This section has been extracted from a briefing document in which the other items are out of scope of the request.

AGENDA ITEM 7: HYBRID WORKING POLICY UPDATE

[redacted] has provided the key points to highlight as follows

Background

Letter of 25th June attached from Maria Morgan advising CTUS remain opposed to the 40% minimum attendance however wish to discuss a number of issues in advance of implementation and sought clarification on:

- **implementation date for the revised policy;**
- **communication regarding reasonable adjustments;**
- **training for line managers to ensure policy is clearly understood;**
- **clarity on management of annual leave and impact on office attendance;**
- **assurance that hybrid discussions will be conducted sensitively;**
- **Connect2 hub attendance;**
- **Senior Civil Servants (SCS) attendance requirements; and**
- **Office estate capacity**

Suggested wording on SCS attendance received from CTUS in email of 27th June:

4.6 Senior civil servants are encouraged to show visible leadership including through workplace attendance to ensure teams feel supported and the benefits of face-to-face interaction in the workplace are optimised and a learning culture is embedded.

Submission to Minister

Draft policy submitted to Minister 4 July seeking agreement. As of 8 July, no response received.

MS RESPONSE ISSUED TO CTUS 7 JULY

Letter of response issued to CTUS 7 July covering each point raised by CTUS and indicating would be helpful to discuss at meeting (letter attached). Response highlighted that, subject to approval from Finance Minister, we plan to launch communications regarding policy during August with implementation from September with full completion in October.

As of 8 July, no response verbally or in writing from CTUS.

Summary of responses to CTUS on points raised:

Implementation date

Having taken on board the points raised by CTUS during consultation regarding anticipated difficulties of implementation during the summer months, the revised policy will be implemented across all Departments from September 2025, with full completion throughout NICS by October. We are unable to defer the commencement of implementation to the end of October. The approach proposed will allow time for communications to issue regarding the policy change and for staff/line management to discuss and agree how the policy will operate in relation to individual business areas.

Communication regarding reasonable adjustments which is separate from adjusted working arrangements, etc.

Following earlier consultation, the draft policy was updated to include paragraph 4.16 highlighting that requests to work from home or to work from another location as a reasonable adjustment due to disability are separate to requests for hybrid working. The paragraph along with procedure further emphasises the legal requirement made for reasonable adjustments under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

The importance of this distinction will be highlighted in communication to support the policy launch. It will also be reinforced in the reasonable adjustment policy which is currently being developed.

Appropriate training for managers to ensure the policy is clearly understood.

Line managers have been managing the application of the current Hybrid Working policy since its introduction in 2022.

The launch of the revised Hybrid Working policy will be supported with communication to promote the policy, procedure, and FAQs. Communication will ensure that managers and staff are fully aware of changes to the policy and requirements to ensure consistent implementation and management of the policy.

Clarity on how leave days are treated under the policy. Specifically, if leave is taken on days when staff would normally attend the office, there should be no requirement for them to attend on other days.

Management of annual leave is covered at Q.29 of the FAQs. Further wording to clarify the impact of annual leave will be drafted for inclusion in both the procedure and FAQs.

Updated wording will be provided to CTUS for consideration.

Assurance that the manager/staff discussion process can be conducted with sensitivity.

Detailed guidance for line managers on workplace attendance conversations is included in Annex C of the Hybrid Working policy supporting procedure. This highlights the importance of ensuring there is appropriate privacy for the conversation and includes the need to discuss the business needs along with discussion on matters including if temporary easements are needed, and wellbeing. The guidance will ensure that line managers are fully prepared when discussing all aspects of hybrid working.

Flexibility in relation to how staff claim attendance at Connect2 hubs.

Following earlier consultation, CTUS views were considered, and paragraph 3.1 of the policy was subsequently amended to provide that Connect2 hubs may be treated as the workplace on an exceptional basis, subject to business need and line management

agreement. It is considered that this provides sufficient flexibility for the use of Connect2 hubs.

Senior Civil Servants (SCS) attendance requirements.

Revised proposed wording is not accepted. As previously discussed at Whitley Subject Committee in June, the wording is to reflect the critical leadership role of the SCS and importance of visible leadership. It is therefore considered it is appropriate to encourage greater attendance by SCS.

Office Estate

CTUS does not believe that the current office estate can accommodate a 40% workplace attendance and had referenced during consultation, Orchard House as an example, and multi occupancy buildings generally.
Matter raised with Construction and Procurement Delivery. CTUS asked to provide further details of buildings in the NICS estate CTUS consider will be unable to support 40% staff occupancy.