



**CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL  
RHONDDA CYNON TAF  
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**COMMITTEE SUMMONS**

C Hanagan  
Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication  
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council  
The Pavilions  
Cambrian Park  
Clydach Vale CF40 2XX

Meeting Contact: Julia Nicholls - Democratic Services (01443 424098)

**YOU ARE SUMMONED** to a hybrid meeting of the **DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE** to be held on **WEDNESDAY, 14TH SEPTEMBER, 2022** at **5.00 PM.**

**AGENDA**

**Page  
No's**

**1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST:**

To receive disclosures of personal interest from Members in accordance with the Code of Conduct

Note:

1. Members are requested to identify the item number and subject matter that their interest relates to and signify the nature of the personal interest: and
2. Where Members withdraw from a meeting as a consequence of the disclosure of a prejudicial interest they must notify the Chairman when they leave.

**2. MINUTES & MATTERS ARISING**

To receive as an accurate record the minutes of the Democratic Services Committee meeting held on 3rd March 2022.

**3 - 6**

**3. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

To receive a brief overview of the Committee's Terms of Reference from the Head of Democratic Services.

**7 - 12**

**4. DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2022 - 2023**

To receive a draft work programme for Members consideration and comment.

**13 - 18**

**5. MODERN GOV APP - VOTING BUTTON**

To receive a report from the Head of Democratic Services outlining the Modern.Gov Voting button and its intended roll out across the Council.

**19 - 26**

**6. MEMBERS SURVEY RESULTS**

To consider the report of the Head of Democratic Services, providing the Committee with an overview of the Members survey that was conducted during 2022.

**27 - 34**

**7. URGENT BUSINESS**

To consider any items, which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, is of the opinion should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency

**Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication**

**Circulation:-**

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Democratic Services Committee  
(County Borough Councillor W Jones and County Borough Councillor M Webber respectively)

County Borough Councillors:

Councillor L Addiscott, Councillor J Bonetto, Councillor S J Davies,  
Councillor A J Ellis, Councillor R Evans, Councillor S Hickman, Councillor G Jones,  
Councillor S Morgans, Councillor S Powderhill, Councillor C Preedy, B. Stephens,  
Councillor S Trask, Councillor J Turner and Councillor K Webb

Chris Bradshaw, Chief Executive

Christian Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication

Andy Wilkins, Director of Legal Services



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held on Thursday, 3 March 2022 at 5.00 pm.

### **County Borough Councillors - Democratic Services Committee Members in attendance:-**

Councillor L Hooper (Chair)

Councillor M Webber	Councillor J Brencher
Councillor J Edwards	Councillor G Holmes
Councillor K Morgan	Councillor S Rees
Councillor J Rosser	Councillor G Jones
Councillor W Jones	Councillor S Powderhill

### **Officers in attendance:-**

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication

### **34 Welcome & Introductions**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and acknowledged two new Members, Councillors Joy Rosser and Glynne Holmes who replace Councillors Gareth Caple and Jill Bonetto as they had recently been appointed to the Cabinet. The Chair extended his thanks to them for their contributions to the Democratic Services Committee.

### **35 Declaration of Interest**

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, a declaration of personal interest was made later in the meeting pertaining to the agenda (Minute No. 37 refers).

County Borough Councillor K Morgan – "I work for the NHS"

### **36 Minutes**

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the hybrid meeting held on the 8<sup>th</sup> November 2021 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

### **37 Fair & Respectful Election Campaign Pledge**

In his report, the Head of Democratic Services set out the decision of Council to delegate responsibility for confirming the contents of the RCT specific Fair & Respectful Election Campaign Pledge to the Democratic Services Committee. He added that the Council had made a commitment to support the Election Campaign Pledge which will form an integral part of the Council's Election material for successful candidates.

The Head of Democratic Services also advised that the recent sessions on 'Becoming a Councillor' aimed at all prospective candidates had been well received and had provided all attendees with information about the role of the councillor and the support available by the Council for new candidates and newly elected Councillors. He added that there had been much engagement between the prospective candidates and the Officers present and that issues of safety for candidates campaigning had been raised.

The Chair reminded Members of the contents of the joint statement made by all 22 Welsh Council Leaders at a meeting of the WLGA Executive Board, held on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> January 2022 which would form the basis of the RCT specific pledge.

Members were unanimous in their view that it was regrettable that a pledge was required at all and despite differing views and political backgrounds, most parties wanted to conduct a fair and respectful campaign and wished to represent their respective wards and communities without fear of abuse. Members felt the pledge needed some positive reflection as they agreed that the process for prospective candidates was a daunting one and the pledge was an opportunity to focus on each other's kindness and add some positivity to the existing wording.

Members were concerned that social media was a contributing factor to unfair behaviour and comments, as they encouraged such behaviour to be challenged online and for political groups to be responsible for the content of their respective online political pages. They also called for political literature to be accurate and fair, and to present a balanced view. Members welcomed the pledge and recognised that it was needed.

In response to a query, the Head of Democratic Services advised that the 'We' in the section of the pledge that states "We will call out...." referred to the Political Groups and stressed the importance of supporting the statement whilst not wishing to restrict active debate. The Head of Democratic Services also referred to the importance of Member remuneration as advocated by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales and how not politicising this was key to encouraging a greater take up by Members of contributions such as costs of care and personal assistance.

The Vice Chair suggested the matter is re-assessed post- election by the Democratic Services Committee to understand the effectiveness of the pledge. She took the opportunity to thank the Chair and wished all those Members of the Democratic Services Committee standing in the Local Government Elections well in their campaigns and those not standing the very best wishes for the future.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the comments and feedback from the Democratic Services Committee are included in Rhondda Cynon Taf's Fair & Respectful Election Campaign statement;
2. That the RCT specific pledge forms an integral part of the material provided to successfully nominated candidates and is subsequently promoted by the Council throughout the 2022 election period; and
3. To re-assess the effectiveness of the Fair and Respectful campaign pledge post- election by the Democratic Services Committee.

### **38 Urgent Business**

The Head of Democratic Services provided an update on the Members Induction process post-election and the intention to provide all Members, new and returning with the same information and packs. He advised that this induction process would feel very different to the last, held in 2017 as newly elected Members would be greeted at the three election sites by the Democratic Services team to capture their details for their IT devices and a booking system would be used to book their training sessions for the weeks ahead.

The Head of Democratic Services advised that it was the intention to conduct the training both virtually and in person with the opportunity for Members to be inducted virtually. Training would also be conducted through a combination of external trainers and in-house training. He added that the wellbeing focus within the training process would equip new and returning Members to tackle the challenges ahead.

The Chair welcomed the new approach to the induction process which he was sure would improve the induction experience for all councillors, and he recognised the huge volume of change which had been embraced by the Democratic Services team. The Vice Chair concluded that regular bulletins would be provided by the Council for all candidates throughout the election period and information would be provided by the Democratic Services team as to their location and the support they can provide.

**This meeting closed at 5.55 pm**

**CLLR L HOOPER  
CHAIR.**

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# DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

# Statutory Responsibilities



APPOINTMENT OF A SENIOR OFFICER AS  
THE STATUTORY HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC  
SERVICES



REVIEWING THE SUPPORT AND  
RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO NON-  
EXECUTIVE MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL



RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEVELOPMENT AND  
TRAINING FOR MEMBERS



# Purpose of the role...

- To champion the needs of all-members
- To ensure members are provided with access to independent advice and support.
- Consider the statutory sufficiency of resources report from the HODS and make recommendations for resources.
- To review resources available to members from accommodation to technology
- Consider matters associated with the role of an elected members (from the IRP annual report through to the recent post-election induction)
- Personal development and training
- Diversity and participation

# Outcomes...

- Secured additional resources to support members in areas identified by members
- Developed plans to enable the broadcasting of committee meetings
- Considered enhancements to facilities and improved accessibility as a result
- Continuing to monitor the development of the members portal
- Extensively enhanced member development and training opportunities over the last two years including the Members Induction Programme
- Actioning feedback from Annual Members survey

# Year ahead...

- Further develop and enhance live-broadcasting and hybrid meetings e.g the Modern.Gov voting app
- Consider the sufficiency of resources
- Assess the effectiveness of the Member induction programme and ongoing training arrangements for new and returning members
- Ensure that the appropriate safety/security provisions are available to Members when undertaking their role
- Consider the new requirements contained with the Local Government & Elections Act Wales

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## RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

14<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2022

**DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME: 2022- 2023 MUNICIPAL YEAR.**

#### REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

##### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To present, for Members' comment and approval, a Work Programme on the proposed list of matters requiring consideration by the Committee for the 2022-2023 Municipal Year.

##### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee approve the draft Work Programme for the 2022-2023 Municipal Year.

##### **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The need to provide Members with a draft work programme to assist them in undertaking their role by agreeing items that come forward to the Committee.

##### **4. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

- 4.1 The proposed work programme is a rolling work programme for the 2022 - 2023 Municipal Year.
- 4.2 A draft work programme is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 4.3 During the period outlined, the Work Programme may be subject to further change to take into account any additional/deletion reports, including any new consultative documents or legislative initiatives from the Welsh Government, which require urgent attention.
- 4.4 Once agreed, the 2022 - 2023 Work Programme will also be published on the Council Work Programme page of the Website to again assist Members of the public, by improving transparency.

##### **5. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT**

- 5.1 The draft work programme has been compiled by the Head of Democratic Services in discussion with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee, considering items previously considered and items recently discussed at Committee meetings

**6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not needed because the contents of the report are for information purposes only.

**7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

**8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 8.1 None

**9. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES.**

- 9.1 The draft work programme encompasses all of the Council priorities as it indicates reports coming forward across the Directorates which may impact upon the Council's corporate priorities and others. It also embraces the Future Generations Acts as all future decisions taken by the Committee seek to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of the County Borough.

**10. CONCLUSION**

- 10.1 A draft work programme for the 2022-2023 Municipal Year is attached.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**14<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2022**

**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

**Item: WORK PROGRAMME: 2022- 2023 MUNICIPAL YEAR.**

**Background Papers**

- None.

Officer to contact: Emma Wilkins, Democratic Services

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**APPENDIX 1 Democratic Services Committee – Work Programme 2022 -23.**

<b>14<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2022</b>		
<b>ITEM</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>AUTHOR</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work Programme &amp; Overview of the Terms of Reference</li> </ul>	To consider a draft work programme (2022/23) to assist Members in their work	Head of Democratic Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members Survey Results</li> </ul>	To consider the findings and comments of the Member Survey conducted in June 2022 and any actions to be taken forward	Head of Democratic Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modern.Gov Voting App (&amp; Demo)</li> </ul>	To receive a report on the Modern. Gov Voting App.	Head of Democratic Services
<b>14<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2022</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resources Report</li> </ul>	To receive an update in respect of the resource provision for Democratic Services	Head of Democratic Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Participation Strategy</li> </ul>	To consider and comment on the Council's Public Participation Strategy	Head of Democratic Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IRP Draft Report</li> </ul>	To consider the draft recommendation of the IRP and provide feedback to the IRP	IRP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual Report</li> </ul>	To consider the draft Democratic Services Committee Annual Report 2021/22	Head of Democratic Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members Portal</li> </ul>	To receive an update in respect of the Members' Portal	Head of Democratic Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi Location Meeting Policy</li> </ul>	To consider the Council's Multi-Location meetings policy and provide comments and observations as appropriate.	Head of Democratic Services
<b>13<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2023</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Webcasting Update</li> </ul>	To receive feedback in respect of the Hybrid and webcasting	Head of Democratic Services

	approach to meetings including the voting app	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members Safety</li> </ul>	To receive details of the support provisions available to Members and any proposals for improvements to be taken forward	Head of Democratic Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IRP Annual Report</li> </ul>	To consider the annual report of the IRP	Head of Democratic Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members Training</li> </ul>	To receive an update from the Head of Democratic Services providing Members with details of the forthcoming training available to Members	Head of Democratic Services

DRAFT



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**14<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2022**

**DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**MODERN.GOV IN-APP VOTING SYSTEM**

**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members with details of the Modern.Gov in-app voting system and to provide committee with an update on the intention to roll out the app.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Democratic Services Committee:
- (i) Acknowledge the progress made (following the demonstration to Committee Members); and
  - (ii) Consider the phased roll out approach to the voting app as detailed within section 4 of the report.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 On the [29<sup>th</sup> June 2021](#), Members of the Democratic Services Committee considered a report in respect of the introduction of the broadcasting of committee meetings and the ability to operate through a hybrid approach which was in line with the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.
- 3.2 At that time, members of the Committee supported the arrangements in respect of a phased roll out of the hybrid meetings with a series of mock demonstrations to support the planned roll out across the Council.
- 3.3 As the webcasting and hybrid approach has been successfully embedded into the Council's democratic process it is considered appropriate now to roll out the Modern.Gov in-app voting system to compliment the webcasting process.

**4. MODERN.GOV.VOTING BUTTON (VOTING APP)**

- 4.1 Previously, Members in their multi location meetings have been voting by raising their hands, a function which has been recognised in the chamber

and through the Zoom platform as Members' clear indication of choice. To aid the process of determining a decision, members views have often been sought through identifying objections or by Group Leaders exercising their members vote on their behalf. This method has worked well for the purposes of formally recording the votes and outcomes of motions and recommendations, particularly during the initial lockdown period, where meetings were conducted virtually only.

- 4.2 The intention has always been to explore the in-meeting voting arrangements to ensure a more sophisticated method of recording votes to accompany the progress made with the hybrid meetings. However, priority has always been given to ensuring the hybrid meeting process was fully embedded into the council multi location meetings in the first instance.
- 4.3 In seeking, a formal voting arrangement within a hybrid meeting environment, Officers have been keen to avoid any arrangement which would mean different arrangements operating virtually, to the mechanisms utilised within a chamber or committee room environment.
- 4.4 Voting through the Modern.Gov in-app voting feature will support both physical attendance and remote attendance with simple, secure and transparent voting functionality through a paperless application. The application provides the opportunity for the Democratic Services team to Pre-submit votes and ad-hoc voting on agenda items for hybrid or virtual meetings. In addition, the app also manages attendance, the entire voting process, vote re-runs and casting votes, provide a suit of additional information, which is publicly accessible.
- 4.5 Utilising the Mod Gov App, Members' attendance will continue to be recorded alongside their respective profiles on the Council website with the addition of voting results which will be captured under their 'Voting Record'. This process will ensure accountability and transparency where voting has taken place and a clear record of Members' decisions.
- 4.6 Much in the same way as the webcasting and hybrid meetings were positively rolled out incrementally, which enabled Members to experience the system within their own committee setting, the same is intended for the roll out of the voting app, before utilising the system at Full Council.
- 4.7 Below is a timetable of the training that has already been undertaken and that which will be delivered by the Digital Skills team followed by the roll out on an incremental basis.

<b>Next Steps</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Scheduled</b>	<b>Progress:</b>
<b>Briefing on new voting arrangements to Group Leaders</b>	To familiarise Group Leaders with the new functionality of the new Modern.Gov in-app voting system	7th September 2022	Complete

<b>Briefing to Cabinet Members/SLT Officers on the new Modern.Gov in-app voting system</b>	To familiarise Cabinet Members and SLT on the Modern.Gov in-app voting system	12th September 2022	Complete
<b>Demo on the new Modern.Gov in-app voting system and briefing report on the new arrangements to members of the Democratic Services Committee (DSC)</b>	To familiarise the DSC with the new arrangements for the Modern.Gov in-app voting system	14 <sup>th</sup> September 2022	14 <sup>th</sup> September. To be completed
<b>Demo to all Elected Members of the Council on the new Modern.Gov in-app voting system</b>	Demo of the Modern.Gov in-app voting system and its full functionality to all Elected Members by the Digital Skills Team	September 2022	To be completed
<b>Demo of the new Modern.Gov in-app voting system in specific committee settings, starting with Planning &amp; Development (P&amp;D) Committee</b>	Demo to and utilisation of the new Modern.Gov in-app voting system by the members of the Planning & Development Committee	October 2022	To be completed
<b>Review Progress November 2022</b>			
<b>Implementation of the new Modern.Gov in-app voting system to Full Council (Following an open session prior to the meeting)</b>	To utilise the new Modern.Gov in-app voting system	To be confirmed as part of the review process	To be completed

## **5 FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS**

- 5.1 The above timetable will enable all Members of the Council to receive a demonstration on the Modern.Gov in-app voting system with a view to implementing the app at a future meeting of the Planning & Development Committee and Full Council in October 2022.

- 5.2 It is considered that the Council is in a positive place going forward and has made steady progress with its hybrid meetings following the initial roll out. Member engagement has been instrumental to the progress made to date, particularly following the Local Government Elections where a number of new Chairs and Vice Chairs will familiarise themselves with the hybrid meetings and the voting app.
- 5.3 Members of the Democratic Services Committee will be the first Committee to undertake a demo by the Council's Digital Skills Team and will continue to receive updates and progress reports on the webcasting of hybrid meetings as well as the in-app voting system.
- 5.4 The Head of Democratic Services is in the process of completing a formal multi-location meeting policy, which will confirm the protocols and procedures to support digital voting.

## **6 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY**

- 6.1 The provision of a webcasting service promotes democracy and encourages public engagement. By removing potential barriers for members of the public to attend meetings at the chamber, webcasting opens up opportunities for wider public engagement and transparency. The aspect of hybrid and virtual meetings also promotes the democracy agenda, allowing the undertaking of Council business by Members to be more accessible and manageable.
- 6.2 The Modern.Gov in-app voting system will enable a clear and concise recording of Members' voting preferences and support the transparency of the voting process.

## **7 WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The developments within the Council Chamber and webcasting infrastructure has strengthened the Welsh language within the democratic process and made it accessible to members of the public when live streaming meetings or watching pre-recorded meetings. The in-app voting system will facilitate the democratic process for members of the public.

## **8 CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 The opportunities offered by webcasting and now the Modern.Gov in-app voting have been considered by members as part of the business of full Council, Cabinet and Democratic Services Committee.
- 8.2 Promoting transparency in the democratic processes, including webcasting and the in-app voting, has also been discussed in the meetings of the Political Group Leaders, which the Head of Democratic Services attends.

## **9 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

9.1 The associated funding to deliver webcasting and the infrastructure were included as part of the Council's 2020/21 Budget, following support provided previously by the Democratic Services Committee. Additional funding has also been sought from Welsh Government in respect of further advancements such as the in-app voting system as outlined within the report.

**10 LINKS TO CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.**

10.1 The provision of webcasting and any associated improvements link to the Corporate Plan priorities with particular reference to 'living within our means' and an 'efficient and effective Council', ensuring transparency with our decision-making process for the benefits of our residents.

10.2 Ensuring that there are greater opportunities for public engagement through webcasting links to the Wellbeing of Future Generations goals of a more equal Wales and a Wales of cohesive communities. This proposal would further support the ability of this council to involve communities in key decisions.

**11 CONCLUSION**

11.1 Through the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 Councils were legally required to webcast meetings to strengthen local democracy and encourage public participation.

11.2 The Council has successfully adopted its hybrid meetings and Members have embraced the multi-location meetings and the new technology. It is proposed that this progress is advanced and developed with the in-app voting system as an example of how further improvements can be made.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**  
**AS AMENDED BY**  
**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**  
**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE**  
**14 September 2022**  
**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

**BACKGROUND PAPERS – none.**



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**RHONDDA CYNON TAF**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**14<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2022**

**DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**MEMBER SURVEY – CONSIDERATION OF FEEDBACK**

## **REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members with the feedback obtained from the Member survey undertaken in June 2022, following the Local Government Elections, regarding the timing and frequency of Council meetings.
- 1.2 In accordance with Section 6 of the Local Government Measure 2011, and as part of the statutory responsibilities of the Head of Democratic Services, the Council is required to survey the views of its Members in relation to the calendar of meetings and the provision of support and resources to non-executive members.
- 1.3 In addition, the survey captured some initial responses about the support provided to Members during their Induction programme to assist them in undertaking their role as newly elected Members (and those returning Members) with the aim of identifying areas where the Council Business Unit can improve or change current arrangements.

### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Democratic Services Committee:
  - (i) Consider the feedback obtained from the Member Survey 2022 as outlined within the report;
  - (ii) Progress any actions deemed appropriate as a result of the feedback and comments received as outlined within the report; and
  - (iii) Note and agree that simultaneous translation will only be provided at those committees where the membership includes Welsh speaking Members (and where advance notice of a public speaker wishing to converse in Welsh has been given) (as set out in section 10 of the report).

### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 As part of the statutory responsibilities of the Head of Democratic Services, the Council is required to survey the views of its Members in relation to the calendar of meetings and the provision of support and resources to non-executive members.
- 3.2 In view of this requirement the Head of Democratic Services, in consultation with the Democratic Services Committee, has made arrangements for a bilingual survey to be conducted on an annual basis. In March 2019 Members of the Committee agreed to the drafting of the survey, which has been adapted over the last few years to recognise changes in working practices, such as hybrid meetings. The previous Democratic Services Committee, agreed to this broader survey, to support service improvement going forward. Such elements are not part of any statutory requirements.

### **4. MEMBERS SURVEY 2022**

- 4.1 Following the Local Government Elections, the Council sought the views of Members in areas not statutorily required to ensure that the Council continues to provide the appropriate support to all Elected Members.
- 4.2 The outcome of the survey informed the calendar of meetings that was agreed at the Council meeting held on the 6<sup>th</sup> July 2022 (following consideration of a draft calendar of meetings at the Council AGM in May 2022) and has enabled the Chairs to make an informed decision in respect of timing of future meetings.
- 4.3 The survey was conducted in June 2022 and overall, 43% Members completed the questionnaire. More detail has been given to the specific areas surveyed below.

### **5. TIMINGS OF MEETINGS**

- 5.1 Members were asked to provide their preference for Committee start times for when taken forward through a hybrid approach.
- 5.2 This view was considered at the Council AGM on the 25<sup>th</sup> May 2022 during consideration of the Calendar of Meetings when Members agreed that in the majority, committees would commence at 5pm as evidenced below:
- In total over 55% of the respondents cited 5.00pm as their preferred starting time for Council meetings. In respect of other key committees currently with a 5pm start time such as Licensing Committee, Scrutiny Committees and Democratic Services Committee, the majority of Members indicated the continuation of the 5pm Committee meeting start time.
- 5.3 With regards to the Planning & Development Committee, of those that responded and are members of the committee, 46% stated that they are

happy with the current start time. It should be noted that the majority of the committee members survey supported the proposed time.

- 5.4 Members agreed that some of the Council's smaller Committees should continue as standalone virtual Committees, a decision recommended by the Democratic Services Committee during its meeting in May 2021. (Subject to caveat arrangements)
- 5.5 Some additional individual comments in respect of start times of Committees were noted by responders:
- *Council need to recognise that some Cllrs have work and family commitments. Cabinet meetings for instance held during the middle of the day is not really acceptable. Every effort should be made to be as inclusive as possible;*
  - *Start time preferences take into account enabling members who work plus members of the public to attend*
  - *There is no option for 3.00 p.m. which is the current time for Planning and Development Committee. This would be my preference.*

## **6 HYBRID MEETINGS**

- 6.1 As reported to Council in July 2022, the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 places a requirement on the Council that meetings take place on a multi-location basis. Members are therefore able to join virtually through the Council's Zoom platform or attend in person at the Council Chamber.
- 6.2 When asked about their preference for attending in person or online, Members responded as follows:
- 86% of Members stated that they prefer to attend physically in the Council chamber and in doing so 97% of Members were happy with the level of support they had received to date to enable them to use the technology in the Council chamber;
  - 14% of Members prefer to join virtually and 94% of those Members were content with the level of support available to enable them to join a meeting virtually
- 6.3 With regards to accessing agendas and reports in advance of the Committees it was recorded that 87% of Members are happy to receive meeting reports through Modern.Gov which is a good reflection of the support and training Members received during their induction programme.
- 6.4 The Democratic Services Committee have always championed the flexibility that comes with the hybrid meetings, allowing Members to choose the meeting setting and environment more suitable to them. In keeping with the previously successful phased approach to Hybrid meetings, which was rolled

out to all Members on an incremental basis, the same will apply to the introduction of the electronic voting system.

- 6.5 The voting app button will provide transparency with decision making and a clear record of votes undertaken within our committee settings and will also provide a publicly accessible record of individual members voting and support the smooth transaction of business. (A report on the roll-out of this function is provided at agenda item 5).

## **7. COUNCIL BUSINESS UNIT**

- 7.1 Members were positive in their comments upon the support provided to them by the Council Business Unit. The response was a unanimous 100% of Members advising they were happy with the support provided by the Unit both in terms of general support provisions to perform their role and in also terms of the advice and support provided at committee meetings. They felt that all responses to Members' queries were both quick and effective.
- 7.2 This response demonstrates that the current level of support and resources remains sufficient; it also demonstrates the need to maintain this positive level of support to newly elected Members post-election.
- 7.3 When asked whether Members were content with the level of information circulated to them such as the daily/weekly updates and consultation information in relation to Welsh Government and RCT services, 97% of Members responded favourably. Notwithstanding this response, the Head of Democratic Services recognises that further improvement is required in this area.

## **8. MEMBER INDUCTION & TRAINING**

- 8.1 Following the recent Local Government Elections, a full programme of training opportunities was provided to newly elected and returning Members which included a number of mandatory training sessions such as:

- How the Council works
- Democratic processes
- Rules of proceedings
- Code of Conduct training
- Meeting participation

General and bespoke training sessions, which were either delivered through external providers such as the WLGA, James Button (Licensing) or internally with Council Officers:

- Understanding Local Government Finance\*
- Elected Members Pension Scheme
- Corporate Parenting and Safeguarding
- Planning and Development
- Licensing

- Members Safety
- Information Management
- Scrutiny Questioning Skills
- Scrutiny Charing Skills
- Accessing the Members Portal
- Welsh Language Skills
- Equality and Diversity\*

\*Both training sessions will be held in September 2022

- 8.2 These training sessions were undertaken both virtually and through the hybrid approach and at various times to accommodate Members with their personal and business commitments. All power point slides/handouts were disseminated following the training sessions and in cases where Members were unable to attend, individual 1-1 sessions were arranged. It is the intention that all recordings and training materials will be published on the Members Portal within the next few weeks.
- 8.3 Feedback forms were circulated to Members following the sessions in order to fully evaluate them, a process which will assist the Council Business Unit to understand how effective the training sessions have been as well as to identify any gaps in learning.
- 8.4 Members were also surveyed on their recent comprehensive Induction Programme to ascertain the relevance/length/content of the sessions and where, if any, improvements can be made for future induction training programmes. Overall, 87% of Members said they were satisfied with the delivery, timings and content of the training with 13% of Members stating that they wished to highlight some specific issues for further consideration such as:
- *Too many {sessions} together in a week, needs to be more spaced out as Members who are employed find it difficult to attend;*
  - *Again, maybe look at the timings of the training so everyone has a chance to attend, maybe one day time and then in the late afternoon.*
- 8.5 Over the coming months every Member will be given the opportunity to have a Personal Development Review (PDR) and any training needs will be actioned following the review conducted by the Head of Democratic Services (or by the Group Leaders if requested). Members' PDRs are taken forward in confidence with the training requirements alone shared with the appropriate service area to allow these requests to be actioned.
- 8.6 Members are reminded that any training requested, either through the PDR's or through Democratic Services will always be accommodated, whether through a bespoke package of training provided by an external provider, a one-to-one session with an internal officer of the Council or general training provision with invites to all Members of the Council.

## **9 WELSH LANGUAGE IN MEETINGS**

- 9.1 In order to ensure that the Council's commitment to promoting and facilitating the Welsh language continues, Members were surveyed on their language preference for correspondence and for the purposes of conducting meetings through their preferred language. 90% stated that English is their preferred language with 10% preferring to converse/receive information through the medium of Welsh.
- 9.2 The existing council chamber conferencing system, which includes simultaneous interpretation and webcasting, currently promotes the use of the Welsh language at every opportunity and has successfully embraced the simultaneous translation facility across its webcasting and virtual meetings to support and promote the Welsh language for both our Elected Members and public speakers.
- 9.3 The survey results have shown that in order to directly support our Welsh speaking Members in meetings, the simultaneous Welsh translation service would be better used specifically for those committees where the membership includes Welsh speaking Members. This will also be offered where Democratic Services has been informed in advance of any public speakers wishing to converse through the medium of Welsh.
- 9.4 This will mean that the Council's commitment to providing the simultaneous translation facility for those Members who have indicated that they wish to converse through the medium of Welsh in a committee setting, will remain unchanged and Members will continue to experience the same high-level service. The Head of Democratic Services is seeking to discuss these amendments with Group Leaders.
- 9.5 The survey also revealed that 16% of Members are currently learning Welsh. In order to promote the Welsh language and increase the confidence of new learners, the Council Business Unit in conjunction with Welsh Language Services will be offering all Members the opportunity to undertake bespoke and dedicated Elected Member Welsh classes. Information on these free sessions led by the Council's Welsh Language Tutor will be circulated in September 2022.

## **10. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 The results of the survey allow for each Member to submit their comments and suggestions into the work of the Council Business Unit and provide valuable insight into the needs and support for each Member. The report encourages the authority to examine the way that business is conducted to ensure the equality of access and involvement of all Councillors.

## **11. CONSULTATION AND INVOLVEMENT**

- 11.1 Members Survey 2022.



**12. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 12.1 Any financial implications aligned to the suggestions put forward by Members will be considered as and when taken forward.

**13 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 13.1 None

**14. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.**

- 14.1 The work of all Councillors is fundamental to the work of the Council and subsequently the delivery of the Corporate Plan, hence ensuring Members are fully supported in undertaking their roles is important to the work of the Council overall.
- 14.2 Ensuring all Members are supported and have equal access to support and development links to the future generations well-being goals of a more equal Wales and a Wales of cohesive communities.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**14<sup>th</sup> September 2022**

**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

**BACKGROUND PAPERS – none.**