



Shire of  
Serpentine  
Jarrahdale

# Discussion Paper

**The identification of opportunities and recommendations for innovative staff working arrangements.**

**June 2024**



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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This discussion paper addresses the requirements of a CEO KPI being:

*Through establishing relationships with stakeholders/organised innovative hubs, present a discussion paper to Council on the identification of opportunities and recommendations for innovative staff working arrangements.*

The paper examines research on innovative workplaces, explores innovative staff working arrangements and provides options and recommendations for Council consideration.

SJ Shire as a growth local government with a relatively small rate base is required to be innovative to meet community needs and expectations. Post COVID the Shire has been in a state of transition and has adjusted and implemented new workplace policies to both attract and retain staff and to adapt to the demands for new ways of working.

While other Local Governments mandated that staff return to the office post-pandemic, the Shire improved its flexible working benefits. As a result, the Shire has attracted many new employees specifically for the ability to be able to integrate their work and home lives. Many other Local Governments are now implementing similar benefits to retain staff.

The challenge for the Shire in a post COVID environment is to continue to attract and retain staff who face challenges accepting the status quo and trying new and innovative approaches to dealing with organisational and community challenges. Without this the Shire risks stagnating.

Given the Shire's growth rate and limited financial resources, it needs staff that are innovative and adaptive to change. The Shire has already taken steps towards being innovative and is at the leading edge in some areas, though the challenge is how to continue to grow an innovative workforce into the future.

This discussion paper outlines examples of where the Shire is already operating innovatively, research on innovative workplaces, findings from workshops and surveys on the new needs of staff and opportunities for innovative staff working arrangements.

Several recommendations have been put forward including attracting more young people into the workforce, bringing forward the redevelopment of the Administration office to facilitate hybrid and agile work arrangements, and exploring opportunities for a presence in Byford both now and into the future through co-working spaces, customer service presence and library for Council consideration.

## **DEFINING INNOVATION**

Innovation, in its simplistic definition is about finding new and better ways of doing things.

In an organisational context it is about exploring new concepts that allow ideas to flow across functions to lead to a more efficient, productive, flexible and engaged workforce.

This requires leadership to set an example of an organisational culture and environment that promotes collaboration, utilises resources in a new way and rewards innovation.

In the Shire's journey of transformation, it has been at the forefront of the Local Government Industry with the implementation of many innovative initiatives including:

- First Local Government to introduce Teams phone calling via laptops
- One of the first Local Governments to transition to a Cloud-based ERP
- One of the first Local Governments to introduce a Communications protocol
- Industry leading Flexible working arrangements
- Industry leading Paid Parental Leave
- Acknowledged for best practice development contribution management and engagement
- Successful partnership with State Government to allocate Crown land to accommodate a major allied health investment within the Byford activity centre
- New Mobile Library Service to deliver outreach service to southern suburbs of Shire
- New Contact Centre and knowledge base to improve customer experience

The challenge for the Shire is how to continue to attract and retain staff who are innovative.

## **RESEARCH AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

In preparing this discussion paper, a research and literature review was undertaken. The following summarises the research relevant to this discussion paper.

### **Deloitte in conjunction with Swinburne Edge**

In 2022 Deloitte and Swinburne worked together to conduct a survey on 2084 Australian workers across Government, Asset, Services and Knowledge industry sectors, to understand the experience, expectations and motivations of workers whose work is location dependent and published "Making Fair Work FlexWork" report.

The report found that in the Government Sector, 80% of flexible location workers chose hybrid (a mix of home, workplace or 3rd location) or home as the ideal location of work. Workers also cited physical, mental and emotional wellbeing as the most important factor, ahead of pay. In fact, 3 in 5 workers said that they would forgo a percentage of their pay rise to achieve greater flexibility.

The reasons for this were that flexible working offer several life benefits, including better work life-balance, less time and cost on commuting, improved mental health, more physical activity and greater contribution to domestic duties.

### **Hassell**

In 2023 Hassell, an architectural firm specialising in workplace designs, surveyed 3,500 people across 7 countries worldwide about their current work-life.

What they found was that people were now spending more time in the office at their own instigation. However, having a choice of where to work was the most popular option with many preferring a hybrid work arrangement.

More importantly, Hassell found that the office environment was still very important and that clean, modern and updated workplaces increased staff satisfaction by up to 17%.

The Hassell study indicated that one of the most desirable workplace amenities is not found in the workplace; it is the vibrancy of what is happening outside.

People commuting into a workplace do not typically visit the office and head straight home. They might pick up some groceries, socialise with friends at a bar or restaurant, or go to the gym. In other words, they make their trip to the office worthwhile by combining it with other errands or things they want to do. This means that the quality of the urban environment around an office is a key factor in the workplace's ability to attract people.

### **One Degree**

Gary Silberman, the Innovation Director for One Degree a technology company that developed a platform for connecting companies to independent contractors, wrote recently on the emerging trends being sought by Gen Z who now make up 40% of the world's workforce.

Having never known a non-digitally enabled workforce, the generation of the emerging workforce are setting the scene for what the workplace will look like in 1 to 10 years.

They no longer want the 9 to 5 structured hours but rather hours that will fit around family and life needs. The environment is one of their top concerns so they see working remotely either entirely or partly will reduce both the time and environmental impact of commuting.

Collaborating and socialising is big - even remotely. They do not agree that you cannot collaborate and socialise remotely, they do this daily via online games where they build friendships and even fight wars in teams! They want an employer who has the technology that allows them to do this seamlessly.

### **McKinsey**

A research article published by McKinsey (a multinational strategy and management consultancy) detailing the future of work and the workplace.

Their analysis looked at 8 countries with diverse economic and labour market models to gain an understanding of a cross section of industrial landscapes.



The findings showed a significant change in workforce trends particularly in the advancement of technology with more remote working and virtual meetings, a shift to and faster adoption of digital transactions.

Their research showed that the workplace changes have been accelerated by the digital revolution that was forced upon many due to the COVID pandemic.

The workplace of the future would need to be able to provide hybrid working arrangements, outcome based, cross functional teams that require more agile workplaces for collaboration that allow teams and people to perform at the highest level. This includes a focus on reskilling and upskilling people more quickly than in the past through formal traineeships and apprenticeships and mentoring.

### **La Trobe University**

At the La Trobe University's recent Youth Innovation Showcase various research articles were discussed relating to youth and innovation. Many held that employees hit their innovative and creative peak early in their careers and that GenZ (the workforce "youth") are now more confident than any other generation and are not afraid to share bold ideas specifically which can lead to innovative practices.

However, young people are attracted to organisations that embrace innovative ideas, seek out employee input and are adaptable to changing environments. They are looking for innovative ways of working and not being held to the previous workplace "norms" as previously set out in Gary Silbermans research.

The benefits from their diverse thought, especially in the representation of their age demographic in our community will be minimum if we are unable to seek out and support youth innovation.

### **AFR – Best Places to Work 2024**

The AFR BOSS Best Places to Work list is an annual list, judged by behaviour change consultancy Inventium, which ranks Australia and New Zealand's best workplaces across nine different industries. Inventium's analysis of the top-ranked companies revealed several themes in how leaders are creating remarkable workplaces for their people.

One of the findings was that where most organisations are now putting in place back to office mandates and leaving employees with little choice over where they work, the best places to work prioritise freedom and choice.

One of the key differentiators of a hybrid workplace with high engagement is the autonomy that gives employees the choice to decide how many days they work in the office versus remotely. The freedom to choose acknowledges the diverse needs and preferences of the workforce, catering to individual work styles, responsibilities and life circumstances.

In addition to flexibility with location, more organisations are moving towards non-traditional models of work, such as the four-day week and flexibility with hours, not just location.

Another theme Inventium identified is that it was not only space to collaborate and be innovative but also time to do so that increased creativity. Marketing agency The Royals, which topped the Best Place to Work Media and Marketing list, provide an innovative solution to an industry-side problem that there is never enough time for creative thinking.

The agency created the initiative “Unnatural Fridays”, whereby they restructured the working week to allow specific teams one day every week to have space and time to think more innovatively. Within 12 months of launch, the agency recorded a **2000 per cent increase** in campaign wins or being finalists in industry awards.

### **Insights From Research**

The conclusion we have reached with this research that the Shire needs to work towards is outlined in the following themes:

#### **Flexibility**

1. Offering more work options to staff through hybrid work arrangements
2. Providing greater choices on where people work from whether that is home, office or co-working spaces

#### **Workplace of Choice**

3. Creating a collaborative and agile workplace that spark innovation and creativity to attract and retain a high performing and innovative workforce through renovation and upgrading the current built environment
4. Increasing our youth employee representation through formal traineeships to grow innovation from within

### **SHIRE STAFF SURVEY**

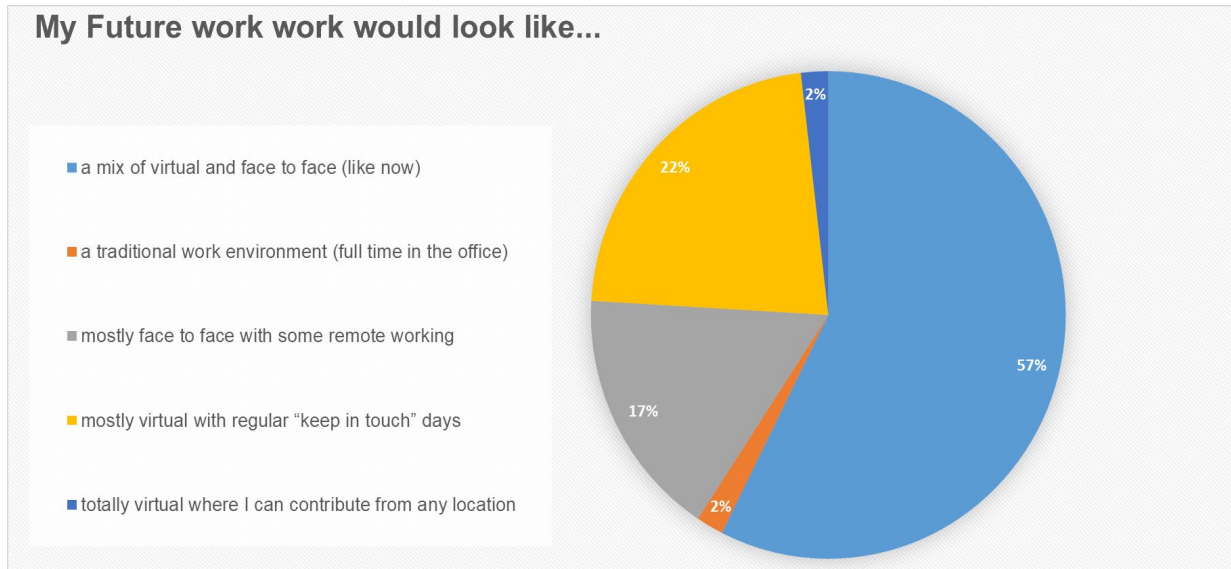
In March 2024 the Shire undertook its own survey of staff to gain insight into how our staff prefer to work and to understand if the research was in line with the views of the current Shire workforce.

The survey was undertaken using the Forms survey function in Teams. The survey was sent to all administrative staff working at the main office (approx. 160 staff). 56 staff responded.

#### **The Return to the Office**

The survey identified that staff are now spending more time in the office at their own instigation. During and immediately following COVID many staff wanted to be working remotely.

The table below identified that having a choice of where to work is the most popular option chosen by employees with many preferring a hybrid work arrangement going forward.

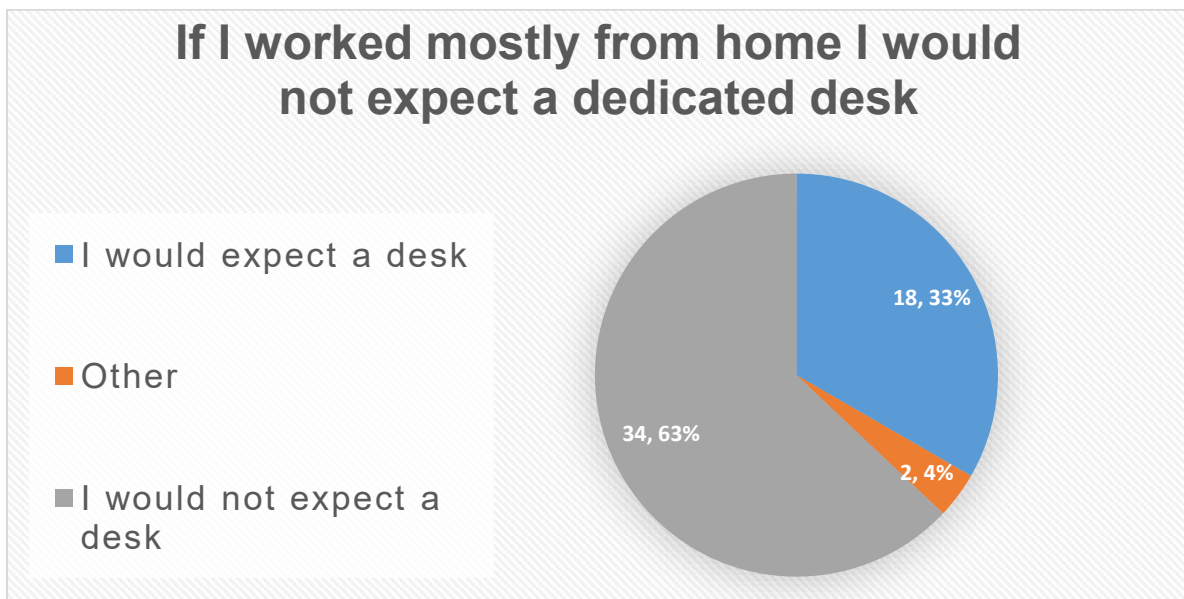


This aligns to the research and demonstrates that Shire employees are aligned to the trends being seen across the country.

### Hot Desking and collaborative working spaces

The staff survey identified that having a collaborative work environment takes priority over a dedicated desk and the option of creating more "hot-desks" and agile working options were seen as opportunities to work more effectively and efficiently with others. This would reduce the need to share services such as photocopiers, printers etc and reduce operational costs across the organisation.

Such an arrangement would also provide the opportunity for staff in other locations such as the depot and library to have a place to sit and interact with other staff they would not normally work with, promoting more cross organisational teams and breaking down silos across the organisation.



The above graph and survey result indicates that most people who are working in a hybrid arrangement do not need or expect a dedicated work desk. This has major



benefits for the organisation in how we plan for and provide the special requirements of the administration building.

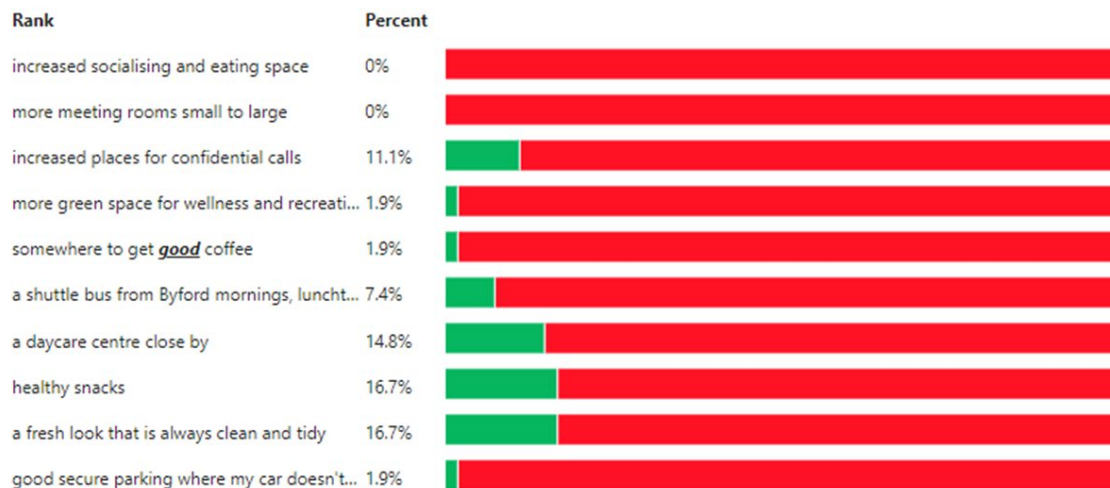
### Getting The Basics Right to Relate – Collaborate – Create

The survey also identified that updating the accommodation and amenities of the office space improves employee satisfaction. Key priorities for a satisfying workplace as identified by staff included:

- Healthy snacks
- A fresh, clean and tidy office
- Family needs being met close to the office
- Spaces for work related confidential phone calls
- Transport to and from Byford (Train station)

6. I would like to work in an environment that has (rank in order of preference)

[More Details](#)



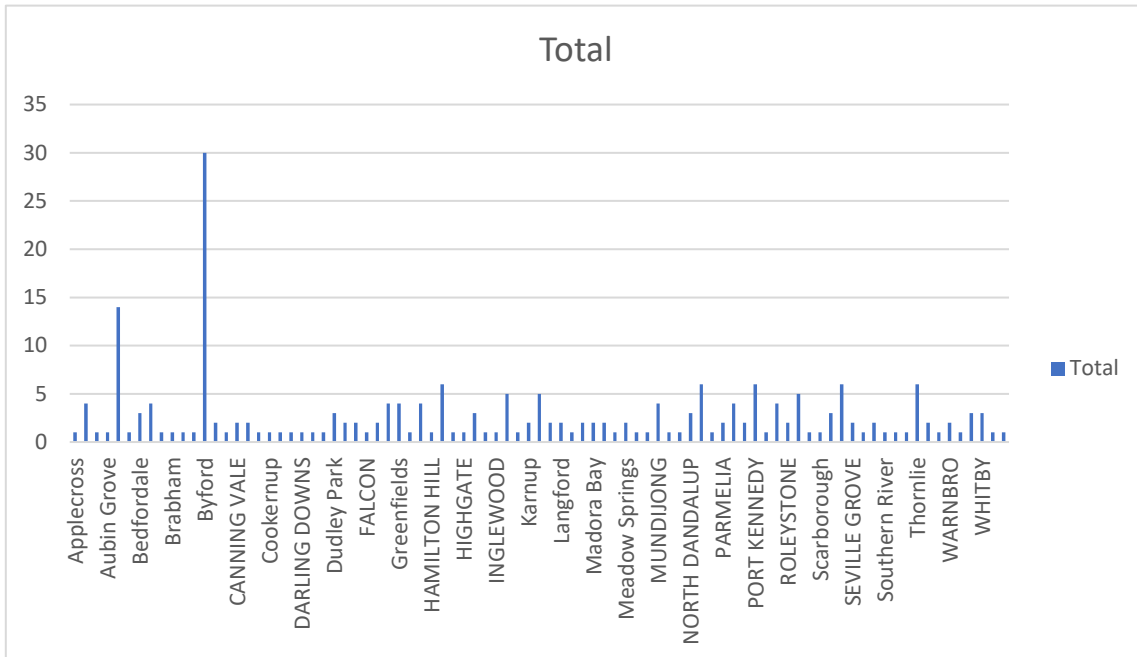
This supports the work which has been done to date on:

1. Improvements to the amenities currently under construction including the toilet, end of trip facilities and kitchen areas.
2. The upgrades are also creating collaborative places i.e. booths for quick or informal meetings from people across the organisation. As other stages of office upgrades are undertaken it is recommended that priority be given to a focus upon hot desks and collaborative working spaces.
3. The changes made to splitting the infrastructure directorate from operations and the restructure of a role to create a new Manager of Facilities position will bring the focus to how the workplaces are maintained and cleaned that staff are wanting.

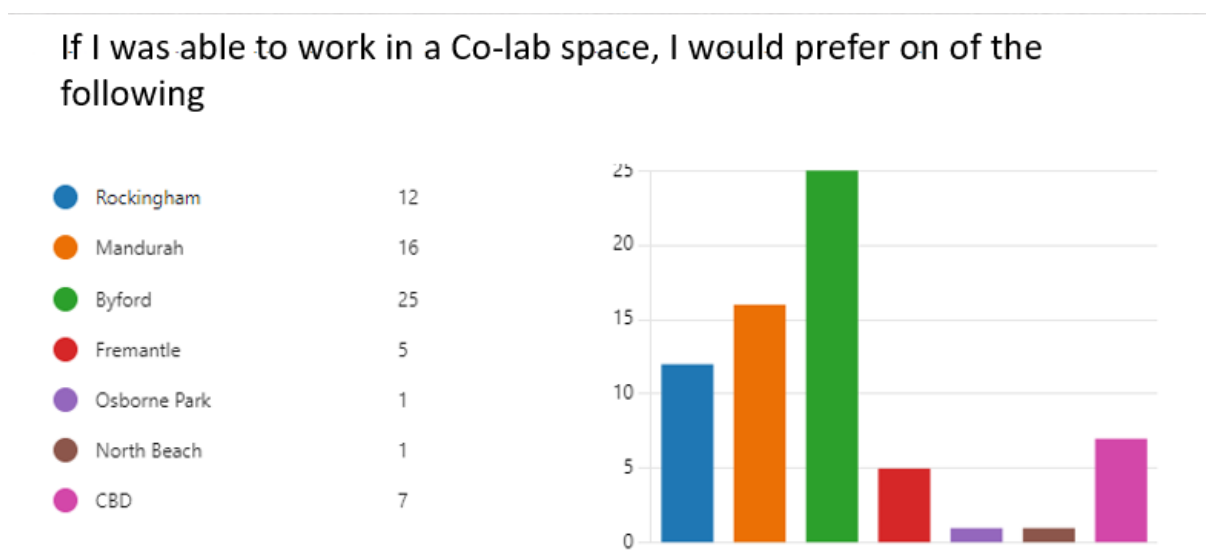
### Local Hires Boosting Local Business

The Shire encourages the hiring of candidates who live in the local area. Local hires can help create a more stable workforce and the employees have a personal interest in ensuring the organisation contributes to a Thriving, Liveable and Connected community through their performance and innovation.

Currently the majority of our employees live in the Byford suburban area as shown in the graph below.



In a recent survey of staff regarding options for working in a collaborative co-working space outside our own offices, most favoured working in Byford. This would support the research by Hassell that the quality of the urban environment around an office is also a key factor in a workplace’s ability to attract and retain people.



In recent years co-working spaces have become popular as flexible and more cost-effective office accommodation mainly for start-ups, entrepreneurs and small

businesses. This provides the opportunity for different companies to work together in a creative and collaborative shared office set up.

One of the significant benefits is the opportunity for employees to gain exposure to innovative ideas and creative solutions they may not have otherwise considered through connecting with and networking with individuals from a diverse range of industries.

It can also provide a location for working when meetings are located in the CBD (or elsewhere) to reduce travel time to and from the office – leading to more productive worktime.

Providing co-lab working spaces outside our regional area allows the Shire to attract a wider pool of candidates who may not have considered working for us due to the distance of their commutes allowing for a greater work and life integration.

Providing alternatives to office space reduces the workspace footprint resulting in savings to overheads and operational cost long term.

## **FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS**

Since the introduction of the Flexible Working Procedure in July 2021, many staff have taken up the option of a flexible working arrangement in some form. The majority of staff have chosen a combination of working from home as well as a compressed work week.

The table below summarises the number of staff on such an arrangement.

Total Staff in the locations where Flexible Work Arrangements are suitable	147
Total staff that have 9 Day Fortnight only or with Working from Home	45
Total staff that have 19 Day month only or with working from home	39
Total staff that have only working from home	50

This means that nearly 98% of eligible staff have some form of flexible work arrangement with all of these having some form of hybrid or remote working.

In response to COVID the Shire introduced flexible working arrangements. This was supported by a new Business Operating Procedure (BOP).

The BOP has the following requirements:

- Choice of compressed work pattern of either 9 day week or 19 day month.
- Flexible start and finish times. Staff may request to start early and finish early to fit in with school pick ups or their partners work patterns for childcare. Generally, any reasonable adjustment of start and finish times can be applied for.
- Working from home up to 3 days per week.
- All of or any combination of the above.

Although trialled at the depot the flexible working arrangements are mostly suited to office-based employees.

This means that on any given day a number of staff are working remotely. The table below identifies how this works on particular days of the week.

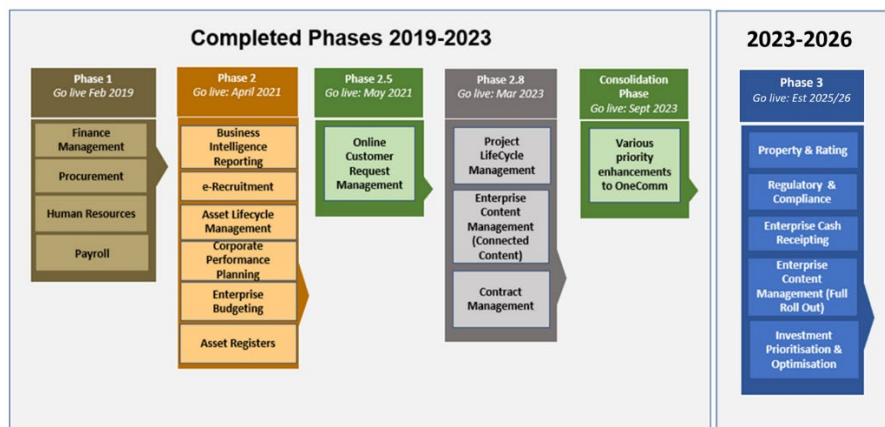
	Week 1 - Off Pay week					Week 2 - Pay week				
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Office	105	128	119	112	94	106	125	117	116	90
Work From Home	25	19	23	34	27	27	22	26	30	27
RDO	13	0	2	0	18	9	0	2	0	22

While these arrangements were introduced in response to COVID, as can be seen from the staff survey many employees would like them to continue.

Additionally, we have had a number of new employees join the Shire from surrounding Band 1 Local Governments where flexible working, mainly working from home, has been revoked after COVID. Feedback received from job applicants at interviews has been that one of the reasons they were attracted to working at the Shire is for the flexible working arrangements in place.

Our own staff have also provided casual feedback that on the days they work from home they have been able to achieve more productivity with most using this time to deal with tasks that need a concentrated focus and that less distractions while working at home have allowed uninterrupted flow of completion of work. This, along with no commuting time has allowed them to be more productive. All business units and Directorates continue to meet KPIs and corporate business plan actions. Most have said that this has given them a greater sense of accomplishment which in turn raises satisfaction levels.

The Shire has also been on a journey of rebuilding an entirely new technological platform on which the organisation operates. The diagram below summarises this journey and next stages:



Hybrid or remote working has been made possible through the implementation of One Comm and other innovations made by our ICT team through the implementation of cloud-based applications and systems, Teams which allows staff a tool to facilitate collaboration, share documents, group discussions, virtual phone calls and online meetings.

The allocation of laptops rather than desktops, has given all staff easy and secure access to the Shire’s IT systems.

Additionally, most of the meeting and conference rooms in the office have been upgraded to provide streamlined connectivity for group meetings via Teams with those working remotely to be included.

Continued implementation of One Comm is supported as an enabler of innovation and flexible working arrangements.

Given that these flexible working arrangements are a valuable attraction and retention tool, the Shire proposes to continue to lock in these arrangements into the foreseeable future.

The staff survey has identified that there is an opportunity to review the planning for office space provision based on this work arrangement continuing. This will be explored in the next section of the discussion paper.

## **WORK PLACE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

Although the Administration Office upgrade is not the primary focus of this discussion paper it provides a context in which the organisation operates and needs to be considered in terms of impact upon innovation into the future.

### **The current plan**

Prior to 2019 the Shire did not have a plan on how it was going to provide long term office space requirements for staff.

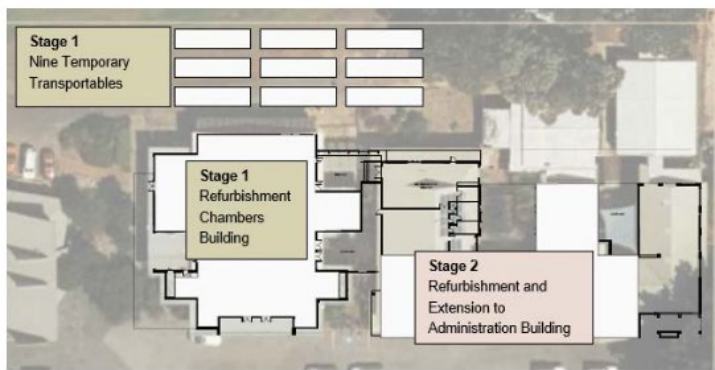
A feasibility was prepared and presented to Council which commenced planning out how this would be managed. This focused on Mundijong remaining the main administration centre of the organisation and the main governance centre of the Shire including the location of Council Chambers.

1. Stage 1 was the relocation of the Library to Byford. This involved moving the Library from the old roads board building next to the administration centre in Mundijong to the Byford Town Hall. This project was achieved using grants funds at very little cost to the Shire. This allowed the old roads board to be used by staff immediately which has been very beneficial to the organisation. The community has also benefited from the library being in Byford.
2. Stage 2 was the upgrade of toilets, end of trip facilities and upgrade to the kitchen and amenities in the administration building. This stage is currently underway.
3. Stage 3 is proposed to be the relocation of the Chambers to the old roads board building. For this work to occur however will require the current staff in that building to be decanted into another location.
4. Stage 4 is the construction of a new building on site. This was proposed to be a building linking the current office space to the redeveloped chambers.
5. Stage 5 is proposed to be the refit of the old Chambers for staff accommodation.

### **Revised planning since this time**

More recently further work has been undertaken on how the redevelopment of the building can occur. This work has not been finalised or presented to Council as yet but a number of options are outlined below.

### Option 1 – Refurbishment and Minimal expansion

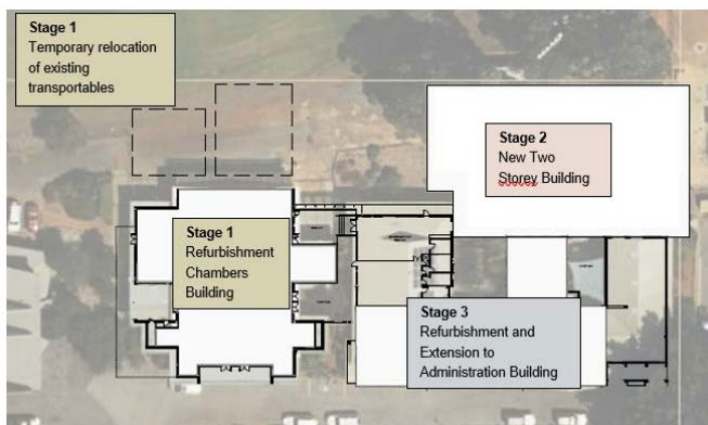


#### Option 1

NLA	<b>1,993 m2</b>
Capacity	<b>155 FTE</b>
Year Capacity Reached	<b>2030</b>
Development Cost	<b>\$12.5 million</b>

- Option based on minimum approach to provide office accommodation for current and expansion over the next 6 years to 2030
- Option considers adding a new floor to part of the current civil building footprint
- This is considered a low capital and short-term solution

### Option 2 – Refurbishment and New Building Expansion



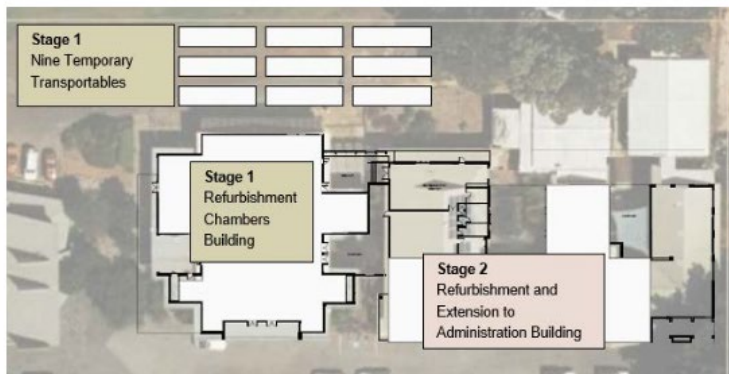
#### Option 2

NLA	<b>3,870 m2</b>
Capacity	<b>303 FTE</b>
Year Capacity Reached	<b>2052</b>
Development Cost	<b>\$30.0 million</b>

- Option based on refurbishment of existing building and construction of a new two storey building to take growth to 2052
- This option may be considered as meeting contemporary workplace standards and suitable for the long term



## Option 3 – Refurbishment only

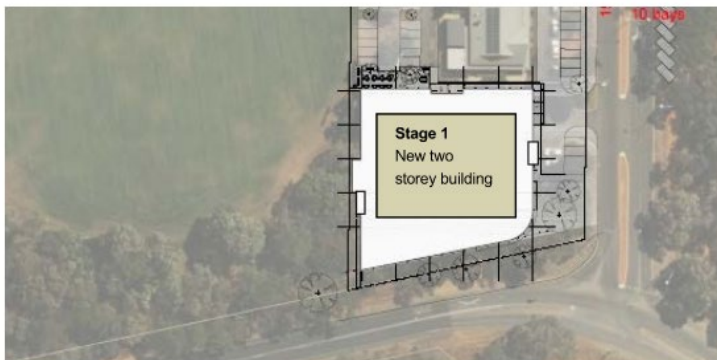


## Option 3

NLA	1,491 m2
Capacity	111 FTE
Year Capacity Reached	2023
Development Cost	<b>\$7.5 million</b>

- This option is based on refurbishment of the existing building only (no change to external footprint)
- Includes removal of two existing transportable
- Includes refreshing the accommodation outcome, however existing capacity will diminish

## Option 4 – New building



## Option 4

NLA	3,628 m2
Capacity	297 FTE
Year Capacity Reached	2052
Development Cost	<b>\$41.9 million</b>

- Based on construction of new building at the corner of our current site.
- Two floors
- All staff in one location (excludes Depot)

The point of identifying this is that all options moving forward will require significant funds whichever option is finally settled upon and could dramatically impact upon creating innovative staff working arrangements.

The worst outcome for innovative staff working arrangements and attraction and retention of staff is the cheapest and easiest which is to install more dongas upon the current site in Mundijong until the final works are completed. That means a number of years of more staff working in dongas. Officers are concerned this will dramatically impact upon innovative work arrangements and turnover in the organisation.

Therefore, this needs to be considered as part of this discussion paper.

## **OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INNOVATIVE STAFF WORKING ARRANGEMENTS**

### **Attracting more young people into the organisation**

As the Shire grows it is important to continue to be innovative. Ensuring that we are enhancing and developing the next generation of innovators is essential to our continued success as a high performing organisation. Increasing opportunities to participate in innovation increase young people's likelihood to innovate in the future and creating an environment where bold ideas are shared and embraced.

Research undertaken by LA Trobe University suggests that:

- Employees hit their innovative and creative peak early in their careers.
- Young people are now more confident to share bold ideas specifically which can lead to innovative practices.
- Focusing on increasing our youth demographic especially as a representation of our resident demographic will increase the value that can be gained from youth insight in the changing trends and provide for greater innovation.
- While we do need to seek out and support young people, they are attracted to organisations that embrace innovative ideas, seek out employee input and are adaptable to changing environments.
- The benefits from their diverse thought, especially in the representation of their age demographic in our community will be minimal if we are unable to seek out and support youth innovation.

To facilitate more young people coming into the organisation an opportunity is to develop and fund a dedicated trainee and apprenticeship program at the Shire particularly targeted at people residing in the Shire.

The Shire has had traineeships previously which has been successful, however it is considered that a more focused coordinated program will be more sustainable long term.

This program will be reflected in the draft 2024/25 FY budget for consideration. Furthermore, a number of new FTE requests for the 2024/25 FY are being proposed as Apprentice and Traineeships opportunities.

#### **Recommendation 1**

**As part of the 2024/25 FY program, establishes an Apprentice and Traineeship program designed to bring more young people into the organisation.**

### **Upgrade of Administration Office to include Hot Desks and collaborative spaces**

Over recent years the Shire has commenced a staged redevelopment of the administration office in Mundijong. Stage 1 is completed and Stage 2 is due to be completed by the end of this financial year.

The research and staff survey identified the following issues relevant to future stages of redevelopment:

1. Hot Desks. The Shire's current plan for redevelopment of the administration space is based upon providing a desk for every staff member.

This requires a significant financial investment from an organisation which has limited financial resources and other priorities. The take up of working from home means that there are a number of days that not all desks in the organisation are being used.

Therefore, the proposal is to revise the plans and provide hot desks to accommodate staff who are working from home or remotely for most of their working hours, need only a short amount of time at a desk, or prefer an agile workspace to collaborate on a given day. The use of hot desks and collaboration desk areas will significantly reduce the office space required.

At this stage of growth, this would provide the means to accommodate all Shire staff in some form and enable flexibility for more desk space to be added in the future if required.

2. Creation of collaborative spaces. This focuses on creating areas that promote collaboration in the workplace as part of redevelopment. Collaborative spaces provide opportunities for staff to work across the organisation in innovative ways unlike a traditional office environment. Collaborative spaces are being created with the current amenity and kitchen upgrades and this focus will extend to the Chambers area once it is refitted. It is noted the redevelopment of the administration area will also include painting, carpets, and ceiling replacement to give a clean, modern and consistent theme across the work areas.
3. Timing of redevelopment of Office Space. The current staged plan for the redevelopment of Office Space at the Administration Building in Mundijong does not see any further redevelopment of this space occur until the Chambers have been relocated to the Old Roads Board/Library Building. This is likely to be in 2 years time. Given the outcomes of the staff survey and research it is recommended this timeline be reviewed and a separate report be presented to Council outlining opportunities to bring forward this staged redevelopment of staff working areas.

### Preparing for the future and addressing immediate accommodation needs

Presently desk accommodation is allocated on a 1:1 basis for office-based employees.

Location	Current Headcount	Offices	Workstations	Meeting Rooms
Civic Centre	11	2	10	5
Administration	69	4	79	2
Finance Donga	16	2	17	-
Infrastructure Donga	23	3	20	-
Old Library	52	1	35	-
	<b>173</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>7</b>

This is no longer sustainable as our projected headcount growth (office-based employees excluding depot and library staff) will reach 215 by 2030 as the Shire moves forward.

While the Shire assesses opportunities for improvement to the administration office and council chambers, immediate accommodation challenges can be managed by leveraging on current flexible working arrangements and reviewing the current use of space.

To ensure success with hybrid and agile working, the Shire has identified the following principles and accommodation models on how different roles will function.

Accommodation Design Principles	Accommodation Models Options
<b>Safe, compliant, and comfortable workspaces</b>	1. Directorate based accommodation areas or 2. Activity-based accommodation areas
	1. Roles/positions that have offices or 2. No office model
<b>Technology and systems to support office, remote and collaborative working</b>	1. 1:1 desk allocation or 2. Hot desking models e.g., hoteling or zoning
	1. Meeting room and 2. Quiet room and 3. Collaborative space and 4. Activity based space
	Defined storage needs

In preparing employees to ease into more agile ways of working, the Shire will support employees through the following change management plans:

### **Employee transition plan**

Educating employees on the benefits of hot-desking and how it works, introducing hot-desking guidelines along with a plan to ensure employees are engaged and supported throughout the transition.

### **Readiness plan**

Preparatory work to include readiness activities such as spring cleaning of items including equipment, audit of storage and storage requirements to reduce storage needs and identification of additional technology or software for confidentiality requirements.

Additionally, to optimise the current space, an option for consideration includes the relocation of Council Chambers for the next 2 years to an alternate venue so this area can be repurposed as a working area for staff. This would be a simple and cost-efficient option to meet short term accommodation needs.

### **Recommendation 2**

**Review the timeline for the upgrade of Office Accommodation and Council Chambers and present a report to Council with a view to bring forward redevelopment/refurbishment of the Administration Office with the aim of:**

- 1. Creating more collaborative spaces.**
- 2. Providing hot desks for employees working on flexible working arrangements for two days per week or more.**
- 3. Improving the physical work environment to give a clean, modern and consistent theme across the work areas.**

**4. Relocating Council Chambers for the next 2 years and repurposing the space to meet short term accommodation needs.**

### **Innovation Hubs/Co-working Spaces**

Co-labs, Co-working spaces/Innovation Hubs provide an ideal opportunity for start up businesses and sole operators to work in a supportive environment part. They have grown in popularity and use. Currently there are business with co-working spaces in Byford, Mandurah, Fremantle, Osborne Park, North Beach and several across the Perth CBD. A tour of Spacecubed in the CBD took place on 20 February 2024 and was attended by the Executive Management Group.

Staff in the organisation were surveyed to determine interest in working from one of these spaces as identified earlier in the report. This research indicated a strong interest from staff to work from a co-working space in Byford.

Officers have reached out and inspected co-working spaces in the metropolitan area, Byford and Mandurah.

The Mandurah Co-Lab is well situated in Mandurah and provide for a number desks in both open space and office suite arrangements. However it is quite expensive and it was felt that many of the staff who can remotely work would likely choose to work from home rather than travel to Mandurah central.

The Byford Co-Lab space allows us to support a business within the Shire however it is small and would only be able to accommodate 9 employees at this time. This would not be sufficient at this time to manage our workspace situation.

There are opportunities to partner with any of these spaces by hiring space for staff to work at them for a fee. However, due to cost and the ad hoc nature of the use of co-working space which does not reduce the accommodation needs significantly, this option will not be considered at this time.

**Recommendation 3**

**Takes no further action in the consideration of co-working spaces at this time.**

### **Office Presence and Customer Service Centre in Byford**

When the feasibility was initially done, Council was very clear on wanting the office and chambers to remain in Mundijong as the governance centre of the Shire. This is also reflected in the local planning strategy and scheme.

However since this time the government has committed to delivering the train to Byford as part of the Metronet expansion. Few local governments have a presence close to a train station and this could be used as a major attraction and retention point for the Shire.

It is recommended that the Shire investigate a presence in Byford which would incorporate a Customer Service Centre and staff office accommodation for the following reasons:

- There is strong interest from staff to be in Byford as identified in the survey
- A presence in Byford as a customer service centre would provide better services to the community

- Easy and cost-effective option to meet short term staffing needs and is an innovative alternative to having more dongas on the current site in Mundijong
- Could be located with a Co Working Space/Business Incubator to support small business development

This could include leasing land from the private sector for this purpose via an expressions of interest process.

Alternatively, it could involve the development of the Shire owned land adjacent to the train station to be collated with a new Library. However, should the funds for this new library solely rely upon developer contributions this will likely be 10 years into the future. An option may be to lease for a period of 10 years whilst a longer-term facility is developed.

A longer-term facility could include a co-working space/innovative hub for the use of start-up businesses and other private sector businesses. This could meet a community need, act as an economic development initiative and ensure that Shire staff are being exposed to innovative thinking and ideas which will assist the organisation in remaining innovative.

Investing in this space in Byford as opposed to spending on new offices and dongas in Mundijong will ensure the Shire is remaining innovative and meeting staff needs in terms of attraction and retention.

This discussion paper recommends that in accordance with the Shire's project management framework, a Project Initiation document be prepared to explore and assess all options and provide a recommendation to Council for consideration.

**Recommendation 4**

**A report be presented to Council for consideration as soon as possible assessing options and providing recommendations (both short and longer term) for the establishment of a Shire presence in Byford to accommodate the following:**

- **Customer Service Centre**
- **Office space for Shire staff (noting that the main Office Space and Council Chambers will remain in Mundijong).**
- **Potentially a Shire sponsored Coworking space/innovation hub**





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