



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

GWŶS I GYFARFOD O'R CYNGOR

C.Hanagan
Cyfarwyddwr Gwasanaeth y Gwasanaethau Democrataidd a Chyfathrebu
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Rhondda Cynon Taf
Y Pafiliynau
Parc Hen Lofa'r Cambrian
Cwm Clydach CF40 2XX

Dolen gyswllt: Emma Wilkins - Democratic Services (emma.wilkins@rctcbc.gov.uk)

**DYMA WŶS I CHI i gyfarfod o PWYLLGOR Y GWASANAETHAU
DEMOCRATAIDD yn cael ei gynnal yn Rhithwir ar DYDD IAU, 27AIN
EBRILL, 2023 am 3.30 PM.**

AGENDA

Tudalennau

1. CROESO

2. DATGAN BUDDIANT

Derbyn datganiadau o fuddiannau personol gan Aelodau, yn unol â gofynion y Cod Ymddygiad.

Nodwch:

1. Mae gofyn i Aelodau ddatgan rhif a phwnc yr agendwm y mae eu buddiant yn ymwneud ag ef a mynegi natur y buddiant personol hwnnw; a
2. Lle bo Aelodau'n ymneilltuo o'r cyfarfod o ganlyniad i ddatgelu buddiant sy'n rhagfarnu, rhaid iddyn nhw roi gwybod i'r Cadeirydd pan fyddan nhw'n gadael.

3. COFNODION

Derbyn cofnodion o gyfarfod blaenorol Pwyllgor y Gwasanaethau Democrataidd a gafodd ei gynnal ar 13.02.23

5 - 10

4. HYFFORDDIANT I AELODAU

Derbyn yr wybodaeth ddiweddaraf gan Bennaeth y Gwasanaethau

Democrataidd sy'n rhoi manylion i Aelodau am yr hyfforddiant sydd ar gael iddyn nhw.

11 - 20

5. PROTOCOL CYMORTH YMCHWIL DRAFFT I AELODAU ETHOLEDIG

Trafod y protocol drafft mewn perthynas â chymorth ymchwil i Aelodau Etholedig.

21 - 30

6. CYFRIFIAD 2021 – DATA RHCT A DATA AR LEFEL WARD

Derbyn manylion ynghylch sut mae modd i Aelodau gyrchu data Cyfrifiad 2021 ar gyfer RhCT ac ar lefel ward.

31 - 36

7. ADRODDIAD BLYNYDDOL

Trafod Adroddiad Blynyddol drafft Pwyllgor y Gwasanaethau Democrataidd 2022/23.

37 - 52

ADRODDIADAU ER GWYBODAETH

8. Y PANEL ANNIBYNNOL AR GYDNABYDDIAETH ARIANNOL

53 - 56

9. DIOGELWCH AELODAU

57 - 64

10. MATERION BRYD

Trafod unrhyw faterion sydd, yn ôl doethineb y Cadeirydd, yn faterion bryd yng ngoleuni amgylchiadau arbennig.

Cyfarwyddwr Gwasanaeth y Gwasanaethau Democrataidd a Chyfathrebu

Cylchreliad:-

(Y Cynghorwyr Bwrdeistref Sirol Y Cynghorydd W Jones a Y Cynghorydd M Webber – Cadeirydd ac Is-gadeirydd, yn y drefn honno)

Y Cynghorwyr Bwrdeistref Sirol:

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

Christian Hanagan, Cyfarwyddwr Gwasanaeth y Gwasanaethau Democrataidd a
Chyfathrebu
Andy Wilkins, Cyfarwyddwr y Gwasanaethau Cyfreithiol

Tudalen wag

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL

Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held on Monday, 13 February 2023 at 5.00 pm.

This meeting was live streamed, details of which can be accessed [here](#)

County Borough Councillors – The following Councillors were present in the Council Chamber:-

Councillor W Jones (Chair)

Councillor L Addiscott Councillor G Jones
Councillor S Morgans

The following Councillors were present online:-

Councillor M Webber Councillor J Bonetto
Councillor A J Ellis Councillor S Hickman
Councillor S Powderhill Councillor B Stephens
Councillor S Trask Councillor J Turner
Councillor K Webb

Officers in attendance

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication

Apologies for absence

Councillor C Preedy

9 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from County Borough Councillor C Preedy and P Evans

10 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

11 MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 22nd September 2022 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

12 SUFFICIENCY OF RESOURCES REPORT - STATUTORY 'OPINION' OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

The Head of Democratic Services provided Members with his statutory required report, which provided details of the provision of staff, resources, and accommodation available to support Members in their role within Rhondda

Cynon Taf Council, as set out within the relevant legislation.

Members were provided with an overview of the staffing provision across the Council Business Unit, were the Head of Democratic Services advised of the return of 3 Members of staff from maternity leave and the loss of one temporary Member of staff to other employment. Members were reminded of the apprentice role within the unit which provides invaluable support to the production of hybrid and webcast Committee meetings, with the intention of making this a permanent role in the near future. The Head of Democratic Services put forward his thanks to all staff for going above and beyond over the past 12 months with particular reference to the work undertaken during the Member Induction programme.

In respect of accommodation and in response to the new way of working and the need for the Council to respond to rising cost of energy and the financial challenges recently reported to Members, the Council has reduced the use of accommodation at Clydach Vale from 6 'Pavilions' to 3. Members were advised that due to this approach, as a temporary measure, the accommodation available to Members had been revised. The Head of Democratic Services continued by advising of the reduced need for attendance by a Member to Clydach Vale through the successful operation of hybrid meeting arrangements, and online access to information for Members through means such as the Members Portal. He added that this approach mirrors the change in working patterns seen across the Council and society more generally post pandemic. As part of the new arrangement, Members would now share the space available on the ground floor of Pavilion B, over an extended footprint with Democratic Services Officers. A dedicated Members hot-desking space had been created at the rear of the building to support this new way of working. This set-up includes a dedicated meeting room for Members or political groups to book as and when required.

The Head of Democratic Services explained that in light of the revised arrangement the Council would not be compliant with the requirements of the Advanced Members Charter. However, in response to significant changes in working practices being adopted by local authorities and its Members, the Charter was currently being reviewed to reflect new ways of working.

The Head of Democratic Services continued his report by providing an overview of the arrangements in place in respect of Members Training, referencing the in depth Member induction programme that was provided and the future training proposals, including the undertaking of Members Personal Development Reviews, and the Officer thanked the Group Leaders for their support with the reviews.

Before finalising his report Members were provided with an overview of the digital support provided to Members, including the provision of devices and the security aspects linked to the use of the devices.

The Head of Democratic Services concluded his report by advising Members that he was of the opinion that there continued to be sufficient support within the Council Business Unit to support non-executive Members.

Members took the opportunity to comment upon the report and the opinion outlined within, and Members paid compliment to the support provided by the Council Business Unit to all Members to assist them to undertake their role and to the Council's ICT support team, for their assistance with devices and ICT

queries, commenting on the good working relationship between the two departments. Members paid tribute to the Member of staff within the team who had recently secured employment elsewhere and also welcomed back the 3 returning officers from maternity leave.

Members supported the accommodation changes for the reasons outlined within the report and welcomed the review being undertaken in respect of the Charter to reflect current working practices.

Following discussions Members **RESOLVED**:

- I. To note the overall support available to elected Members, as set out within the report.
- II. To note the statutory opinion of the Head of Democratic Services, in respect of the sufficiency of resources, as set out within the report.

13 MULTI LOCATION MEETING POLICY

Members were referred to the report before them which provided Members with a draft Multi Location Meeting Policy, for Members comment and consideration. Members were advised that through the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 Councils are statutory required to provide hybrid meeting facilities, enabling greater public participation and Councillor involvement in decision making.

Members were advised that statutory guidance sets out a number of general principles to guide Authorities when developing their meeting arrangements, namely, transparency, accessibility, good conduct, Welsh language, local needs and future generations. The guidance confirms the meeting arrangements should be reflected in the procedure rules set out in the constitution.

The statutory guidance also stipulates that Authorities should develop a policy setting out how multi-location meetings will operate and reflect the meeting arrangements in the constitution.

Members considered the draft policy attached as Appendix 1 to the report and spoke of the greater flexibility hybrid meetings provided, allowing Members greater opportunity to undertake Council business through a remote setting.

Members discussed in detail aspects of the policy focusing on the need to ensure that Members attending Meetings virtually were in a safe, secure and confidential environment.

Members were in agreement that certain meetings of the Council should be offered as hybrid, however if physical attendance was depleted then the meeting should be moved to a virtual only setting, with sufficient notification provided to Members. It was proposed that a proportion of the Committee Membership be identified in the policy to reflect these situations rather than an actual number of attendees listed, due to the varying membership sizes.

Following a lengthy discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to:

- I. Amend the policy to include reference to nonsmoking at meetings; further

clarity on the location of a Member attending a meeting virtually and a percentage figure of the membership in relation to hybrid meetings to be included.

- II. That the revisions be circulated to the Committee membership for further comment before agreement by the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee
- III. The agreed version of the policy be submitted to Council for endorsement.

14 MEMBERS PORTAL

The Head of Democratic Services referred Members to the report before them which provided details of the developments taken forward in respect of the Members' Portal.

Members were advised of the training materials contained within the Portal for ease of reference for Members and reminded of the functionality to submit questions to Council and completion of Declaration of Interest forms relating to a meeting. The Head of Democratic Services advised of current developments taken forward in respect of the 'Useful Information/Links' page and the provision currently being developed in respect of submitting of travel expenses to the Council's Payroll section, electronically via the Portal. This advancement would simplify the process with pre-populated information to reduce the time currently spent completing a paper expenses form.

Going forward, Members were informed that the Portal will, in time, provide statistical information, compiled from the Council's customer reporting system ('The CRM'). Information on reported matters, such as dog fouling or pot-holes, will be compiled on a ward by ward basis, alongside information on the resolution of these complaints. The portal will also provide information on the latest business of the council being considered and matters such as planning applications which relate to the respective Members electoral division.

Members commented on the functionality of the portal and the developments that were proposed to be taken forward over coming months.

Following discussions, it was **RESOLVED** that Members would advise the Democratic Services Officer if they would like to take forward the role as a 'champion' of the Members Portal and undertake demonstrations/provide feedback on the functionality of the Portal as and when new developments are completed.

15 INFORMATION REPORT

For information purposes, the Head of Democratic Services provided Members with an overview of the information report presented, which provided an update on a number of items under consideration by the Committee and to ensure Members are kept up to date on these items.

The report provided detail in respect of Member Devices; Members Attendance; Members 3rd Party transactions; Diversity in Democracy; Members Wellbeing; Member Notifications and details of the recent bid submitted within the Democracy Engagement Grant.

Members noted the information report.

This meeting closed at 6.25 pm

**Councillor W Jones
Chair.**

Tudalen wag



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

27TH April 2023

MEMBER'S TRAINING

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of the report is to provide Members with an update in respect of the training opportunities that have been made available to Members and the active offers of training to be taken forward.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that Members:

- (i) Acknowledge the training provided to Members since the Member Induction Programme
- (ii) Consider the forthcoming training opportunities made available to Members and to provide any additional comments in respect of Members Training.

3. MEMBER TRAINING

- 3.1 The role of an Elected Member can be complex and challenging. Constantly changing priorities and legislation require difficult decisions for which Members need to be well informed. It is therefore essential that Members are equipped and supported to allow them to undertake their role confidently
- 3.2 The Head of Democratic Services, in conjunction with the Democratic Services Committee seeks to ensure that Members are provided with sufficient training to assist them in undertaking all aspects of their role. As a Council we have made it a requirement that Members must undertake training on a Committee they become a member of before they can engage in that Committee.
- 3.3 Training opportunities have been undertaken through the detailed Member Induction Programme and additional training has also been undertaken through specific Member or Committee requests as detailed further in the report. Training support and opportunities have also been identified through the Member Personal Development Review programme, which is nearing completion.

- 3.4 Members can view their training record under each of the Member profiles on the Council website. [Profiles](#)

4 MEMBER INDUCTION PROGRAMME.

- 4.1 Following the 2022 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

- 4.2 In addition, general and bespoke training sessions, were also 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 Chairing Skills
- Accessing the Members Portal
- Welsh Language Skills
- Equality and Diversity

- 4.3 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.

- 4.4 Feedback forms were circulated to Members following the sessions in order to fully evaluate the training, 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.
- 4.5 Members were also surveyed on the comprehensive Induction Programme to ascertain the relevance/length/content of the sessions and where, if any, improvements could be made for future induction training programmes. Overall, 87% of Members said they were satisfied with the delivery, timings and content of the training.
- 4.6 All recordings and training materials in respect of the Induction Program will be available on the Members Portal for Members future reference. Developments are underway to see if the training can be 'tagged' under each Members profile on the portal so that Members can clearly see which training they attended.

5 MEMBER PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

- 5.1 The Head of Democratic Services, along with colleagues in the Council Business Unit have taken forward the Member Personal Development Review process with Elected Members and for the first time, includes co-opted Members. The process is nearing completion with a handful of Members yet to meet.
- 5.2 The reviews have been conducted virtually and have been well received by those Members that have completed the process. The Head of Democratic Services would like to thank all Members for their time and contributions at these meetings.
- 5.3 The reviews are confidential in nature and are an opportunity for Members to discuss support and training opportunities as well as discussing Members wellbeing. The majority of Members have asked for a follow up meeting, which the Head of Democratic Services has agreed to provide. This will provide further opportunities for Members to discuss support arrangements and general wellbeing.
- 5.4 A detail Training programme identifying training requested and how this is to be accommodated (ie through 1:1 training or all Member briefing session) is being developed following the information received during the meetings.
- 5.5 To date, most Members are supportive of refresher training following the Council AGM in respect of scrutiny, planning and licensing. A number of ICT support requests were identified through the process which have been actioned. Digital training and social media training is also a common request by Members, as well as a better understanding of the Councils budget.
- 5.6 Forms of good practice by Members have also been identified through the process and where possible, such ways of working will look to be shared to all Members to further assist them in their roles.

6 ADDITIONAL TRAINING

6.1 The Council's Governance and Audit Committee have agreed its programme for learning and development to support the delivery of its Terms of Reference, during its meeting on the 14th February 2023. Examples of the Learning and Development Areas to be undertaken include:

- Risk Management
- Complaints Handling
- Fraud and Corruption
- Financial Management and Accounting
- Governance
- External Audit and Internal Audit

6.2 A number of pre-Council surgeries have been taken forward to assist Members with any digital support that they require. It is the intention for further pre-Committee surgeries to take place in the new Municipal Year.

6.3 Data Cymru have provided opportunities for 2 delegates per Authority to attend 'data training for Councillors'. These spaces were taken forward by 2 Members of the Council's overview and Scrutiny Committee due to their scrutiny of the Council's Performance and Resources reports.

6.4 The Council are currently working towards becoming an Autism Aware organisation. Autism Aware is an accreditation that shows customers and staff that we are an inclusive organisation that looks to support its staff and customers. The scheme aims to increase knowledge and awareness of the needs of individuals with autism. All Cabinet Members and Members of the Council's Senior Leadership Team have completed this training and it is the intention for this training to be rolled out to all Elected Members by the summer. In completing this training, there is an opportunity for Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council to become the first Autism Aware certified Council (Elected Members) in Wales.

6.5 Six Elected Members are undertaking regular Welsh classes with the Council's Welsh language tutor.

6.6 Member Briefing Session – A number of briefing sessions have been taken forward to assist Members with their role.

- a. Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board (23.11.22) – Winter pressures
- b. Children's Services residential transformation strategy. During March, a number of briefing sessions were hosted for Members (both virtually and hybrid) providing Members the opportunity to find out more about the ambition of the residential transformation strategy, the duties to look after young people and to support Elected Members in responding to any queries from constituents.
- c. Welsh Ambulance Service NHS Trust (29.03.23) – Winter Pressures

- 6.7 Secure by Design (SBD) from Design Out Crime Officers from South Wales Police, provided a training session in March in advance of a planning Committee meeting which all Members were invited to attend. SBD is the official police security initiative that works to improve the security of buildings and their immediate surroundings to provide safe places to live, work, shop and visit. South Wales Police had approached RCT Planning on several Planning Applications within the Borough and were keen to develop the partnership further by presenting to Members. Members of the planning committee have found this training to be useful when considering applications before them.
- 6.8 Training in respect of the Council's Winter Maintenance plan was presented to Members on the 15th November 2022
- 6.9 Training sessions on the Modern Gov Voting app have been taken forward through a number of different settings, including 1:1 sessions with Cabinet Members , Democratic Services Members and Planning Committee Members. It will be the intention to revisit this training, following the conclusion of the review of the voting application opportunities taken forward by the Head of Democratic Services.
- 6.10 Treasury Management training was provided to all Members on the 7th September 2022
- 6.11 Training has recently been provided by the Head of Democratic Services to the Plaid Cymru group following a specific request in respect of 'Notice of Motion'.
- 6.12 The Council have taken forward their allotted allocation on the WLGA Leadership Academy.

7 FUTURE TRAINING

- 7.1 Following the AGM training will be provided by the Council Business Unit for scrutiny Members and Co-opted Members, with a training session run for each of the Committees, to remind new and old members to the committee (following any potential changes to membership at the AGM) of the Committees Terms of Reference, general good practice with scrutiny and providing an opportunity for related Senior officers to discuss emerging priorities for the service area to assist Members with their future discussions surrounding work programmes. Refresher training will also be provided in respect of Planning and Development and training in respect of Licensing.
- 7.2 Future briefing sessions will be taken forward prior to full Council meetings to assist Members in their role. A draft programme is outlined below which may be subject to change to take into consideration any emerging priorities:

Month	Subject
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June	Trivallis Update
July	Housing Allocation
August Recess	
September	Council Budget and Reserves (MTFP)
October	Council Winter Maintenance Plan
November	TBC

- 7.3 With the increase in phishing and cyber attacks on the Council and the targeting of Elected Members, an ICT course on Cyber Security and Staying Safe in a digital world will be made available to Members.
- 7.4 Work is being undertaken by the Council Business Unit and the Council's Performance team to develop a climate change toolkit to assist Members in scrutinising reports with the Climate Change agenda in mind. In addition, an ICT course in respect of Climate Change is currently being developed and will be rolled out to all Elected Members to assist with their knowledge base in this important area.
- 7.5 A training session will be taken forward by the Council's Monitoring Officer and Council Business Unit to provide Members with further guidance on the completion of Declarations of Interest and the importance of updating declarations within the 28 day period.
- 7.6 Work is also being undertaken to offer Members with ICT Bitesize courses, similar to the training provision offered to Council staff. These courses will include training on digital devices, Training on the Members Portal (once recent developments have been completed). These sessions will look to be run as mini online sessions with a small group of Members although individual one to one sessions can also be accommodated. Details of these opportunities will be provided to Members.
- 7.7 An email will shortly be circulated to Members to remind Members of the online training opportunities through the RCT Source and a useful bilingual guide is available to assist Members.
- 7.8 In addition to the above we will also be reminding and encouraging Members of the Welsh Language training opportunities that are available. Details of the opportunities for Members to undertake the Level 1 course will be promoted. This course is an interactive PowerPoint training based course, which Members can complete overtime and will provide a basic understanding and knowledge base for opening conversations, the Welsh alphabet and some phrases Members may wish to use during meetings. For those Members who wish to progress their Welsh language skills further, opportunities are available for the Welsh Language Level 2 course. Free Short online taster courses will also be promoted to Members through the Members weekly update, which introduce everyday words and phrases for Members to use on a daily basis.

- 7.9 A mock Code of Conduct hearing has been scheduled for Members of the Standards Committee to assist them in taking forward their role. This training is being delivered on a joint basis with both RCT Council and Merthyr Tydfil Council Standards Members.
- 7.10 The Council are currently developing an online data library. Once developed, training will be provided to Members on how to access and use the data library.
- 7.11 Work is also ongoing to support the training needs identified through the PDR process, with training to be held on a one to one basis or full Members training if deemed appropriate.
- 7.12 Where appropriate, training sessions will be recorded and will be available for Members to view through the Members portal.
- 7.13 Refresher Code of Conduct training is always available to Members on a one to one basis as and when requested, with advice on hand from the Council's Monitoring Officer and Head of Democratic Services.

8 EVALUATING TRAINING

- 8.1 As a form of good practice, the Council Business Unit circulate training evaluation forms to assist in gauging the training provided to Members, however open feedback is always welcome.
- 8.2 Evaluation forms were circulated to all Members following the induction training programme at the beginning of the Municipal Year.
- 8.3 The unit will continue to engage in Member feedback on the training that is provided to ensure that we provide training that is fit for purpose.

9 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 9.1 This report supports the need for all Members to have equal access to support regardless of political allegiance. The report encourages the authority to examine the way that business is conducted to ensure the equality of access and involvement of all people as councillors. The provision of E-learning Modules and hybrid meetings / training sessions will ensure all Members have equal access to training provision.

10 CONSULTATION

- 10.1 Members PDRs were conducted to allow information to be gathered in respect of any training requirements to assist Members in their roles.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 11.1 Members training is an important aspect to allow Members to feel equipped to undertake their duties and roles required of them. The Council have a Members training budget, which is accessed to provide any external training needed. Where practical in-house training is also provided to Members.

12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 None

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

- 13.1 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.
- 13.2 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.

14 CONCLUSION

- 14.1 The Council Business unit will continue to support Members with any training opportunities identified to assist Members in undertaking their roles.
- 14.2 Members are reminded that they may request any form of training that they feel would assist them in undertaking their role to the Head of Democratic Services.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATION

Free Standing Matter.

Tudalen wag



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

27TH APRIL 2023

RESEARCH SUPPORT AND SERVICES FOR COUNCILLORS – PROTOCOL

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to remind Members of the Research provision available for Members within Rhondda Cynon Taf, and to review the Council's current protocol following the new statutory guidance issued, as suggested by the WLGA.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Members:
- i. Note the research facility available for Members to utilise to assist them in undertaking their role
 - ii. Consider the draft protocol outlined within Appendix A of the report and subject to Members comment, agree to adopt the draft protocol going forward.
 - iii. Support the promotion of the Member Research facility to all Members and the sharing of research requests (where appropriate) to all Members in the future.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The new statutory guidance issued under section 8(1A) of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 states that "all elected members should be able to access a range of information and support" in order to undertake their roles effectively.
- 3.2 It is clear that Councils across Wales are already undertaking a range research support activity to assist Councillors in fulfilling their duties and it is intended that the new statutory guidance published, provides an opportunity for Councils to review this support and establish a clear commitment or protocol for research support and services, identifying

areas for potential improvements within the resource constraints faced nationwide.

4 STATUTORY GUIDANCE - PROTOCOL

4.1 The new statutory guidance as a minimum recommends that Councils undertake an internal review / audit of the existing research support provided to Councillors and evaluate against the examples given within guidance. It is recommended this is undertaken through the Democratic Services Committee.

4.2 In undertaking such a review, the following questions have been proposed for Members to consider. To assist Members a response to these questions based on the workings within RCT has been provided:

Question	Answer
Are background papers available to help all Councillors understand key decisions	As a form of good practice, the report template for Committee papers provides a section for background papers, to allow for access to information for Members where available. It is sometimes the case that not all Officers when drafting reports include this information.
Are all Councillors provided with regular performance management information, or is it readily available to them?	Yes, Quarterly updates are provided to the Cabinet and to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and information in respect of this information can be found on the Council website. All Members receive hyperlinks to the Committee papers.
Are Councillors signposted to useful sources of information?	Members receive a daily update of useful links and information compiled from a number of different organisations and websites. Details of open consultations from Welsh Government and RCT Council are provided to Members on a fortnightly basis and highlighted

	<p>on all the Council's Scrutiny agendas.</p> <p>A weekly 'round up' email is also provided at the end of each week. All Members are sent the links to every agenda publication and accompanying reports.</p> <p>This is in addition to any ad hoc emails / briefing sessions taken place.</p> <p>Going forward such 'live' information will be made available through the Members portal for Members to access.</p>
Is demographic information readily available to all Councillors, including information on local services and their usage?	Direct email on a ward basis regarding specific information such as Flood Investigation Reports and as above
Is there regular circulation of local and national events which Councillors may be interested in?	As above
Are Councillors able to request specific research requests, and are the parameters clearly set out?	A research criteria has been established within RCT to assist Members in their research submission, please see section 5 for details.

4.3 It is suggested that a review of the research facilities and provision of information to Members will allow the Democratic Services Committee, and the Council, to establish whether support services and sources of information could be better coordinated, better promoted, and access to information improved.

4.4 Having established the existing research support and sources of information available, this should be clearly set out to Councillors with guidance on how they can access the information available to them. It is suggested that Councils should take the opportunity to work with Councillors to identify any gaps or issues with the existing processes,

reviewing how this support and its parameters could be developed over time.

- 4.5 In light of the above and the responses provided within the table within 4.2 do Members feel that they are provided with sufficient knowledge and information to assist them in undertaking their role?

5 RESEARCH SUPPORT WITHIN RCT

- 5.1 At the Democratic Services Committee in November 2018, Members were advised how the Head of Democratic Services had for the first time secured a research officer resource within the support structure. This new role would for the first time provide a scrutiny research resource for Non-Executive Members to support their scrutiny responsibilities and wider elected member roles.
- 5.2 The [Democratic Services Committee](#) at a further meeting agreed to the following criteria to ensure accuracy with the research conducted:
- Submission to be provided in writing / email providing as much detail about the research to be undertaken as possible to assist.
 - Email to be submitted to the email address: Councilbusiness@rctcbc.gov.uk
- 5.3 Any submission for research would be reviewed by the Head of Democratic Services to ensure the request is appropriate.
- 5.4 To ensure a timely and manageable workload for the Research Officer it was proposed that a two week turn around at the minimum is afforded to the Research Officer to undertake the research. If the officer was unable to provide the Member with the research within this timeframe then timely notification would be provided to the Member.
- 5.5 The Member Research facility is promoted within scrutiny agenda's and through the Members weekly bulletin. The research facility is underutilised by Members and further promotion of this useful tool needs to be addressed. It is proposed that once the Members Portal is fully developed any submissions for research will be made available through this avenue, although written / email submissions will be taken forward until this is available.

6 GOING FORWARD

- 6.1 Going forward, and following the new statutory guidance it is suggested that the following items are considered when Members submit a research request:
- Does the information request help toward the achievement of corporate priorities?
 - Is the information request of a political nature?
 - Would the information enable a Councillor to undertake their ward role to a higher standard, and would the information bring benefits to Councillors from more than one electoral ward?
 - What are the budget and resource implications of the request?
- 6.2 Upon completion of a research request, it is recommended that the information be made available to all Councillors, where appropriate. It may be the case that the research request is of a confidential nature and therefore will not be shared if deemed appropriate. Wherever possible it is also proposed that information or briefings be published and made available to the public, if not of a confidential or sensitive nature. It is hoped that the sharing of Member Research reports will also encourage other Members to use the resource available
- 6.3 In establishing a local protocol for research requests, Councils should:
- clearly define the types of research requests that can be achieved
 - clearly state limitations to the service
 - have a defined process in place to accept or reject research requests
 - make any information gathered through such requests available to all councillors, and if appropriate, the public.
- 6.4 In light of the above, a proposed Research criteria is provided in appendix A of the report.
- 6.5 Although, there is a need for a robust criteria for research requests it is also important that the criteria does not become too prescriptive to dissuade Members from using the facility. Therefore the criteria proposed for RCT Council will still remain relatively open with requests being approved by the Head of Democratic Services or other appropriate officer in their absence.

7 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 7.1 The role of an Elected Member is integral to the effective running of the Council and it is essential that all Members are provided with any support

necessary to undertake their role. The support provision of 'research' is a positive provision which will assist all Members in undertaking their role.

8 WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no language implications associated with this report. Members are able to submit requests in the language of their choice.

9 CONSULTATION

9.1 None required

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

10.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 section 8(1A) of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011

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

12.1 The role of an Elected Member links to the Corporate Plan priorities and supporting Members to undertake their role through access to additional information will assist both Members and residents.

13 CONCLUSION

13.1 Providing Members with additional information to assist them in undertaking their role is an important tool available that all Members should have access to. It is clear that the research facility within RCT is under utilised and further promotion of the resource needs to be taken forward.

13.2 It is important that the Council review their current criteria for research requests

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATION

Free Standing Matter.

Democratic Services Committee – [November 2018](#)

Democratic Services Committee – [July 2019](#)

DRAFT**Member Research Criteria.**

The primary objective of research is the deepening and broadening of knowledge and understanding by responsible and professional means. It is important that all Members of the Council are afforded the opportunity to receive information to help them undertake their role and to make informed decisions.

The Council provides Members with a high range of information through its Committee reporting and links to such information are shared with all Elected Members.

The Council Business Unit compliment this information by providing daily updates to Members, sharing local and national information including details of local events within areas.

The Council are mindful that Members may also require additional or alternative information to undertake their role and the provision of a Research Officer is available within the Council Business Unit for Members to access. Research requests should not be of a political nature.

Research Requests:

When submitting research requests we ask all Members to complete the following information. Members are reminded that the Head of Democratic Services will review all submissions before agreeing to the research being carried out:

Question	Elected Member Response	Head of Democratic Services Response
Does the information request help toward the achievement of the Council's corporate priorities and / or the Well-Being of Future Generations Act?		
Is the information request of a political nature?		
Would the information enable you to undertake your ward role to a higher standard, and		

would the information bring benefits to Councillors from more than one electoral ward		
Would the information enable you to undertake your Council Business role (Scrutiny / Committee Member) to a higher standard and also be beneficial to other Members of that Committee		
Are there any potential budget and resource implications of the request, in addition to the time or the Council's research officer?		
Is the research request of a confidential nature? Where appropriate Research requests will be shared with other Members and published in the public domain if felt appropriate.		

To ensure accuracy with the research conducted any submission for research will need to follow the criteria outlined below:

- Submission to be provided in writing / email providing as much detail about the research to be undertaken as possible to assist.
- Email to be submitted to the email address: CouncilBusiness@rctcbc.gov.uk

Members are reminded that subject to the nature of the request, the research response will be made available to all Members of the Council and if appropriate to the public through the Council website.

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

27TH APRIL 2023

CENSUS 2021 RCT AND WARD LEVEL DATA

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of the report is to provide Members with details of the provision of Census data available, including ward level data and how such data can be made available going forward for Members to utilise.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that Members:

- (i) Acknowledge the Data information currently available for Members to access
- (ii) Support the developments taken forward with the Data online library
- (iii) Support that the 'Members Portal Champions' work with data colleagues to support developments of the data library to ensure that it is fit for purpose.

3. BACKGROUND - CENSUS 2021 RESULTS

- 3.1 The 2021 census asked people about topics including their background (such as ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation), housing, health, and work.
- 3.2 Census data provides a level of detail that isn't possible from other government surveys – information is available about small population groups, and for small geographic areas. Census data contributes to policy decisions and provides a benchmark for other official statistics.
- 3.3 The 2021 census data is being published for England and Wales across 2022 and 2023.
- 3.4 This report outlines how Members can access the Census data from a number of external sources and provides further information about future access to data through a data library

4. RHONDDA CYNON TAF CENSUS 2021 DATA

- 4.1 The link below provides a summary of the key data released for Rhondda Cynon Taf. It covers the characteristics of people and households in Rhondda Cynon Taf, more data and geographies will be added over time.
[2021 Census Profile for areas in England and Wales - Nomis \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2021/summary)

How has life changed since 2011?

- 4.2 The ONS have put together an article that compares some key data changes that have taken place between the 2011 and 2021 Census, for example, between the last two censuses the population of Rhondda Cynon Taf increased by 1.4%, from just over 234,400 in 2011 to around 237,700 in 2021.
[How life has changed in Rhondda Cynon Taf: Census 2021 \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandlife/articles/how-life-has-changed-in-rhondda-cynon-taf-census-2021)

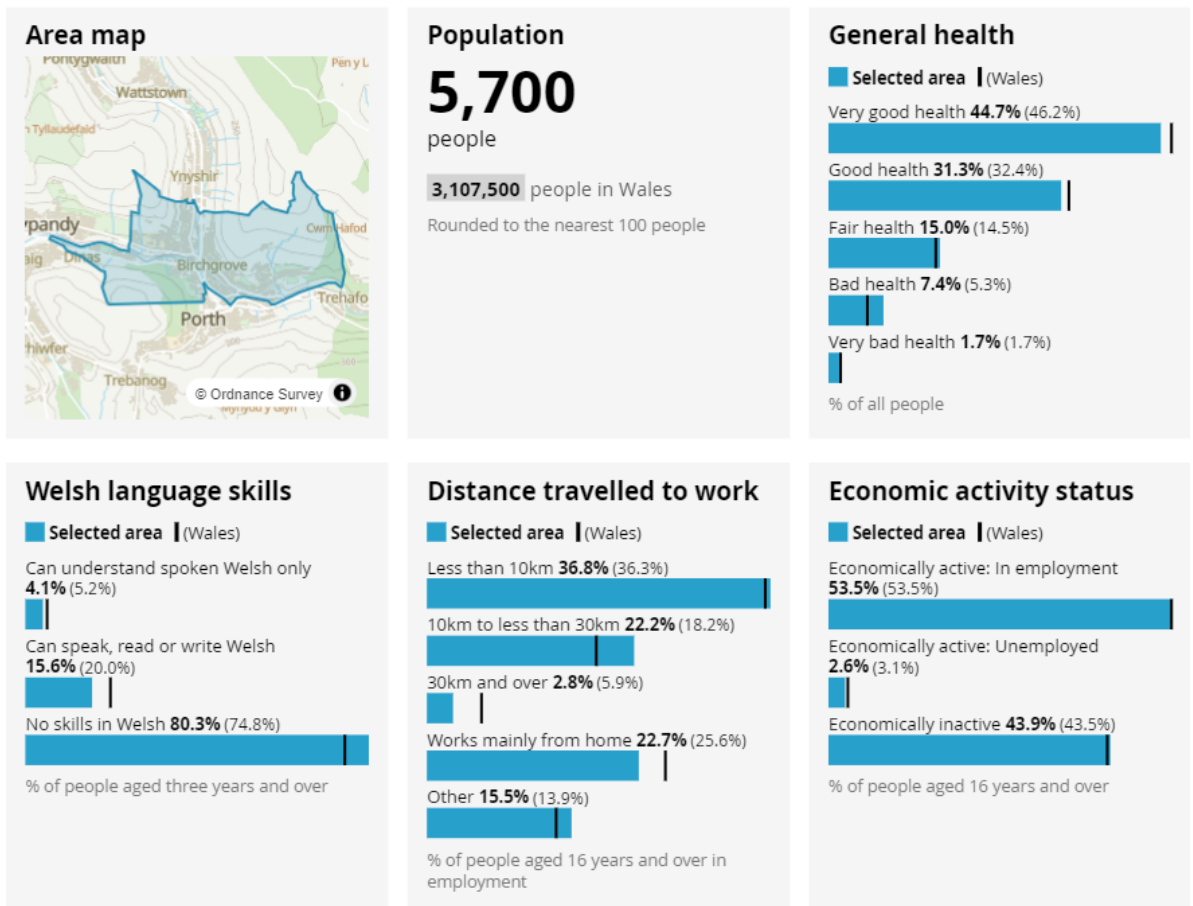
Accessing facts and figures within Member Ward areas?

- 4.3 There are a number of ways that Members can view data at the Ward level for a range of data. Simply search a chosen postcode or area name on the below link, and data for that area from some of the topic summaries already released will be available.

[Build a custom area profile - Census 2021, ONS](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandlife/articles/build-a-custom-area-profile-census-2021)

- 4.4 As the title of the link suggests, Members can build a profile, by clicking on the data required for the area. The image below shows Porth as an example, with

a number of summary datasets chosen;

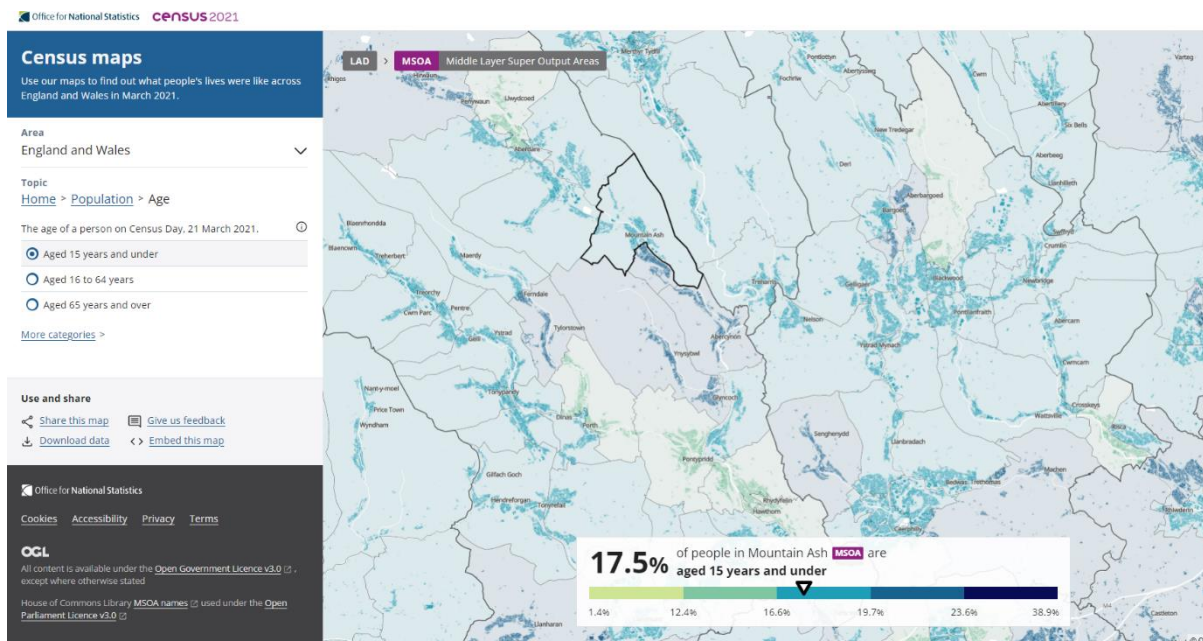


Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

- 4.5 In addition to topic summaries available in the tool above, more detailed Ward data is available at the following link. .
[Ward data, England and Wales: Census 2021 - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/wales/census/2021/ward-data)

Interactive Map

- 4.6 The ONS have created an interactive tool to explore Census 2021 topic summary data down to a neighbourhood level.
[Census Maps - Census 2021 data interactive, ONS](https://ons.gov.uk/census/2021/interactive-census-maps)



5 FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS FOR ACCESS TO DATA

- 5.1 The Council have resourced a 'Community Data Analyst' who sits within the Councils Consultation and Engagement team. This officer assists departments within the Council to acquire and interpret data to assist in service delivery and policy making.
- 5.2 As part of the role, the officer is also developing an online data Library, which will host a range of data to assist both Council Officers and Members in the future.
- 5.3 The data library is in very early development stages with colleagues working with the Online Development team to create a suitable online platform to host the data information, ensuring the system is current and easy to navigate for all those wish to use it.
- 5.4 It is proposed that to help support the developments of the data library the Democratic Services Committee 'Member Portal Champions' test the system at an appropriate time in its development to ensure its fit for purpose.
- 5.5 It is the intention that as the data library will be a web based system, the library will be embedded within the Members Portal, again allowing the portal to become the 'one stop shop' for all Members information and requests going forward.
- 5.6 In the interim, if Members wish to receive any further detail in relation to their Ward, Members are advised to email the Member Services inbox, where officers will direct the request appropriately to the Community Data Analyst.

6 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 6.1 The role of an Elected Member is integral to the effective running of the Council and it is essential that all Members are provided with any support necessary to undertake their role. The Council have pledged to become a diverse Council and therefore it is important that all Members and any future candidates looking to stand as an Elected Member feel safe in taking forward this role.

7 WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no language implications associated with this report.

8 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 None required

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

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

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no legal implications aligned to this report

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

- 11.1 The role of an Elected Member links to the Corporate Plan priorities and supporting Members to undertake their role through access to data will assist both Members and residents.

12 CONCLUSION

- 12.1 The provision of access to data will help Members have a greater understanding of their ward and the makeup of the County Borough.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972
AS AMENDED BY
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985
RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
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COMMUNICATION

Free Standing Matter.



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

27TH APRIL 2023

ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide members of the Democratic Services Committee with the opportunity to consider the Annual Report for the Municipal Year 2022 / 23:

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Review the draft Annual report at Appendix 1.
- 2.2 Subject to 2.1, agree for the Chair of Democratic Services to endorse the Democratic Services Committee Annual Report 2022/23 to a future Council meeting.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To provide to Council a summary in respect of the work of the Democratic Services Committee during the Municipal year.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The purpose of the annual reports is to provide a summary of the work undertaken by the Committee throughout the Municipal Year and for this to be reported to a future Council meeting.
- 4.2 The achievements listed in the Annual Report are not exhaustive but reflect some of the successful projects over the last year. Notable examples are given of how the individual Committees have worked to tackle important issues in a collaborative and efficient way.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

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

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 Consultation has been undertaken with the Chair of the Democratic Services Committee

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

7.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

8.1 The report has been prepared in accordance with Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's constitution.

9. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/ FUTURE GENERATIONS – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

9.1 The work of all Committee encompasses all of the Councils priorities and provision of an Annual report allows the Committee to highlight the work undertaken and items for future consideration in line with the corporate priorities.

9.2 The work of the Committee also takes forward the principals and wellbeing goals of the Well-being and Future Generations Act, linked to the Committee's Terms of Reference.

10. CONCLUSION

10.1 The Annual report outlines the work of the Committee in the 2022/2023 Municipal Year.

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Free Standing Matter.

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DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE.

ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

Foreword



It was my privilege to take forward the role as Chair of the Democratic Services Committee through this important inaugural year for the Committee, following the Local Government Elections in May 2022. The election welcomed 35 new Members within the Council and the role of this Committee has been more important than ever, to ensure that we support all new and returning Members to undertake their role. The work and support of the Council Business Unit should not go unnoticed through the Member Induction Programme and beyond, with the support and advice, training and the provision of technology to assist members. This appreciation was clearly visible through the results of the Members Survey results and our thanks go to the Head of Democratic Services and the dedicated team who continue to go over and above to support all elected members.

As a committee we have welcomed the work undertaken to establish a suitable voting system for Members to take forward at Committee and appreciate the review of numerous options to try and take forward an option that works best for us as a Council as we proactively take forward hybrid meetings across the Committee structure. Linked with this is the importance of establishing a robust policy for hybrid meetings and the Committee provided positive challenge and comment on the draft Multi Location Meeting policy, which will now work its way through to Council for endorsement.

We have embraced a fresh forward-looking approach as a committee, being fortunate to build upon the strong foundations of the previous Committee and its former Chairs. We continue to champion areas previously progressed, in particular the diversity and equality agenda that the former Committee passionately highlighted through its working group arrangements, which has made a positive difference to the diversity of the Council.

As a new Committee Membership there are many areas and opportunities we have committed to take forward over the next Municipal Year to ensure that each and every Member is given the best opportunity to deliver for their residents and will look to produce a robust work programme in the new municipal year to achieve this aim. In particular, we look forward to the review of the Member training program and its delivery following the successful Personal Development Review process that has been undertaken by the Head of Democratic Services and his senior colleagues.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank my Vice Chair, Councillor M Webber for her invaluable support and advice during my first year as Chair of the Committee and to each of the Members for their attendance, input and positive challenge brought to each and every meeting.

I would also like to place on record my thanks for continued corporate resources identified to support the improvements agendas being taken forward by the Democratic Services Team.

County Borough Councillor W Jones

Chair.

MEMBERSHIP

			
Councillor W Jones Chair		Councillor M Webber Vice Chair	
			
Councillor Addiscott	L Councillor J Bonetto	Councillor S J Davies	Councillor A J Ellis
			
Councillor R Evans	Councillor P Evans	Councillor S Hickman	Councillor G Jones
			
Councillor Morgans	S Councillor Powderhill	Councillor C Preedy	Councillor Stephens B
			
Councillor S Trask	Councillor J Turner	Councillor K Webb	

Member Induction Program and Training

The Member Induction Programme saw the most extensive programme of training to newly elected and returning Members, over and above the prescribed mandatory training requirements. During the course of the first municipal year, further general and bespoke sessions were delivered both externally and internally. In addition, Members were provided with a Member Induction Booklet and training literature and of course the provision of electronic devices such as laptops and mobile phones to assist them in undertaking their role and training.

The training sessions were undertaken both virtually and through the hybrid approach and at various times to accommodate Members with their personal and business commitments. Where Members were unable to attend, individual 1-1 sessions were arranged. The provision of training on a group-by-group basis was also positively received.

The Democratic Services Committee is responsible for the training and development opportunities provided to Members by the Council Business Unit. Therefore the Committee were keen to review the Members Survey to establish the feedback from Members in respect of the Induction programme to ascertain the relevance/length/content of the sessions and where, if any, improvements could be made for future induction training programmes. It was pleasing to note that overall, 87% of Members said they were satisfied with the delivery, timings and content of the training. It is appreciated that for a few Members the programme was difficult to accommodate and the Council Business Unit were appreciative of the feedback, to allow them to where possible refine the induction programme for the benefit of future Members.

Going forward, it is important to build on the training foundations of the Induction Programme to ensure Members are further equipped with the skills and further knowledge base to undertake their role and the Committee have supported the Personal Development Review Process undertaken by the Head of Democratic Services, providing Members with the opportunity to take forward private discussions to establish any additional training needs and also the opportunity to discuss general wellbeing, which as a Committee, we feel is just as important.

A report outlining the training programme going forward for the 2023/24 Municipal Year was considered by the Committee during its April meeting, with training to be taken forward on a number of different settings, through political group settings, Committee settings and one to one training and the Committee welcomed the refresher training to be provided following the Council Annual General Meeting. A specific training programme is already in place for Members of the Audit and Governance Committee and with many of our Committees, Members MUST undertake initial training before taking forward their place on a Committee Membership.

Members are reminded that any training requests can be brought forward either through requests by Committee's, individual requests direct to the Head of Democratic Services or through political group requests.

Resources

At its meeting in February the Committee were presented with the Head of Democratic Services statutorily required opinion in respect of the sufficiency of resources available to support Members in their role.

Members were provided with detailed information surrounding staffing levels, accommodation, training and digital support, all key areas for Members.

Through the report Members welcomed back 3 Members of staff from maternity leave, passed on their thanks and best wishes to one team member who had secured employment elsewhere and provided thanks to the Head of Democratic Services, The Council Business Unit and officers from within ICT for their continued support and assistance, with particular reference to the Member Induction programme. Members were advised how the good working practices of the Council Business Unit were recognised by other organisations, with the unit taking forward support to the Central South Consortium and taking forward the Joint Scrutiny arrangements for both the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Cardiff City Deal Region Scrutiny Committee.

Members were made aware of the changes to the office accommodation setting within the Council Offices, and committee were supportive of the approach being taken, and the direction of travel being set by the Head of Democratic Services in terms of evolving the provision to respond to new virtual ways of working. Members were mindful that the Council were currently out of compliance with the current requirements of the Advance Level Charter in respect of Member meeting room requirements as a result, although Members welcome the involvement of the Head of Democratic Services in shaping the revised national Charter requirements currently being reviewed.

Members were supportive of the digital provisions that had been made available to Members and the Head of Democratic Services re-emphasised the importance of security of Member devices following recent phishing attacks on the Council, with particular aim to Elected Members, hence the importance that Members should use whenever possible Council devices to undertake Council business.

Hybrid / Webcasting

The Democratic Services Committee have been heavily involved in the implementation and roll out of the webcasting system since initial discussions in 2019 and it is pleasing to see so many of the Council's Committees being webcast and live streamed with Members choosing to attend meetings either via attendance at the Council Chamber or through the zoom platform. The webcasting infrastructure has assisted the Council in its proactive approach to hybrid meetings, with the facilities also being used by the WLGA to host its AGM and by the Public I User group, the Council's webcast provider.

The live streaming / webcasting of meetings is a further approach to engaging with the public, allowing members of the public to watch meetings as they happen from their own setting, rather than having to attend the Council Chamber, which has previously been recognised as a barrier for public participation. Other benefits achieved through webcasting include:

- A positive demonstration of accountability and transparency;
- Encouraging engagement and debate, by creating more opportunities for the public to access meetings;
- Accuracy of recording of meetings including recording of decisions, voting and attendance;
- The opportunity to raise the profile of the work of Councillors, and the discussions behind the decisions of Council and its committees.
- Assists in supporting our paper light approaches to meetings moving forward as some facilities in the Council chamber are currently inhibiting the role-out of a paper-light approach.

Meetings conducted since Council AGM 2022 – April 2023

Committee Meeting	No of Meetings	All Views	Live Views	Archive Views	Times Shared
Council	12	2,739	411	2,328	26
Cabinet	13	3,396	288	3,108	3
Democratic Services	2	65	9	56	0
Scrutiny	18	988	106	882	10
Planning & Development	17	3,359	745	2,614	7

The Committee recognise that although the webcast views are healthy and are higher than any physical attendance by the public at meetings, still further needs to be done to increase public participation within democracy and the Committee welcome the Public Participation Strategy that the Council will be taking forward, as required by the Local Government & Elections Act (Wales) 2019.

The hybrid approach to meetings is well established within the Council and the Committee considered the Draft Multi Location Meeting Policy at its meeting in February, where Members constructively challenged the policy to ensure that it created a meeting environment that was suitable for all. Members recognised the importance to establishing the policy, including the conduct of Members through hybrid meetings and refining of meetings that would be held as Hybrid or purely virtual.

Going forward with the digital advancements available the Council Business Unit are reviewing the various virtual meeting platforms available to ensure value for money, security and professionalism of meetings.

Voting Arrangements

At its meeting in September, the Democratic Services Committee undertook a pilot of a digital voting arrangement through the Civica Modern.Gov system, a system utilised by the Council to access Committee papers.

Voting through the Modern.Gov in-app voting feature would 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 suite of additional information, which is publicly accessible.

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.

Although Members were supportive of the voting app and taking forward a phased roll out approach (following thorough training provision), advancements have been made in the digital market with other hybrid voting arrangements being developed which the Head of Democratic Services is scoping to ensure that the Council take forward the most appropriate voting arrangement.

Timely Updates in respect of voting arrangements are to be provided to the Committee

Members Portal

During the Member Induction process, Members were provided with training on the Members Portal, a web based portal which it was hoped would allow Members greater flexibility and access to undertake their Elected Member role. The system currently allows Members to submit questions to Council, completion of Declaration of Interest at Meetings and to submit a Call In. It is the intention that all training materials will be available on the Portal for Members future reference. The Portal is a developing system and it is proposed that it will, in time, provide statistical information, compiled from the Council's customer reporting system ('The CRM'). Information on reported matters, such as dog fouling or pot-holes, will be compiled on a ward by ward basis, alongside information on the resolution of these complaints. The portal will also provide information on the latest business of the council being considered and matters such as planning applications which relate to the respective Members electoral division.

The current status of the Portal was considered by the Democratic Services Committee during February and it was discussed how the Portal in its current form needed to be reviewed to ensure it provided the intended platform that was envisaged. Volunteer Members of the Committee have therefore taken forward the role as 'Member Portal Champions' and are working with

Council Business Officers in respect of developments to the system and have already identified a number of advancements which would improve the users use of the system as well as amendments to the look and feel of the Portal, to make it more aesthetically pleasing. The submission of Member Expenses will shortly be made available on the system as well as key contacts, training materials and inclusion of a well-being section. The Member Portal Champions will take forward tests on the system following the developments prior to a further roll out to all Members. It will be the intention that the portal is reviewed on a regular basis by the Member Portal Champions to ensure it continues to be an important and useful aid to Members in undertaking their role, so that the Portal becomes the 'go to place' for all Members when wanting to access information / report problems and get involved in the democratic process.

Members Safety & Security.

The Role of an Elected Member is integral to the running of the Council and as such an important role of an Elected Member is to keep in touch with their residents and communities, which includes communication via telephone, email, social media, virtual meetings and face to face contact with constituents, for example, by holding ward surgeries, making visits to people's homes, or when receiving people at their own homes.

It was therefore important that as a Committee, we reviewed the safety and security arrangements in place to ensure Members feel safe and secure in undertaking their role. Due to the new ways of virtual working and the use of digital devices, it isn't surprising that there has been an increase in the cyber attacks against the Council.

As a Council we have been subject to a large number of cyber phishing attacks and as Elected Members details are more easily sourced due to the nature of the role undertaken and the contact details available on public facing websites, Elected Members have been at the centre of some of these attacks. It is important that as Members, whenever possible, we limit use to trusted Council digital devices which allows access to emails, teams and Council systems to Members, whilst Members are safe in the knowledge that this access is trusted.

Members on Council provided devices are more protected from such attacks, and also cannot be impersonated as they are protected by the Council's cyber security technologies. For the reasons mentioned above, Members will now only able to access Council emails from a Council digital device. It is for this reason that all Members, by default, were provided with the provision of a mobile telephone from the local elections in May 2022.

Online abuse is also on the increase, as social media platforms are one of the main channels of communication. The social media training provided at the Member Induction programme was therefore of vital importance to help Members interact safely and confidently with constituents and residents of the County Borough. Members are reminded that access to such training can always be made available to help Members feel more confident in dealing with difficult and persistent messages.

A range of safety provisions available to Members were outlined at the Democratic Services Committee in April and it is important to recognise the effects on Members wellbeing, when a victim of any personal or cyber attack, which is discussed in the next section.

Members Wellbeing

The welfare and mental health of Members is crucially important and Members need to be aware of the support that is available to them if they wish to utilise through the Council's Occupational Health service.

Members are reminded of the support arrangements available to them, through informal and private discussions with the Head of Democratic Services, opportunities to utilise the Council's Occupational Health team and referral through the self referral Care First program

(<http://www.carefirst-lifestyle.co.uk>).

The Committee supported the return of the Coffee Catch Up session, an opportunity to allow all Members to come together in an informal environment to network and catch up in person, which is sometimes missed through the hybrid / virtual approach to meetings. Although the latest session was hampered by the adverse weather, it was lovely to see Members from all political parties coming together and the Council Business Unit, with the support of this Committee will look forward to taking forward more of these opportunities over the next Municipal Year.

Looking Ahead.

As a Committee and through our Member Portal Champions we will continue to develop the Members Portal to ensure Members can easily access and obtain information, engage in the democratic process and report problems on behalf of constituents. This 'one stop shop' will hopefully assist Members going forward.

In addition to the above it important that we continue to monitor Member's training. For both returning and new Members, training provides many opportunities and helps Members become even more confident in their roles. It is appreciated that for New Members, the induction process involved lots of new and key information, so it is important that we continue to build on this knowledge base going forward. We need to make sure that we have done all that is possible to make any Member, newly elected or long standing, easier by providing them with the information and support necessary to equip them in undertaking the positive and rewarding role of a Councillor.

We will continue to strive to make improvements in the democratic process and a transparent voting system will help improve accountability. This combined with a focus on public participation in the democratic process will further improve and enhance the decision-making process within the Council. We will therefore monitor the implementation of the Public Participation Strategy as part of our on going work and the ongoing commitment to hybrid meeting arrangements, as outlined within the Councils Multi Location Meeting Policy.

Appendix

Terms of Reference for the Democratic Services Committee

- Carry out the local authority's function of designating the Head of Democratic Services;
- Keep under review the provision of staff, accommodation and other resources made available to the Head of Democratic Services, in order to ensure that it is adequate for the responsibilities of the post;
- Make reports to the full Council in relation to these matters;
- The Democratic Services Committee may require Members and officers of the Council to attend before it to answer questions such as Members and Officers having a duty to comply with but are not obliged to answer any questions which they would be entitled to refuse to answer in court proceedings in England and Wales. The Democratic Services Committee may invite other persons to attend meetings of the Committee;
- The Democratic Services Committee must meet at least once in every calendar year.
- The Chair of the Democratic Services Committee must secure that meetings are held in accordance with the requirements set out in these terms of reference;
- The Democratic Services Committee must consider any report or recommendation sent to its Members any report prepared by the Head of Democratic Services under Section 9(1)(h) of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 at a meeting held not more than three months after copies of the report are first sent to Members of the Committee;
- The Democratic Services Committee must as soon as practicable after it has prepared a report or made a recommendation under Section 11(1)(c) of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 arrange for a copy of it to be sent to each Member of the Council who is not a Member of the Committee;
- The Democratic Services Committee will have overall responsibility for deciding what should be regarded as reasonable training and development opportunities as part of its function of providing support to Members to carry out their functions. In addition to the list set out below, the Democratic Services Committee may add some policy areas for which training is considered essential, such as planning or licensing:
 - Induction
 - Role and functions of the Executive, the Council and its Officers
 - Overview and Scrutiny
 - Information Technology
 - Code of Conduct

- The role of a Councillor as a local Member
 - Public Engagement
 - Equality and Diversity training
 - The agreed training and development opportunities will be contained within a published development strategy; The WLGA's Charter for Member Support and Development ("the Charter") will be used for guidance purposes in maintaining the award of the "Advanced Charter";
-
- The Democratic Services Committee will propose the appropriate level of funding to be made available for the purchase of external training, should there be the case that the reasonable training and development needs of the Council cannot be met in-house

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

27th APRIL 2023

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

INFORMATION REPORT

INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES: ANNUAL REPORT 2023 TO 2024

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 For information - To provide Members with the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Annual Report.

2. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Acknowledge the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales' Annual Report 2023 to 2024, available via the following link
[English](#) / [Welsh](#)

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To ensure that members are aware of the contents of the annual report.

4. SUMMARY OF PANEL'S DETERMINATIONS FOR 2023 TO 2024 IN RELATION TO PRINCIPLE COUNCILS.

- 4.1 **Basic salary for elected members of principal councils: Determination 1 -**
This will be £17,600. This will represent a 4.76% increase in the basic salary.
- 4.2 **Salaries paid to Senior, Civic and Presiding members of principal councils: Determination 2 –** See table below

Basic salary (payable to all elected members) £17,600
--

Band 1: leader	£66,000
Band 1: deputy leader	£46,200
Band 2: executive members	£39,600
Band 3: committee chairs, civic head and presiding officer (if remunerated)	£26,400
Band 4: leader of the largest opposition group	£26,400

4.3 Salaries for Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committees: Determination 3

The salary of a chair of a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be £8,800. The salary of vice-chair will be £4,400.

4.4 The remaining determinations of the IRP do not relate to Principal Councils and have therefore not be produced in this summary.

5 CONSULTATION

The Panel produced and issued a draft report on 6 October 2022 for an 8 week consultation, which closed on 1 December 2022. This draft was circulated to Members of the Council.

6 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The determinations set out within the report are based on the principle of all Elected Members being treated equally and consistently. As a result, no Equality Impact Assessment is required for the purposes of this report.

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

7.1 The provision of appropriate support and resources to elected Members is critical in ensuring the interests of local people are represented, governance of local communities is undertaken and value-for-money public services are secured for local tax-payers through effective scrutiny. The continued ability to effectively fulfil these duties will make a positive contribution to the Council's Corporate Plan priorities and the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

An increase in Member fees is determined within the IRP report.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

April 2023

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS – None.

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

27TH APRIL 2023

INFORMATION REPORT

INFORMATION REPORT - MEMBERS SAFETY / SECURITY

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of the report is to provide Members with an update in respect of the provisions available to ensure Members safety / security when undertaking their role and to consider any improvements that can be take forward.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that Members:

- (i) Acknowledge the support provided to Members to ensure Members safety and security both in a physical and online context
- (ii) Consider the proposals to further advance these support arrangements as outlined within section 7 of the report
- (iii) Consider any additional support arrangements that could be provided to Members.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 An important role of an Elected Member is to keep in touch with their residents and communities, which includes communication via telephone, email, social media, virtual meetings and face to face contact with constituents, for example, by holding ward surgeries, making visits to people's homes, or when receiving people at their own homes.

3.2 Most Councillors will not experience any problems when meeting with their constituents, and even when they do experience aggression or other forms of unacceptable behaviour, it will usually be of a relatively low level. However, it is important that we as a Council consider and re - evaluate the support and security provisions available to Elected Members.

- 3.3 On the 15th June 2022, Members received a presentation briefing session on Members Wellbeing which included details of Members Safety and wellbeing. A link to this briefing session is available [here](#).

4. UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR

- 4.1 It is important that Elected Members recognise what is unacceptable behaviour. Members throughout their term of office are likely to have to deal with unpleasant or challenging interaction on occasion with residents in their community. Welsh Government have recently advised of Ministers being targeted by activists with hostile behaviour.
- 4.2 With the rise of usage in social media platforms written and online abuse is another avenue of abuse that Elected Members are potentially subjected to. Whilst most of the aggression councillors experience will usually sit at the 'low to modest' spectrum of unacceptable behaviour, severe abuse can tip into the legal definition of violence even if no physical interaction is involved.
- 4.3 Intimidation affects people differently but can significantly affect an individual's physical and mental health. Intimidation against Elected Members whether in person or through online abuse undermines representative democracy, stifles debate and threatens the integrity of democratic structures. It can also discourage those who may wish to represent their community in being involved in the Council, potentially impairing the diversity and vibrancy of representative democracy.
- 4.4 It is important that if a Member does feel threatened or that they are subject to unacceptable behaviour that they know how to report this behaviour as potentially criminal behaviour. Members are encouraged to contact South Wales Police through the following mechanisms:

- Call 101
- Report online via the South Wales Police Website 'Report' tool at <https://www.south-wales.police.uk/ro/report/>
- Email SWP101@south-wales.police.uk
- Private message via Facebook South Wales Police - Home | Facebook
- Private message via Twitter South Wales Police@SWP101

- 4.5 If a Member feels that any of the behaviours they have endured have had an effect on their wellbeing then Members are again reminded of the support arrangements through the Council's Occupational Health arrangements.

5 SUPPORT PROVISIONS.

- 5.1 The Role of an Elected Member is integral to the running of the Council and the Council, through its Council Business Unit and in partnership with the Police and Community Safety team have taken forward a number of support provisions to ensure Members personal safety.
- 5.2 In 2019 the Democratic Services Committee took forward the drafting of a lone working policy for Members as it recognised the need for guidance for all Members when working alone. This policy was approved by Committee in 2020 and forms part of the Member Induction Programme booklet.
- 5.3 Personal Alarm devices have been made available to all Members upon request. More bespoke security support can be provided to Members as and when necessary. Member's safety is paramount to the Council and there are no defined parameters in place, however the overriding objective to ensure that the appropriate support is made available to provide the necessary safety arrangements for a member and provide the maximum level of reassurance.
- 5.4 Following the receipt of anti-social and challenging behaviour, security provision has been made available at some Members residential address, as a precautionary safety measure.
- 5.5 Publication of Official addresses - The removal of a Members contact details from the Councillor profile page on the Council website has been taken forward with the Council Business Unit being the point of contact in the first instance for any public correspondence. The Local Government and Elections Act 2021 places a duty on principal councils to publish an electronic and postal address for each member of the council on its website. A council office address may be to protect the privacy of Members home address.
- 5.6 Members have been provided with social media training opportunities to help with the managing of their Council social media accounts. Members are strongly advised to take forward a separate Councillor account and refrain from sharing any personal information on this account with their own personal social media platforms. A social Media policy has also been developed and is shared with Members during induction.
- 5.7 Infographics to assist Members with online civility have been promoted by the Council Business Unit, for Members to utilise.



5.9 Other resources for Councillors to utilise in respect of personal safety and online abuse are listed below:

- **Councillors' guide to handling intimidation | Local Government Association (Welsh version)**
- **Personal safety | Local Government Association (Welsh version)**
- **'Rules of engagement' infographic for councillors** to use on social media to give all users a clear 'code' by which they should operate (also in Welsh)
- **'Rules of engagement' infographic for candidates** to use on social media to give all users a clear 'code' by which they should operate (also in Welsh)
- **'Handling online abuse' infographic** - a quick reference guide for councillors with steps they can take to protect themselves online and seek support where needed. (also in Welsh)
- **Improving digital citizenship: A practical guide for councillors | Local Government Association (Welsh version)**
- **Research and Good Practice Improving digital citizenship: Research and good practice | Local Government Association (Welsh version)**

5.10 Police guidance as to how to deal with intimidating behaviour has also been provided to Members following the Member induction process in respect of the following:

- 'Protect yourself Guide Blue Booklet'
- Crime Prevention Survey - [Accredited Product Search \(securedbydesign.com\)](https://www.securedbydesign.com)
- Dealing with aggressive behaviour- [skillsyouneed.com/ps/dealing-with-aggression.html](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ps/dealing-with-aggression.html)

6 **CYBER SECURITY**

- 6.1 Through the new ways of working imposed on the Council through the pandemic, and the new statutory required hybrid approaches to meetings, the provision of ICT equipment to Members is now more important than ever.
- 6.2 Post-election, all Members were equipped with a digital device to allow them to undertake their Elected Member role, and to attend Committee meetings via the virtual Zoom platform, with appropriate training provided to each Member through the Council Business Unit and ICT colleagues.
- 6.3 In line with the recommendations of the Independent Review Panel and the decision taken forward by the previous Democratic Services Committee, Members have been provided with mobile telephony provision.
- 6.4 One of the most significant risks we face as a Council is the risk posed by cyber criminals. This risk is detailed on our Council risk register.
- 6.5 One key area is that of digital identity. Unfortunately, Members details are more easily sourced due to the nature of the role they undertake and are listed on the public facing website. Therefore, Members become an easier target for cyber-attacks. By limiting use to trusted Council digital devices this allows the Council to provide access to emails, teams and Council systems to Members, whilst Members are safe in the knowledge that this access is trusted.
- 6.6 Members on Council provided devices are more protected from such attacks, and also cannot be impersonated as they are protected by the Council's cyber security technologies. For the reasons mentioned above, Members will now only be able to access Council emails from a Council digital device. It is for this reason that all Members, by default, were provided with the provision of a mobile telephone from the local elections in May 2022.
- 6.7 Members feedback has been that many Members do not utilise the Telephony provision provided and prefer to utilise their own personal device. Although for security reasons outlined above the Council would encourage the use of the Council mobile provision.
- 6.8 It is suggested that a survey of Members is undertaken to establish the usage of Members devices and to ensure that the correct contact details are displayed on the Council website to assist Members of the public in engaging with Members.

7. **REVIEW OF SUPPORT PROVISION**

- 7.1 In light of the support already available, the following review opportunities are suggested to strengthen the support arrangements available. It is also important to note that the provision of security for Members is recognised within a previous IRP Annual report:

“As a result of their role as a councillor an elected member’s personal security may become adversely affected. It is the duty of Democratic Services

Committees to fund or provide support necessary to enable a councillor to discharge their role reasonably and safely. This may require funding appropriate security measures to protect councillors from personal risk or significant threat. Risk assessment and liaison with relevant bodies such as the police and security services would normally inform the selection of required provision.”

- 7.2 If felt appropriate a Members briefing session in respect of Members Safety, providing details of the support available by the Police and Community Safety Partnership could be taken forward, highlighting the safety provisions available to Members by the Police and the Council including points of contact.
- 7.3 It is suggested that the Elected Members lone working policy developed by the Democratic Services Committee is reviewed to ensure it is updated to reflect current working practices with virtual working and further advancements with social media abuse.
- 7.4 ICT course on Cyber Security and Staying Safe in a digital world to be taken forward.
- 7.5 Members are contacted to ensure they are happy with the information available in the public domain, in respect of contact details on the Council website and Council telephony provision
- 7.6 Information regarding a ‘Member Safety tracking App’ previously advised by South Wales Police to be suggested to Members for installation on Member Council Mobile phones.

8 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 8.1 The role of an Elected Member is integral to the effective running of the Council and it is essential that all Members are provided with any support necessary to undertake their role. The Council have pledged to become a diverse Council and therefore it is important that all Members and any future candidates looking to stand as an Elected Member feel safe in taking forward this role.

9 WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no language implications associated with this report.

10 CONSULTATION

- 10.1 The Council Business Unit consult where necessary with the Community Safety partnership to address any security and safety measures required by a Member.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 11.1 Any financial implications associated with Members Safety will be taken forward through existing budgets.

12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 outlines a mandatory requirement publication of Official Addresses of Elected Members.

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

- 13.1 The role of an Elected Member links to the Corporate Plan priorities with particular reference to people and the need to ensure the safety of both Elected Members and the residents that they serve within the Communities.

14 CONCLUSION

- 14.1 Although there have been very few major incidents involving violence toward local or national politicians, it is important that we ensure that the safety measures in place for our Elected Members are sufficient and fit for purpose, to ensure Members feel comfortable and safe in taking forward their important role.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES &
COMMUNICATION**

MEMBERS SAFETY / SECURITY