



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL COMMUNITY LIAISON COMMITTEE

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Community Liaison Committee held on Friday, 12 November 2021 at 10.00 am

Community Liaison Committee Members in attendance:-

Councillor M Webber – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member Council Business **(Chairperson)**
Councillor R Bevan – Cabinet Member Enterprise and Development
Councillor R Jones – Hirwaun & Penderyn Community Council
Councillor A Raines – Llantwit Fardre Community Council
Councillor C Willis – Pontyclun Community Council
Councillor C Woodley -
Mr T Graham – Clerk Pontypridd Town Council
Ms C Hendy – Assitant Clerk Llantwit Fardre Community Council
Mr G Hopkins - Clerk Llantrisant Community Council
Mr S Powell – Clerk Tonyrefail Community Council

Officers in attendance

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mrs S Daniel – Senior Democratic Services Officer

Others in attendance

Ruth Glazzard – Independent Remuneration Panel Wales
Helen Wilkinson – Independent Remuneration Panel Wales

Apologies

Councillor T Burnell
Councillor B James

34 Welcome and Apologies

The Chairperson welcomed Ruth Glazzard and Helen Wilkinson from the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales who were in attendance to answer members questions and receive their feedback into the consultation on their Draft Annual Report 2022/23

35 Declarations of Interest

The following members declared personal interest in item 6, Local Boundary Changes

Councillor R Bevan
Councillor S Powell
Councillor G Hopkins

36 Minutes

RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting held on July were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting

37 Diversity in Democracy

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications provided members with an update on the following areas:

- The last clerks meeting a number of areas of new requirements in Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 were discussed and Communications on development will continue with the clerks over next few months
- The Authority had made progress in moving to hybrid meetings including incremental discussion of live broadcasting of meetings.
- In terms of supporting virtual working the Democratic Services team had been working with finance colleagues to award Community Councils with funding from digital and democracy fund to support them in implementing measures in the Local Government and Elections (wales) Act to hold multi location meetings.
- Member safety was also being explored due to recent events and a number of safety documents had been shared with members.
- The Incident management team had issued stronger advice in school settings for wearing masks as infection rates were continuing to rise in younger age groups, though the rates for RCT were levelling off.

A Member asked if One Voice Wales had produced model standing orders to include the changes in the Local Government and Elections Wales Act.

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications advised that they had not produced anything so far and that the Authority had only just had sight of them for the Authority from Welsh Government. He added that Welsh Government had also commissioned the Authority to produce a Democracy Handbook which once published can be shared with members.

A Member wished to pay thanks to the ICT team who had recently showed them around some of RCT's Hybrid meeting room set ups to enable to Community Council to look at different ICT solutions that would suit their model. He found the visit very helpful and urged other members to take up the offer to visit if they were struggling to visualise the equipment they required

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications continued his update and informed the Committee that the first phase of budget consultation was live with a series of public events taking place in communities across RCT, he added that contributions to the consultation can also be made online too. He further advised members that the Council Tax Base report had also been approved at Council and contained information for Community Councils to consider whilst setting their pre-cept.

A Member stated that it was welcoming to hear that the Authority were able to hold events in the public we can no go out to the public as it was vitally important to reach all members of the Community and not just those that are able to respond online.

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications continued by updating members on the work of the Authority in Diversity in Democracy where this had previously been the focus of meetings with the Community Council clerks and how together we can promote people standing for election in 2022. Work is also continuing to be developed on the Councils digital content and platforms to make them more accessible.

The Diversity Charter which was developed by WLGA was also supported by Council in May 2021 with a final version to be taken to the December meeting of Council

The Chairperson commented that they were continuing to push the Diversity agenda to ensure it reaches communities in the valleys and rural areas as it was acknowledged that there were challenges in achieving a diversity balance. She continued that it was important to give that level of encouragement and support as we don't want inequality in any area.

A Member commented that diversity was hard to achieve, particularly in some valley communities. He commented that he was the only person in his Community Council with a visible disability but still wanted to be involved in many of the campaigns that the Community Council are involve in and his disability should not be a barrier. He commented that funding could be made available to encourage people with disabilities to stand for election and therefore increase diversity in public life.

Another member agreed and stated that we also need to get younger people involved in our democracy and press the importance of political education in schools and colleges.

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications agreed with comments and advised that we need the support of Welsh Government to take forward the proposed initiatives. He added that the Authority wanted to do a lot more in advance of elections to encourage 16&17 year olds to participate at Mays elections. He further added that we have worked with the YEPS Service, school councils and schools to encourage participation. As a council we want to engage 16 and 17 year olds, and we will send a more user friendly letter to encourage them to vote.

RESOLVED: To note the contents of the report

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications presented the report to members which detailed the Electoral Arrangements Order 2021 which implements the recommendations of the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales

He confirmed to members that the changes affect areas that are not represented by Community Councils. He continued that there are a number of areas where there may need to be community reviews in the future, but this would not be possible to do now in advance of next year's Local Government elections so this will follow and will be discussed with Community Councils.

RESOLVED: Members noted the contents of the report.

39 Draft IRPW Annual Report

Helen Wilkinson and Ruth Glazzard from the Independent Remuneration Panel Wales (IRPW) were welcomed to the meeting and thanked for attending to receive members feedback on their Draft Annual report 2022/23 which this year had a focus on fitting in with the diversity in Democracy agenda. Members heard as an example that reimbursement for the costs of care for example was a benefit that was rarely taken up and asked if members could shed any light on this.

One member commented that he thought the allowance was a great initiative and he was an advocate of encouraging members to claim where it was required and Councillors should not be left out of pocket for undertaking their role. He however did relay his concerns as a small community Council, the claims could have a significant impact on their budget. He asked if funding was available to support this, particularly for smaller Community Councils

Panel members replied that unfortunately funding was not within their gift and if they are asked for initiatives to increase diversity in democracy, they are very aware there is a cost to this. However, If there is an additional cost which is unsustainable then they are prepared to say that and reassured that affordability is taken into account. Panel members reassured the Committee that there is commitment within the panel to develop Community Councillors voice to create a more enabling environment at a more local level. They also acknowledged that they recognise payments have not kept pace with inflation and this needs to be addressed to ensure the roles are sustainable.

A Member stated that she felt there is a climate where Councillors are encouraged not to claim, particularly in Community Councils due to their smaller budgets. She commented that there could be a member that does need to claim but they do not want to say or claim the money.

She added that the climate has made it difficult for Councillors to claim as she felt it is seen as a badge of honour if you don't claim.

The panel members commented that they encourage every person who is entitled to make a claim to do so, therefore this would encourage others to make claims too. Their position was that they expect Councillors to make these claims and this will be strengthened in the final report.

RESOLVED: Members noted the report and agreed for their comments to be fed back into the consultation process

**CIlr M Webber
Chairperson**