



A week in the life of a member of the Management Team – Mandy White, Head of Corporate Services

Monday 15 June

I definitely have that Monday feeling today and struggling to find the motivation for the week ahead. Possibly due to a busy but enjoyable weekend. My silver wedding anniversary was last week and we should have been in Portugal, but instead a celebratory garden get together at my son and daughter in law's home. A good time was had by all, but need to get my work head on now!

So up to my "office" I head. When I first started working from home in March my desk was the dining room table but as lockdown dragged on, it was getting too uncomfortable, and my patience was being tried with hubby rattling around the place. Plus I had to distance myself from the fridge! So my office desk was delivered and I moved upstairs.

I start the working day by checking my email inbox. Our text service sends messages to my email address so there are usually a few to be forwarded to various staff members. There is also an email from one of the housing officers Elaine to say her monitor that I ordered for her had arrived. Working

on laptop screens all day can be tough on the eyes so some, myself included, have had to get large monitors attached to the laptops – it certainly makes a huge difference!

After getting through my emails, I make a start on letters to our staff members who have been furloughed since lockdown - our 2 cleaners – both called Dorothy! – and Tom, our Estates Inspector who obviously could not work from home. Their current period of furlough ends this week, so I am writing to seek agreement for a further 3 week period. All 3 of them have no problem with this, but like many of us are just eager to return to some form of normality.

The rest of the working day carries on with further messages from tenants, some with repair queries and others with queries for their housing officers. I also manage to get some work done on yearly returns to various organisations before clocking off at 5. I try as much as possible to keep to normal working hours although sometimes this isn't possible.

Tuesday 16 June

Up bright and early this morning, so I decided to go for an early morning walk. Before lockdown I was a regular gym goer but I haven't done much exercising at all over the past few months and my waistline is definitely aware of that fact! 4 miles complete then home, showered and at my desk for 9. And I definitely feel better than yesterday morning!

Quite a few emails to get through this morning before getting on with my work. Some more repairs and housing application queries, so these are forwarded on to relevant staff. There is also an email from Laura our Finance Assistant to warn of a scam email doing the rounds trying to fraudulently obtain money. These types of scams are always frustrating but moreso during these times.

I met with our Data Protection Officer through Zoom last week which was a bit of a disaster as my internet kept cutting out (I must phone Sky to see if my broadband can be

improved). After the meeting he emailed me with a 2 page action list, and I've been putting off dealing with it till now....

An hour later and the action list is nowhere near complete, so it can stay on my To Do List for now.

Our Welfare Rights Officer Moira is organising a bingo session via Zoom for staff on Friday so she has emailed me bingo cards to distribute. The Management Team is keen to keep staff morale up by encouraging staff to come up with fun things to do at the end of the week where we can all get together. Like so many people, we recognise that some staff may be struggling more with losing the social interaction they have always been used to. So we have an all staff Whatsapp group and there have been a few quizzes going through that. We have also had a couple of virtual catch ups through Facetime and Zoom. Details for the bingo session are sent to staff – hopefully there is a good turnout!

Wednesday 17 June

Another brisk walk this morning to kickstart the day. We live within a short walking distance of the Cochno Hills so some lovely morning views to accompany my walk today. And achieved 5 miles so a win win!

I have some company today in my office. My son and daughter in law's golden labrador puppy, Ziggy (my son is a big David Bowie fan). As Harry is a telephone engineer and Emma a nurse, they have been working throughout lockdown and their dog walkers stopped their services which meant Ziggy has been a regular house guest. They only live round the corner so it makes sense. Even though the dog walkers are back in business now, we still like the odd visit! Now, Ziggy is 1 year old and absolutely adorable, but she is totally full of mischief. She has managed to crawl under my desk 3 times this morning to steal an envelope from the box and paper from the printer!

In between chasing after Ziggy, I manage to catch up on emails and read over some information on the furlough scheme. Apparently from 1 July it will become more flexible, allowing some work to be carried out by those furloughed. I'll need to keep an eye on that. Spoke with Catherine our Depute Director/Housing Manager this morning about starting recruitment for a temporary housing assistant. This is to cover Kelly's post as she is due to go off on maternity

leave soon. It looks like we will need to conduct interviews via Zoom, and potentially the new employee will start his or her employment with us from home! Strange times indeed.

Took Ziggy out to our nearby park at lunchtime to let her run about in the hope this will calm her down. A combination of the heat and running did the trick as she slept at my feet most of the afternoon to allow me to get on with checking and updating policies which were approved at our last committee meeting.

I also managed to phone Kieran and Laura – 2 members of my team who are working from the office – for a catch up on how their week is going. Up until a couple of weeks ago it was just Kieran manning the phones, but the volume of calls are increasing so it made sense for Laura to join him to ease the pressure.

Pleased to see a good response for the bingo session on Friday, so I've emailed the cards to those who have printers at home and posted the other ones.

Can't believe we're over halfway through the week. When we first started working from home I thought the days would drag and workload would reduce – I couldn't have been further from the truth!

Thursday 18 June

Took the same scenic route for my walk this morning – but my app says I only completed 4 miles today..... I have no idea what happened to that other mile!

After dealing with today's email inbox, I check over a report from our Internal Auditor who has been carrying out a validation on our annual return to the housing regulator. He has made some comments seeking further clarification on one of the sections I completed, so I get to work on that.

Weekly Management Team meeting at 11, and I'm hoping my internet behaves, as last week I could hardly hear anyone and was even thrown out of Zoom a couple of times! Phoning Sky is top of my To Do list tomorrow!

The meeting went well – my turn for the notes this week so another addition to the list! We always have these meetings weekly even when in the office. It is good to get an update on all the areas of the business, and even more important just now.

After lunch another Zoom session – this time with Laura from my team and Heather from the housing team. Laura is taking over various aspect of the rent processing and housing benefit and universal credit payments, so Heather is going over some of the steps involved. This session did not go well. Poor Laura had major connection issues, starting off with her sound not working at the start of the meeting which resulted in a weird sequence of mimes and lip reading. This was the start of hilarity which went on throughout the "training" as every time Laura started to ask a question she disappeared off screen. After half an hour, with tears of laughter streaming down our cheeks and only 2 questions asked and answered, we agreed Heather would phone Laura tomorrow. Might not have been a great training session but certainly brought some laughter to the event! After catching up with some more emails I log off – Friday tomorrow!

Friday 19 June

Not so much of a scenic route this morning – just along the Great Western boulevard and back but another 4 miles in the bag. Thought I'd log in a bit earlier this morning, but unfortunately there seems to be an issue with the internet connection back at the office.

After a few computer restarts for staff and phone conversation with Maureen our Systems Support Officer, we are all up and running again. Technology is great – but only when it works!

Managed to phone Sky today – and have organised fibre broadband and wifi booster which should hopefully solve all my problems. It was totally worth being on hold for 40 minutes as I also ordered Sky Q – and all for a cheaper monthly bill! I guess patience does pay!

Between emails and monthly returns, I check in with Kieran at the office again to discuss his current SVQ certificate,

which he is nearing completion. Unfortunately lockdown has meant this has been more challenging. We agree to have a zoom meeting next week to discuss it further.

All of a sudden the working day – and week – is at an end and it is time for Bingo! And what a hoot it was! Between explaining to the Bingo Virgins what we were to do, confusion over what to call when you had a line or full house, and what the correct "bingo lingo" was! Kieran won the "first to get a line" and Sharon won the full house. Well done to both, and prizes on their way! A bit of chat after the game, which created more laughter – we have learned a lot about what funny effects lockdown has had on us!

Happy to end the working week wiping tears of laughter off my face, and grateful that we can still pull together and make each other smile.