are made up by people with different working arrangements. Some roles afford more flexibility than others, some may require us to be at a specific location for a specific purpose, whilst others can be done from other locations.

To find your **workstyle**, managers and individuals should first discuss business requirements and customer expectations as well as personal preferences and needs. The availability of desks or other spaces in the workplace may also be a factor in determining when staff will attend workplaces.

While every effort will be made to accommodate your personal choice, it must always be weighed against business and operational needs. You may have to come into a workplace to do certain tasks, functions or take part in certain events.

Whilst you may agree a plan for a hybrid way of working with your manager, you should not assume that this schedule can or should remain fixed permanently. Business needs change, situations arise and requests may require a degree of flexibility on both sides. For example, a wider reopening of Council buildings to the public may have an impact on the need for an employee to return to a Council workplace.

Staff who already had pre-existing flexible working pattern arrangements in place prior to Covid-19 will continue with those arrangements, with any future arrangements agreed between a manager and employee/post being based on the Hybrid concept.

Employees with disabilities should discuss any concerns and individual needs with their manager. This may include a preview of the workplace, prior to any workstyle being agreed.

3b.   What do our Hybrid Offices Look Like?

Many of the **Council buildings** we return to will look and feel different. There will be some restrictions on how we move around buildings and around workspaces to enable us to work safely.

Full building **maintenance checks, health and safety inspections** with trade union colleagues and **workplace risk assessments** have been carried out.

The **number of people** who can be in a building at any one time will depend on the layout of the building.
NB: Should Scottish Government guidance reinstate social distancing measures at any point, this may mean a **much-reduced capacity** for the duration of those restrictions.

In the majority of circumstances, those returning to Pullar House and 2 High Street, will be asked to return to the area/pod they were allocated prior to COVID-19. In a few cases this may not be possible due to changes to building layouts and your line manager will agree an alternative desk for you to use. You should remain at the same workstation throughout the day and observe a clear desk policy to ensure enhanced cleaning can be carried out in the evening. Your allocated desk may be allocated to another member of your team on days you work from home/non-working days.

Toilets and kitchens will be open, **meeting rooms, booths and other shared areas** will be available for staff use however meeting rooms may have occupancy restrictions placed on them.

Effective ventilation of Council buildings is key to maintaining a safe environment for all. You are encouraged to dress appropriately to ensure your thermal comfort whilst in the office as windows will continue to be open.

4.   Staying Safe

Your return to the office on a Hybrid basis should take place following a discussion with your line manager videos highlighting changes to the layout of buildings should be watched by those returning to Pullar House and 2 High Street.

There are no longer be restrictions on which doors can be used for entry/exit from buildings and one way systems in Pullar House have been removed.

There is, however, be a "Keep Left and Keep Moving" approach and in line with Scottish Government, face masks will be mandatory in communal and public areas and when moving about the building, unless you are exempt.

All staff are encouraged to take regular Lateral Flow tests before attending for work in a Council building. These are available from caretakers in Pullar House and 2 High Street.

Any questions re returning to a Council Building should be directed to your line manager in the first instance or to premises staff in your building. Any new/recent members of staff, who may not yet have attended their contractual office base, should be met by a line manager on day one and shown to their allocated desk/given an induction of the building. This may be delegated to Premises Management team in some circumstances.

Current work bubble arrangements will be maintained, as far as possible, so please be aware that some colleagues, particularly those in client-facing roles, may prefer not to interact in-person with people out with their team. The Council supports the Scottish Government distance aware scheme.

4a.   Travelling to and from work safely

If you have concerns about travelling to work safely, for example if you rely on public transport, you should discuss with your manager whether a staggered work schedule

might be possible so that essential journeys, especially on public transport, can take place at less busy times.

4b.   Passes/Clocking in

Flexi Clocks in Council buildings have been removed. Clocking in whilst in a Council building should be done at your desk using your laptop/device.

4c.   At your assigned workstation

Laptops are now the default computing device for all staff. 50% of desks in main offices have been set up with a single monitor, docking solution, keyboard and mouse. This will enable you to use your allocated laptop between home and the Office.
A range of laptop models and docks are in use across the Council. To make sure you are able access the systems and information you need when you return to the office, it is important that you or your manager contacts IT (kbrown@pkc.gov.uk or gplunkett@pkc.gov.uk) in advance of your planned return date, to make sure a compatible docking solution is available for use with your laptop.

Most main office desks have been set up with single monitors and dock: this will allow you to use the desktop monitor and your laptop monitor for a dual screen set-up, where required. Where work stations have been set up with dual monitors, your manager will allocate these within your team, based on business need.

Additional monitors can be ordered via IT, subject to availability. Running dual monitors when not required incurs additional unnecessary cost: any dual monitors no longer required must be reported to IT, to ensure valuable resources are not being under-used.

You will be able to use your laptop camera when making Microsoft Teams calls from the office: you are strongly recommended to use a headset for better call quality and noise reduction. Headsets are available on request from cbs@pkc.gov.uk You should continue to use Teams when making internal calls. Desk phones are available for external calls.

When starting back to work in an office, you can contact kbrown@pkc.gov.uk or gplunkett@pkc.gov.uk for technical help and pkcdigital@pkc.gov.uk for "how do I?" / digital skills assistance. [. General IT faults / incidents should be reported via the IT Self Service Portal.](#)

You should be considerate of those around you, try to limit unnecessary movement around buildings and respect another's need to work and privacy. Use headphones when in virtual meetings.

On return to the office or if you require adjustments to equipment you will require to complete a **DSE Assessment** if you have not already done so.

Workstations should be left free from clutter and belongings to enable cleaning to be carried out.

4d.   Safe Meetings

Where possible meetings should take place using TEAMS. We appreciate that sometimes a face-to-face meeting will be preferred and some meeting rooms are reopening in Council offices, on a limited basis, due to the challenges of ventilating and cleaning between meetings.

Please observe and follow occupancy signage in all meeting rooms.

Video Conferencing equipment is set up in select meeting rooms to facilitate group meetings where some staff are in the office and others at home/remote location. Information about how to book rooms and use our standard video conferencing equipment will be published on eric.

How to book a meeting room

The past 2 years have shown us that meetings can be done on the move, with one to one's and team catch ups regularly and successfully taking the form of a stroll through the park/catch up on a park bench and there is no reason why these new ways of working shouldn't continue.

4e   Security

Security is everyone's responsibility and you should continue to comply with the Councils **Security Policy.**

External visitors attending a business meeting or event at the invitation of a PKC team should be met by the meeting organiser, or someone nominated by them, at an appropriate time prior to the meeting. External visitors should always be accompanied during their visit and escorted to the exit when the meeting is finished. At no time should a visitor be allowed to move around the building unaccompanied.

Visitors should use the track and trace QR code on arrival, to check in and out of the building.

On return to the office "Bin It" days will be organised to enable staff to securely dispose of confidential/other documents which should no longer be/do not need to be kept. When tidying remember to recycle/re-use where possible and to follow the Records Management Policy and confidential waste processes when considering what documents to retain or dispose of.

4f   Fire/Evacuation

The out of hours procedure for fire evacuation is currently in place and will continue to be utilised until there is a significant increase in staff numbers and we have a better understanding of who is in regularly to cover fire warden duties. This will be reviewed on a regular basis as building occupancy increases.

4g.   Health and Wellbeing

All caretakers are **First Aid** trained and present in Pullar House/2 High Street during working hours. First Aid procedures will be reviewed on a regular basis as building occupancy increases.

The Council is committed to creating and maintaining working environments that enhance Health & Wellbeing.

5. Reviewing the Hybrid Approach

We will continue to look at ways we can build and support a more flexible workplace experience with a choice of workstyles and workspaces to match the type of work being done and individual needs. We believe that, with time, there may be less focus on physical desks and more on collaboration however this will be monitored and revisited frequently.

With COVID-19 staying with us for the long term, in some capacity, we may, from time to time, be subject to restrictions in the way we work, in line with advice from the Scottish Government.

The initial arrangements will be revisted at the end of March 2022. We will review how effective hybrid working is after that point. Business needs and expectations may change so flexibility is required on all sides.

6. Questions and further advice

If you have any questions regarding your return to the workplace, please speak to your line manager in the first instance or contact hr@pkc.gov.uk.