



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

COMMITTEE SUMMONS

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

Meeting Contact: Emma Wilkins (emma.wilkins@rctcbc.gov.uk)

YOU ARE SUMMONED to a Hybrid meeting of the **DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE** to be held on **WEDNESDAY, 5TH JULY, 2023** at **3.30 PM**.

It is the intention to live stream this meeting, details of which can be accessed [here](#)

AGENDA

**Page
No's**

1. WELCOME

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

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

Note:

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

3. MINUTES

To receive the minutes of the previous meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held on 27TH April 2023.

4. MEMBER'S TRAINING - DRAFT MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

To receive the report of the Head of Democratic Services providing Members with the Councils draft 'Member Development Programme'.

11 - 34

5. THE COUNCIL'S OFFICE ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY - RELOCATION OF THE COUNCIL CHAMBER

To receive the report of the Head of Democratic Services presenting Members with information regarding the considerations taken forward in respect of the relocation of the Council Chamber.

35 - 44

6. MEMBER'S SURVEY - CONSIDERATION OF FEEDBACK

To receive the report of the Head of Democratic Services, providing Members with details of the responses to the Member's Annual survey and the proposals presented to address the comments obtained within.

45 - 54

7. DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME

To receive the draft work programme of the Democratic Services Committee for the 2023 – 2024 Municipal Year.

55 - 60

8. URGENT BUSINESS

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

Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication

Circulation:-

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

County Borough Councillors:

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

Christian Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Andy Wilkins, Director of Legal Services and Democratic Services



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held on Thursday, 27 April 2023 at 3.30 pm.

County Borough Councillors – The following Councillors were present:

Councillor W Jones (Chair)

| | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| Councillor M Webber | Councillor L Addiscott |
| Councillor J Bonetto | Councillor S J Davies |
| Councillor A J Ellis | Councillor S Hickman |
| Councillor S Morgans | Councillor B Stephens |
| Councillor S Trask | Councillor J Turner |
| Councillor K Webb | Councillor P Evans |

Officers in attendance

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication

16 Welcome

The Chair welcomed all Members to the days meeting.

17 Apologies

Apologies of absence were received from County Borough Councillors G Jones and C Preedy.

18 Declaration of Interest

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

19 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 13th February 2023 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

20 Matters Arising

Minute 13 – Members were advised that the Multi location Meeting policy was presented to the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs at their recent meeting who were supportive of the policy following the comments and amendments of the Committee.

Minute 14 – A Member Portal Champions meeting has been undertaken, where Members considered a range of new developments. The Portal Champions were thanked for their time and constructive feedback.

21 Members Training

The Head of Democratic Services provided Members with an update in respect of the training opportunities that had been made available to Members, including details of the Member Induction Programme and the future proposals in respect of training.

Members were referred to the Personal Development Review process that the Head of Democratic Services, along with colleagues in the Council Business Unit were currently undertaking. The Officer advised that such reviews were an opportunity for Members to discuss support and training opportunities as well as discussing Members wellbeing. It was advised that the majority of Members had 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. Culminating from these meetings, the Head of Democratic Services will compile a detailed training programme which will be presented to the Committee at a future meeting advising how this programme will be delivered upon.

The Head of Democratic Services provided details of training events undertaken since the Member Induction programme and provided details of future training opportunities including Member briefing sessions.

The Chair thanked the Officer for the report and spoke of the training opportunities available to Members and the support provisions including Members wellbeing.

The Vice Chair welcomed the report and reminded Members of her role as Member Champion, another opportunity for Members to seek advice and support regardless of political party. The Vice Chair commented on further training that would be beneficial to all Members in respect of equality and diversity with particular reference to 'Gender Fluidity' and spoke of the Autism training undertaken by the Cabinet and queried when this would be available to all Members.

The Head of Democratic Services thanked the Members for their comments and agreed that the training suggested would be beneficial for all Members and would look to add this into the training programme. In respect of the Autism Awareness training, work was currently being undertaken by the Council Business Unit in conjunction with colleagues in Human Resources to commence the roll out of such training.

Members **RESOLVED:**

- (i) To acknowledge the training provided to Members since the Member Induction Programme;
- (ii) To note the forthcoming training opportunities made available to Members

22 Elected Members Draft Research Support Protocol

Members were referred to the report before them which sought to remind Members of the Research provision available for Members and to review the Council's current protocol following the new statutory guidance issued, as suggested by the WLGA.

The Head of Democratic Services explained the research facility requirements under the Local Government & Elections Wales Act 2019 and spoke of the unique position of RCT, as such a provision had been established since 2018, although it was noted that this provision had been under utilised.

Members were advised that the new statutory guidance as a minimum recommends that Councils undertake an internal review / audit of the existing research support provided to Councillors and provided a range of questions to assist Councils with such a review, as outlined within 4.2 of the report.

The Head of Democratic Services commented that 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, as highlighted within Appendix A of the document would still remain relatively open with requests being approved by the Head of Democratic Services or other appropriate officer in their absence. Members were advised that where appropriate research requests would be made available to all Members.

The Vice Chair commented on the importance of the Research opportunities within the Council Business Unit and encouraged Members to utilise the resource going forward.

One Member queried whether examples of research could be added to the criteria, to ensure Members kept within the parameters of non political research requests to which the officer agreed.

The Chair thanked the Head of Democratic Services for the report and commented on the positive position of the Council and its proactive approach to support.

Following discussions it was **RESOLVED**:

- i. To note the research facility available for Members to

- utilise to assist them in undertaking their role
- ii. To adopt the draft protocol outlined within Appendix A of the report subject to the inclusion of research examples within the criteria
- iii. To 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.

23 Census 2021 RCT and Ward Level Data

The Head of Democratic Services provided Members with details of the provision of Census data available, including ward level data and took the opportunity to explain how such data could be made available going forward for Members to utilise.

Through his report, Members were provided with examples of how such data could be gathered through external sources and commented on the importance of Members accessing such data to assist them in their roles. Reference was made to the 'Community Data Analyst' officer who assists departments within the Council to acquire and interpret data to assist in service delivery and policy making.

Going forward, the Head of Democratic Services advised how the Community Data Analyst, along with other colleagues was developing an online data Library, which will host a range of data to assist both Council Officers and Members in the future. Members were advised of the proposal that the Democratic Services Committee 'Member Portal Champions' test the system at an appropriate time in its development to ensure its fit for purpose.

The Head of Democratic Services also advised that it was the intention that as the data library would be a web based system, the library would be embedded within the Members Portal, again allowing the portal to become the 'one stop shop' for all Members information and requests going forward.

The Head of Democratic Services took the opportunity to encourage Members to contact the Council Business Unit if they had any data research requests, where officers would direct the request appropriately to the Community Data Analyst.

Members took the opportunity to thank the Corporate Policy & Consultation Manager and the team for the work undertaken in respect of data collection and consultation and the Vice Chair spoke of the valuable data collected in respect of Armed forces which the council are positively using to help veterans going forward.

The Chair commented on the importance of accessing data and

understanding the data acquired and spoke of the need for future briefing sessions to assist Members in this area.

It was **RESOLVED:**

- i. To acknowledge the Data information currently available for Members to access
- ii. To support the developments taken forward with the Data online library
- iii. To 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.

24 Annual Report

The Head of Democratic Services welcomed Members comments in respect of the Committees Annual report which provided a summary of the work undertaken by the Committee during the Municipal Year.

Members were provided with an overview of the report, which highlighted the work undertaken in respect of Hybrid working arrangements, digital voting, Members Wellbeing and Members Security as well as many other important subject areas.

The Vice Chair welcomed the report and commented on the significant developments taken forward by the Committee over the Municipal Year, under the positive influence of the Chair.

Members agreed the report was an accurate reflection on the amount of work undertaken by the Head of Democratic Services and colleagues within the Council Business Unit and spoke of the significant developments taken forward with hybrid working arrangements over a short period of time.

The Chair took the opportunity to thank the Vice Chair for the continued support provided and to all Committee Members for their attendance, feedback and support of the work undertaken.

Following discussions it was **RESOLVED**

- I. To agree the draft Annual report at Appendix 1.
- II. To agree that the Chair of the Democratic Services Committee endorse the Democratic Services Committee Annual Report 2022/23 to a future Council meeting.

25 Independent Remuneration Panel

For information purposes the Head of Democratic Services provided Members with details of the recent Independent Remuneration Panel Annual Report.

26 Members Safety

Members were provided with a brief synopsis of the information report before them in respect of Members safety.

This meeting closed at 4.10 pm

**Councillor W Jones
Chair.**



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

5th July 2023

MEMBER'S TRAINING - DRAFT MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of the report is to provide Members with the Draft Member Development Programme to assist Members with the skills necessary to undertake their roles.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that Members:

- (i) Consider the proposed draft Member Development Programme appended at Appendix 1
- (ii) Subject to Members comments to agree the proposed programme and to monitor its delivery throughout the Municipal Year.
- (iii) Subject to 2.1(ii) notification of the training scheduled is provided to all Members at the earliest opportunity to maximize attendance.

3. BACKGROUND

- 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.
- 3.3 The Head of Democratic Services along with colleagues in the Council Business Unit have identified training support and opportunities through the Member Personal Development Review programme, which was recently undertaken with Elected Members.
- 3.4 Other training opportunities have also been identified through the Members survey that was undertaken and Members direct requests to the Head of Democratic Services and requests through Committee meetings. The

programme also reflects upon the Welsh Government Competency Framework and modules identified through this framework as general good practice.

- 3.5 At the meeting of the Democratic Services Committee on the 27th April 2023, Members considered a report in relation to training, which advised upon the training undertaken to date following the Local Government Elections. The report also identified future training opportunities. This report seeks to further support the training opportunities for Members and provide a robust training programme for the Municipal Year.
- 3.6 It was pleasing to note that 92% of respondents to the Member Survey indicated either being very satisfied or satisfied with the training provided to Members, however, 8% also identified that they were dissatisfied with the training provided. It is important that we ensure that the training opportunities are available for all Members to assist them in their role, hence the need for regular monitoring and evaluation of the training provided.
- 3.7 A response within the Member Survey in respect of training was the suggestion of a 'rolling programme of training' which will hopefully be accommodated within the suggested draft programme. The suggestion for a brochure of training has been considered by the Head of Democratic Services however, it has been considered that the provision of a training brochure might restrict Members requesting training not detailed within the brochure. The current system allows for the Council to respond to training requests, regardless of the subject.
- 3.8 It was pleasing to note from the Member Survey that Members found the Personal Development Review Process helpful and a further round of these meetings will be taken forward later in the year.

4 MEMBER TRAINING PROGRAMME.

- 4.1 Through the work of the Democratic Services Committee the Council are working to support the development of all of its Elected Members and to ensure that they are able meet the demands of their roles. As a Council we would look to ensure that:
- There is a planned and structured approach to Elected Member Learning and Development;
 - Elected Members have access to appropriate means to assist them to acquire relevant knowledge and develop the skills necessary for their roles;
 - Learning and development, wherever possible, is linked to the roles of Elected Members;
 - Access to learning and development activities is equitable;
 - Elected Members are encouraged to identify their own development needs and participate fully in learning and development activities;
 - Elected Member learning and development activity is adequately resourced within available budgets;

- The Member Development Programme will be produced, updated and monitored on a regular basis, to support the needs of Members.
- 4.2 Attached as appendix 1 to the report is the draft Member Development programme which outlines training opportunities that have been identified. The programme outlines how this training will be delivered and where necessary proposed timeframes for delivery.
 - 4.3 The Programme outlines a tiered approach with 'open' training which will be delivered to all Members either through open briefing sessions or through online learning opportunities. And 'bespoke' training requested by individual Members which will be taken forward either through 1:1 settings or smaller group settings depending on the requests received and the nature of the request.
 - 4.4 During the Member Induction Programme, 'essential' training was taken forward with all Members in respect of Code of Conduct, Corporate Parenting and understanding of a Member's role within a Committee membership setting. This latter training approach has continued with any changes in Committee membership, providing that no Member can take part in a meeting until they have received the required training.
 - 4.5 Members will recall that during the Member Induction programme the Head of Democratic Services had proposed training in respect of 'Resonant Leadership'. Unfortunately this was not taken forward at the time but will be looked to be built into the current training programme. It is proposed that this event may be delivered through an 'away day session' to try to capitalise on networking opportunities for Members. Training in respect of Emergency planning will also look to take on a more interactive workshop setting, subject to Officers availability.
 - 4.6 Political Group Leaders now have a duty to take reasonable steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by the members of their group. A standards committee must also provide advice and training or arrange to train group leaders on the new duty. The Council's Monitoring Officer will work with the Standards Committee to put such training in place during the Municipal Year.
 - 4.7 Going forward, it is proposed that the programme (appended as appendix 1) is shared with all Members to allow all Members a further opportunity to identify any further training they would like to consider or to be included in. It is anticipated that such an approach will help ensure all Elected Members will have equal access and opportunity to learning and development opportunities.
 - 4.8 A flexible approach to the delivery of learning and development opportunities will be adopted to meet the identified needs of individuals and groups. A variety of methods may be used to deliver these opportunities which could include: Member Briefings, workshops and e-learning opportunities through RCT Source and the Members Portal.

- 4.9 Subject to Members comments it is proposed that the delivery of the training programme is regularly monitored by the Democratic Services Committee, so that Members can further shape its delivery over the Municipal Year. The Head of Democratic Services will also provide updates to Group Leaders during their diarised meetings.
- 4.10 To capitalise on Member Attendance at the scheduled training events, diary markers will be utilised at all opportunities and details of training will be provided within the Members Weekly Update.
- 4.11 Members attendance at training will be logged by the Council Business unit and will be available under each Members profile on the Council website.
- 4.12 Where appropriate an evaluation of any training will be undertaken to enable Elected Members to identify and record any additional learning needs which may arise from a completed learning activity.
- 4.13 Elected Member learning and development, will be resourced from the allocated Member Development budget. Where appropriate, In house training will be provided by Directorates if the topic relates to their service areas. The Council will look to capitalise on any free training that is offered by the WLGA and other organisations as appropriate.

5 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 5.1 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.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 Members PDRs were conducted to allow information to be gathered in respect of any training requirements to assist Members in their roles.
- 6.2 Members should continue to advise of any training requests at any opportunity and discussions will be taken forward by the Head of Democratic Services with Group Leaders to ensure all Members are supported with development opportunities.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 7.1 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.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 None

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

9.1 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.

9.2 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.

10 CONCLUSION

10.1 The Council Business unit will continue to support Members with any training opportunities identified to assist Members in undertaking their roles.

10.2 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.

RCT Members Development Programme – 2023 - 2024.

Elected members are an integral part of ensuring that the strategic aims and objectives of the Council are met in carrying out their duties of making local decisions and delivering better outcomes for the citizens of the County Borough. The Council is working to support the development of all its elected members to ensure they are able to meet the demands of their role both in the present and for any future expectations.

This programme looks to ensure that:

- There is a planned and structured approach to Elected Member Learning and Development;
- Elected Members have access to appropriate means to assist them to acquire relevant knowledge and develop the skills necessary for their roles;
- Learning and development, wherever possible, is linked to the roles of Elected Members;
- Access to learning and development activities is equitable;
- Elected Members are encouraged to identify their own development needs and participate fully in learning and development activities;
- Elected Member learning and development activity is adequately resourced within available budgets;
- The Member Development Programme will be produced, updated and monitored on a regular basis, to support the needs of Members

OPEN TRAINING FOR ALL MEMBERS TO ATTEND

These sessions will be run either through a hybrid setting or virtually

| MEMBERS BRIEFING SESSIONS | DATE DELIVERED | PROVIDER |
|---|--|----------------|
| JUNE 2023 | | |
| Children's Services residential transformation strategy | 15 TH June 2023 | In House |
| JULY 2023 | | |
| Members Support and Contact Arrangements | 12 TH July 2023 | In House |
| SEPTEMBER 2023 | | |
| Housing Allocation | 6 TH September 2023 | In house |
| Gender Fluidity | 12 th / 13 th September 2023 tbc 11 th December 2023 tbc | Umbrella Cymru |
| Cyber Security | 8 th September 2023 – virtual 11am 18 th September 2023 – Hybrid 2pm 28 th September 2023 – Hybrid 5pm **Members will also be supported to undertake the training through an online module if they cannot attend any of the above sessions** | In House |
| Council Budget and Reserves (MTFP) | 20 TH September 2023 | In House |

| OCTOBER 2023 | | |
|---|--|--|
| Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 | (Date tbc subject to availability of Training provider) | External - Office of Future Generations Commissioner |
| Equality Act (2010) for Councillors | 12 th October 2023 | External - WLGA |
| NOVEMBER 2023 | | |
| Council Winter Maintenance Plan | 6 th November 2023 | In House |
| Safeguarding Training refresher | 14 th November 2023 | In House |
| ALN Briefing Session | November 2023 (date tbc) | In House |
| DECEMBER 2023 | | |
| Members Wellbeing <i>(Members to be canvassed on the subject areas they would like to be included in the training)</i> | 4 th December 2024 | Inhouse |
| Democratic & Council Procedure Rules. | Date tbc | In House |
| JANUARY 2024 | | |
| Introduction to anti-racism | Date tbc – subject to availability of external provider | External - WLGA |
| FEBRUARY 2024 | | |
| Emergency Planning | 20 TH February 2024 | In house |
| MARCH 2024 | | |
| | | |
| APRIL 2024 | | |
| | | |
| TO BE SCHEDULED | | |
| Code of Conduct Training | Open training requests – to be scheduled as requested. | In House |
| | | |

| | | |
|--------------------------|----------|-------------------------------|
| Trivallis Update | Date TBC | External Provider - Trivallis |
| Declarations of Interest | Date TBC | In House |

Committee Training – Specific to Committee Membership although open invite to all Members

| COMMITTEE TRAINING | DATE DELIVERED | PROVIDER |
|---|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| MAY 2023 | | |
| Planning & Development - Refresher Training following AGM | 18 TH May 2023 | In House |
| Licensing - Refresher Training following AGM | 23 rd May 2023 | In House |
| Overview & Scrutiny Refresher Training following AGM | 25 th May 2023 | In house |
| JUNE 2023 | | |
| Standards Committee – Mock Hearing | 14 th June 2023 | External - Anthony Collins Solicitors |
| Community Services Scrutiny Committee Refresher Training following AGM | 19 TH June 2023 | In House |
| Education & Inclusion Scrutiny Committee Refresher Training following AGM | 26 th June 2023 | In House |
| Climate Change Scrutiny Committee Refresher Training following AGM | 27 th June 2023 | In House |
| TO BE SCHEDULED | | |
| Cwm Taf Morgannwg PSB JOSC | Autumn | External - Future Generations |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| Initial training following formation of JOSOC (Awaiting membership confirmation from 2 other LAs) | | |
| Appeals Refresher Training following AGM | TBC | External - Eversheds |
| Overview & Scrutiny Understanding Performance Data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Data101: an introduction to understanding and using data •Understanding and using performance data • RCT Performance Data – local perspective | TBC | Data Cymru Data Cymru In House |
| Decarbonisation Strategy | TBC | In house |
| Licensing Committee Update on the mandatory licensing scheme for special procedures in Wales | TBC | In House |
| ONGOING | | |
| Audit Committee | Agreed programme of delivery for the Committee Throughout the Municipal Year | Inhouse |
| Pension Committee | On going training programme specific to Committee delivered throughout the year | In house / External |

**Individual Training – 1:1 / Smaller Workshop setting
(Following specific requests by individual Members)**

****The majority of this training will be scheduled subject to the availability of the Members requesting and the training providers therefore proposed dates have not been included****

| 1:1 TRAINING / WORKSHOP SETTING | DATE DELIVERED | PROVIDER |
|--|----------------------------|--|
| JUNE 2023 | | |
| Pension Scheme | Completed June 2023 | In house – 1:1 guidance in respect of pension scheme taken forward with relevant Member. |
| JULY 2023 | | |
| Understanding Council Budgets | July 2023 | In House – Small workshop setting |
| Climate Change – Key Lines of Enquiry | July 2023 | In house – Potential development through the Overview & Scrutiny Committee |
| Scrutiny Chairing Skills | 13 th July 2023 | External – WLGA |
| Knowledge base of departments / directory | 12 TH July 2023 | Inhouse – Will be linked with Member Briefing Session on contact arrangements |
| OCTOBER 2023 | | |
| Scrutiny Questioning Skills | TBC – October 2023 | External - WLGA |
| FUTURE TRAINING TO BE DELIVERED DURING 2023 -2024 – SUBJECT TO MEMBERS AVAILABILITY | | |
| Social Media Training | To be agreed with Members | In House – 1:1 sessions to be taken forward to support with usage of Social Media |
| ILM Coaching Level 5 | Course module | Inhouse |
| | | |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| Handling difficult conversations | TBC | External - WLGA |
| Planning Processes | TBC | In house - 1:1 sessions to be taken forward with those Members not on planning committee to allow them to support constituents |
| Assertiveness training | TBC | External - WLGA |
| Housing Benefits | TBC | In House |
| Delivery of Speeches / Public speaking | TBC | WLGA |
| Time Management / Managing constituent workload | TBC | WLGA approved provider |
| Media Training | TBC | In House |
| Challenging Situations | TBC | WLGA approved provider |
| Welsh Language Classes | 6 Members currently undertaking the course. Details of any new cohort to be promoted to Members | In house |
| Notice of Motion Training | Plaid Cymru Group – May Labour Group –date tbc | Inhouse |
| Scrutiny of Performance | Course content under development – tbc | External - WLGA |

ONLINE TRAINING – RCT SOURCE / MEMBERS PORTAL AND OTHER ONLINE PLATFORMS

(SUGGESTED TRAINING)

| ONLINE TRAINING | DATE COMPLETED | DELIVERY |
|--|---|-----------------|
| Cyber Security | September Briefing Sessions and access to the online module through RCT Source | RCT Source |
| Autism Awareness | Pushed out to Members in June for online completion | Online |
| Climate Change | Once module developed, online learning resource to be pushed out to Members for online completion | Online |
| RCT Source Modules | Providing Members with suggested training modules available through the Source | RCT Source |
| Previous Training Materials available for viewing through Member Portal | Promotion of the training opportunities throughout the Municipal Year | Members Portal |
| Welsh Level 1 and 2 | Promotion of the Levels during July and regular promotions throughout the Municipal Year | Online |
| Data Library | Workshop Sessions and 1:1 sessions to be undertaken on accessing and use of the data library once fully developed | In house |
| Range of Equality & Diversity modules created by RCT available through RCT Source. | Promotion of the modules throughout the Municipal Year | RCT Source |

Digital Training Opportunities – Workshop setting / 1:1 / course module

| DIGITAL TRAINING | DATE COMPLETED | DELIVERY |
|---|---|--|
| Digital 1 training <i>Please see Appendix 2 in respect of further detail surrounding Digital 1 training.</i> | Members to sign up for 6 week course / or be referred as part of PDR process | In House - Proposed that 1:1 training is undertaken following specific requests received. If at the end of the session, further training can be provided either in house or external depending on requirements. |
| Digital bitesize training <i>Appendix 3 provides details of the sessions between July – October.</i> | Promotion of the opportunities available to Members | In house |
| Chamber Drop-In sessions | Opportunities to utilise the Coffee Catch up sessions with a presence from ICT and Digital Improvement to run some small sessions if required | In house |
| Mod Gov App | Training on the Mod Gov App as and when necessary | In house |
| Members Portal Training – Training on the developments taken forward including expenses and access to the ITrent System | Rolling programme between September and October of drop in sessions / 1:1 training | In house |

OTHER TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

| | |
|---|---|
| Leadership Academy | WLGA |
| Resonant leadership | HR Insight |
| Community Leadership Modules | WLGA |
| WLGA Councillor Work books for Personal Development | Chairing Skills Child Sexual Exploitation – It Can and Does Happen Here Corporate Parenting Facilitation and Conflict Resolution Handling Casework Influencing Skills Making Sustainable Decisions Safeguarding Adults Stress Management and Personal Resilience The Effective 'Ward' Councillor |

This training programme is a fluid document and will be updated accordingly.

The programme will be monitored for delivery by the Democratic Services Committee

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Digital1 Programme

What is Digital1?

Digital1 is a new bespoke training package to help to develop RCT staff and members digital skills. It is a voluntary programme, hosted by the Digital Skills, Adoption and Enablement Team within the DIO, tailored to individual needs and is non-accredited.

Programme delivery consists of six consecutive week sessions (if you are ill or unable to attend, we are unable to add this week on at the end due to waiting lists), lasting one hour each time on an individual or small group basis depending on need.

Who can benefit from Digital1?

The anticipated audience for this programme includes those with:

- No or limited digital/IT experience
- Low confidence in their digital skills
- Ad hoc low/medium level digital skills gaps who need more support than Bitesize sessions
- Additional learning needs who may struggle to learn in group settings, work place environments or self-directed courses.

How will the programme be managed?

Sessions will be delivered one to one or in small groups

Face to face (office or community venues) or virtual depending on ability. (Home locations not an option)

Up to 6 sessions, 1 hour per week

Rolling programme with regular entry points as capacity allows

Limited spaces so a waiting list will hold any referrals above programme capacity.

[Type here]

What happens after Referral?

A colleague from the Digital Skills, Adoption and Enablement Team will meet you to discuss your goals and assess your needs. This will be documented in an Individual Development Plan so that you can refer back to at the end of the six weeks.

Once this is complete, you will be assigned a tutor who will work with you for those six weeks. If you have a work laptop, you will need to bring it. For those without work devices, we have a Lend and Learn scheme.

What happens at the end of 6 weeks?

You will have a short re-assessment to measure learning and document goals achieved.

Depending on individual, we will either:

- Close involvement
- Re-refer to learn other digital skills or reinforce current learning
- Signpost to further digital skills providers for higher level courses e.g. ICDL

How to Refer?

Please ask a member of the Council Business unit to refer on your behalf or for details of the form to be completed.

Bitesize Sessions July - October

If you're short of time but still want to learn then our Bitesize Thursday sessions are perfect for you!

As the name suggests Bitesize Thursdays are held on a Thursday, virtually over Microsoft Teams. Sessions cover a range of digital topics and vary in length between 30 minutes and 1 hour. All sessions are repeated at 10am, 1pm and 3pm.

Some bitesize sessions are really popular with lots of our RCTCBC colleagues joining sometimes there are just a few. Some people ask questions, some people just listen but everyone is there to learn.

Booking a Bitesize session...

Booking couldn't be easier, to book on to a Bitesize Thursday, you can find a list of bitesize sessions here and complete our booking form by clicking on the session you want to attend.

13/07/23 Microsoft Planner and Tasks

Learn how to organise and prioritise tasks for yourself and your team with this great Office 365 tool.

20/07/23 Using the ICT Self Service Portal

Not just there when things go wrong, the ICT Self Service Portal can be used log and view calls , request new accounts and so much more.

03/08/23 Managing Shared Files

Sharing files has never been easier, find out how you can collaborate in real time and set permissions for viewing, download and editing.

10/08/23 Powerpoint Presentations

Put the pizzazz into your presentations by getting to know how to use the great features available in Powerpoint.

17/08/23 Outlook 365

Not sure how to recall an email or don't know how to create a contact group. This session will help you get to grips with email, calendar and Tasks on Outlook.

14/09/23 Windows Explorer

Learn hints and tips on how to use Windows Explorer to organise access, create, move and copy files.

21/09/23 Bitlocker PINS and Password Security

We can't emphasise enough how important a strong PIN and Password is in RCTCBC's fight against cyber crime. This session takes you through the do's and don'ts and shows you how to change a Bitlocker PIN and create a strong password that meets our password standards.

28/09/23 Teams Meeting Tools

Did you know that there are loads of different things that you can do to make your Teams Meetings more interactive? From backgrounds, break out rooms to adding language interpreters, join to find out more.

12/10/23 Accessibility Tools and Features in Windows 10

Make your digital worklife more inclusive and learn about the accessibility features that you can set to make life easier for yourself or someone else with disabilities or conditions. The session includes to help people with Visual and or hearing impairments, physical conditions and neurodiverse conditions such as Autism Spectrum Disorder, ADHD and dyslexia.

19/10/23 Teams Essentials

New to Microsoft Teams or curious about what else it can do. The Digital Skills Team will walk and talk you through it.

26/10/23 iShare GIS

This little known app, available to all RCTCBC ICT users has some great uses and features that can help you and your team find out more information about RCT.

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

5th JULY 2023

THE COUNCIL'S OFFICE ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY – RELOCATION OF THE COUNCIL CHAMBER

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to receive an update from the Head of Democratic Services in respect of members facilities and accommodation, following the decision of Cabinet to relocate the Council's HQ, and Council Chamber, to 2 Llys Cadwyn Pontypridd as part of the Council's Office Accommodation Strategy.
- 1.2 This report also provides the opportunity for the Head of Democratic Services to provide a statutory opinion in respect of the proposed new accommodation arrangements for Members, following the recent Sufficiency of Resources report.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members

- 2.1 Note the work undertaken to date in respect of the relocation of the Council Chamber; and provide comment on the arrangements proposed within the report;
- 2.2 Note the revised statutory opinion in respect of accommodation resources available to Members as set out in paragraph 8.
- 2.3 Agree to receive further updates as appropriate to ensure Members are kept abreast of the office move.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 On the 15th May 2023, the Cabinet approved the Office Accommodation Strategy, which included relocating the Council's headquarters into the heart of Pontypridd town centre, utilising vacant floor space at Llys Cadwyn.
- 3.2 As part of the report the Head of Democratic Services was charged with assigning suitable and sufficient office accommodation and services to meet the resource and facility requirements of Elected Members.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 The report presented to Cabinet in respect of the Office Accommodation Strategy can be found [here](#).

4.2 Within the report a number of objectives were identified. Strategic Objective 2 advised of the need 'To create economic growth and community benefit by focussing office accommodation in town centre locations.' To achieve this ambition it was proposed to:

- Relocate the Council Headquarters to the heart of Pontypridd, utilising vacant floor space at Llys Cadwyn, by relocating the Council Chamber and services from The Pavilions, Clydach Vale.
- Releasing the site at The Pavilions, Clydach Vale for consideration of redevelopment of the site for a new Special School subject to a consultation in accordance with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code (011/2018).

4.3 A report in respect of utilising the current Clydach Vale site for a new Special School is due to be considered by Cabinet on the [28th June 2023](#).

4.4 The main drivers for the Cabinet supporting the above-mentioned proposals as part of the revised Office Accommodation Strategy were:

- Generate footfall in town centres by increasing the number of staff working at or visiting offices in town centre locations.
- Relocate the Council's Civic Headquarters from The Pavilions, Clydach Vale to a town centre location easily accessible by public transport which will be of great benefit to staff and residents and improve involvement and engagement between the Council and residents.

4.5 Members will recall that the Sufficiency of Resources Report presented by the Head of Democratic Services on the [13th February 2023](#), identified that it would be important for the future accommodation needs of members, to reflect the new ways of working undertaken by both Elected Members and council officers, and that committee subsequently reflected upon the need to embed these new approach into the future accommodation and resource requirements of Members.

4.6 It is important that going forward the facilities within the new Headquarter locations support the new working approaches of Elected Members as they undertake their role on behalf of their constituents.

4.7 The move to a new modern building provides the opportunity to enhance members facilities, at this new modern location, and determine a new model which will aim serve elected members for many years ahead.

5. NEW CHAMBER AND MEMBER FACILITIES.

- 5.1 The Head of Democratic Services and senior colleagues, are working closely with Corporate Estates, to ensure that the office space within the new accommodation are sufficient to support Members, but importantly address some of the weakness of the Council's current HQ, previously identified by Members
- 5.2 While the office accommodation provided at Clydach has served members well, and has evolved continually since the formation of Rhondda Cynon Taf in 1995, a number of areas for improvement have been identified. These include:
- Enhancing safety arrangements for Elected Members
 - Providing greater 'hot desking' capacity for Elected Members
 - Increasing the number of 'bookable' meeting rooms available to Members
 - Improving accessibility to Members facilities
- 5.3 Early engagement has also been taken forward with 'Public I' who previously supported the Council with enhancements made in 2020 to the current Council Chamber, which enabled the Council to comply to the new statutory requirements upon us in respect of live broadcasting and remote attendance.
- 5.4 Public I have committed to supporting the office move within the desired timescales, however there will be a period of time where Committee meetings resort to online only, whilst equipment and furniture from the current Chamber are lifted and fitted within the new accommodation.
- 5.5 When developing options for a new Council chamber, a key priority has been to facilitate the ability to re-use existing technology and furniture which were introduced as part of the chamber improvements in 2020. Where possible the current furniture and equipment will be lifted and reused within the new Council Chamber, to reduce waste and additional expenditure.
- 5.6 Proposed Floor plans have been discussed with Corporate Estates and will be shared with Members at the meeting.

6. PROPOSED FACILITIES AT LLYS CADWEN

- 6.1 Democratic Services and Members facilities, including the Council Chamber will be located on floor 3 at 2 Llys Cadwen. This floor will also be occupied by Legal Services and the Council's Monitoring Officer.
- 6.2 Floor 4 will be occupied by the Council's Senior Leadership, Cabinet Office and the Council Communications services. Corporate Policy and Engagement will also reside on this floor, alongside hot desking space for senior managers.

MEMBERS ACCOMODATION

- 6.3 Members will occupy a shared space with Democratic Services. This will provide positive benefits in terms of building relationships between Councillors and the staff which are dedicated to support Elected Members. Hot desking facilities will be available to Members and the Democratic services team.

- 6.4 This set-up includes a dedicated meeting room for Members or political groups to book as and when required. Open space is provided for Members to utilise, with provision for Members to hot desk. This working environment will also look to encourage networking between Members, which has been lost somewhat through virtual way of working. The facilities will be located alongside the Council Chamber, which include direct Members only access between the Members area and the chamber. Within the Democratic Services area, provision has been made for refreshment points for Members to utilise.
- 6.5 It is proposed that a continuation of the current arrangement is provided within the new office accommodation setting, as the rooms are still largely under utilised.
- 6.6 For the first time, a multi Faith Room where prayers can be offered, which will be provided to staff and Elected Members jointly.

CHAMBER

- 6.7 2 Pillars sit within the Council Chamber and consultation with Corporate Estates and Public I have been taken forward to ensure that the pillars do not obstruct the view within the Council Chamber, in particular members view of the top table or the hybrid viewing screens. We will work to Public I's viewing guidelines to ensure viewing distances are appropriate and consideration is being taken forward in respect of small desk monitors to be incorporated as part of the desks within the Chamber to reduce any chance of visual disruption. A new 'Loop system' will be made available within the Council Chamber and Committee room area to allow for discreet hearing provision, providing an enhancement upon the technology currently utilised in Clydach Vale.
- 6.8 A new translation booth will provide better space for translation colleagues.

PUBLIC & PRESS ACCESS

- 6.9 The proposed floor layout will enable alternative access to the Council Chamber for Elected Members away from the Public gallery. Although the Council are keen to encourage the public to be involved in the democratic process, Member Safety is always of paramount importance. It has been highlighted that where possible alternative access should be provided for Elected Members and Members of the public, to avoid any potential confrontation when contentious items are discussed during Committee meetings. As with current arrangements, suitable safety measures will be in place within the new Chamber.
- 6.10 Public speaking arrangements will be enhanced through the provision of a suitable area / lectern for the public to utilise when addressing Committee. Ensuring provisions are provided to live stream Committee meetings into the additional committee room if maximum occupancy is taken up within the public

gallery of the Council Chamber and for this live streaming to be made available with in the foyer area, to assist Members of the Public.

- 6.11 The Head of Democratic Services has queried the parking provision arrangements for Members at the new location. We have been advised by colleagues that parking provision is available within Llys Cadwyn, although this is limited and therefore it likely that blue badge holders will be prioritised within this space. Pontypridd Town Centre benefits from three 24 hour car parks, and three further car parks that range from 7am – 7pm opening times.
- 6.12 It is anticipated that with the good public transport options surrounding the town centre and the continued developments with the metro both staff and Elected Members, where possible, will utilise such modes of transport when visiting the Council Headquarters. Storage facilities are also available on site for bike storage for those Members wishing to commute through this mode of transport, with shower facilities also available.

7. GOING FORWARD

- 7.1 The Council are working to a timescale of relocation by the beginning of the New Year (2024).
- 7.2 It is proposed that a site visit of the new location of the Council Chamber and Member facilities at Llys Cadwyn is taken forward at the earliest opportunity to strengthen Members involvement in the Chamber relocation.
- 7.3 Regular updates in respect of the relocation will be presented to Committee Members as appropriate by the Head of Democratic Services.
- 7.4 To enable the relocation of broadcasting and hybrid meeting 'kit' to the new location, there may be a period towards the end of the calendar year, where some committee meetings may need to operate on a virtual basis only.

8. SUFFICIENCY OF ACCOMODATION RESOURCES

- 8.1 The relocation of the Council HQ, and accommodation for Elected Members from Clydach Vale to Pontypridd constitutes a key change in the provision of facilities to Councillors.
- 8.2 For this reason, it is important that the Head of Democratic Services revised the statutory opinion provided to Democratic Services, in-line with the Local Government Measure 2011 (As amended by the Local Elections Act 2021).
- 8.3 In [February 2023](#), the Head of Democratic Services, determined the accommodation provided to Elected Members as sufficient, noting how the revised arrangements in Clydach Vale, had already responded to changing way in which members accessed support.
- 8.4 The move to 2 Llys Cadwen, will provide significant improvements in respect of the accommodation offered to Members. The proposed use of space on floor 3,

will enable new working practices of both Officers and Elected Members to be embedded into the office space available, and increases the 'space' and meeting options available to Elected Members.

- 8.5 Members will recall that the previous sufficiency of resources report, indicated that the current office arrangements, which mean that the Council would not comply with Members Advance Charter.
- 8.6 Since consideration of this report, WLGA, Welsh Government and Heads of Democratic Services from across Wales, have been working to revise the Charter to reflect new ways of working in this digital age.
- 8.7 While the detail of the revised charter are still to be published, these office arrangements, will enable Rhondda Cynon Taf to be well placed to become an early adopter of the new Members Charters in 2024.
- 8.8 **For the reasons set out above, as Head of Democratic I can confirm that I remain of the view that the accommodation provided to Elected Members is 'sufficient' and will be remarkably enhanced following the relocation to Pontypridd.**

9 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 9.1 An equality and diversity impact assessment was undertaken as part of the report to Cabinet in respect of the Office Accommodation strategy.
- 9.2 The delivery of the Office Accommodation Strategy will be built on user centred design principles and where possible will be fully accessible and support equality and accessibility.

10. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment was undertaken as part of the report to Cabinet in respect of the Office Accommodation strategy.

11. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 11.1 The Chair and vice chair of Democratic Services has visited the new accommodation and has been consulted upon in respect of the work undertaken to date.
- 11.2 Group Leaders have also been consulted as part of the scheduled meetings undertaken with the Head of Democratic Services.

12. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 As outlined within the Cabinet report, the Office Accommodation strategy would deliver annual and recurring revenue savings of £435k. This level of saving is supported by rental income generated at Llŷs Cadwyn now being in excess of

that assumed in the original business case enabling the Council to benefit from this.

- 12.2 Where possible the Head of Democratic Services is keen to ensure that existing furniture and equipment is reused within the new office accommodation. Further discussions will be taken forward with Public I to discuss the costs associated with the refitting of equipment and any additional screens / microphones / monitors if deemed needed. Fit out costs will be funded from a combination of existing office accommodation budgets, any capital receipts generated from the delivery of the strategy and the annual revenue savings in the short term.

13. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 13.1 The Council's power to dispose of land and buildings is contained in Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972
- 13.2 The Council's power to acquire land and buildings is contained in Section 120 of the Local Government Act 1972

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

- 14.1 The Office Accommodation Strategy contribute towards the priorities in the Corporate Plan:
- Ensuring **People: are independent, healthy and successful;**
 - Creating **Places: where people are proud to live, work and play;**
 - Enabling **Prosperity: creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper**
- 14.2 The Well-being goals which are particularly relevant to the Office Accommodation Strategy include:
- **A Healthier Wales:** a society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood
 - **A Globally Responsible Wales:** a nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being
 - **A More Equal Wales:** a society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio-economic circumstances)

14.3 The Office Accommodation Strategy is consistent with the sustainable approach promoted by the with the five ways of working:

- Long term – the strategic approach takes into account that factors can change over time, we will continue to evaluate and monitor trends and will utilise a range of effective interventions to support our objectives for the long term
- Prevention – the strategic framework recognises that the Council needs to protect its assets to ensure that the land and building portfolio does not deteriorate or fall into disrepair and complies with statutory requirements. We will collaborate and share data and experiences with other public bodies to encourage early intervention
- Integration – a key feature of the Council's strategic approach to asset management is to ensure it is joined up, integrated, and coordinated with the Council's Digital and Workforce plans and the Council's Town Centre Regeneration Strategy
- Collaboration – intrinsic to the vision and objectives is collaboration with other public services and third sector organisations to make the best use of the public estate
- Involvement – communities and Council services will be involved with the delivery of objectives and have their say

15. **CONCLUSION**

15.1 The Council's Office Accommodation Strategy and Operating Model & Working Arrangements Policy sets out a clear direction of travel and framework for our longer-term ambitions for the Council's office accommodation portfolio for the period 2023/2030.

15.2 It is important that Members are equipped with appropriate meeting requirements to ensure that Members can conduct their role.

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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RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

5th JULY 2023

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

MEMBER'S SURVEY – CONSIDERATION OF FEEDBACK

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members with the feedback obtained from the Member survey undertaken in April 2023, prior to the Council Annual General Meeting.
- 1.2 In accordance with Section 6 of the Local Government Measure 2011, and as part of the statutory responsibilities of the Head of Democratic Services, the Council is required to survey the views of its Members in relation to the calendar of meetings and the provision of support and resources to non-executive members.
- 1.3 In addition, the survey captured some initial responses surrounding the support provided to Members to assist them in undertaking their role with the aim of identifying areas where the Council Business Unit can improve or change current arrangements.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Democratic Services Committee:
 - (i) Consider the feedback obtained from the Member Survey 2023 as outlined within the report;
 - (ii) Consider the proposals put forward in respect of actions to be taken forward to address Members Comments, as outlined within section 9 of the report;
 - (iii) Subject to 2.1(ii) to agree for the Head of Democratic Services to take forward the actions outlined with section 9 of the report.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 As part of the statutory responsibilities of the Head of Democratic Services, the Council is required to survey the views of its Members in relation to the

calendar of meetings and the provision of support and resources to non-executive members during an elected term.

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

4. MEMBERS SURVEY 2023

- 4.1 During April 2023 and ahead of the Council Annual General meeting, a survey of Members was undertaken.
- 4.2 The outcome of the survey informed the calendar of meetings that was agreed at the Council Annual General meeting held on the 10th May 2023.
- 4.3 Overall, 51 Members completed the questionnaire. More detail has been given to the specific areas surveyed below.

5. TIMINGS OF MEETINGS

- 5.1 Members were asked to provide their preference for Committee start times, which was considered at the Council AGM on the 10th May 2023 during consideration of the Calendar of Meetings. Members agreed that in the majority, committees would commence at 5pm as evidenced below:
- In total 86% of the respondents cited 5.00pm as their preferred starting time for Council meetings. In respect of other key committees currently with a 5pm start time such as Licensing Committee, Scrutiny Committees and Democratic Services Committee, the majority of Members indicated the continuation of the 5pm Committee meeting start time.
- 5.2 In respect of Planning and Development Committee the survey responses indicated a preference to both a 3pm (40%) and 4pm (40%) meeting start time. Following the appointment of the Chair of the Planning Committee, the Head of Democratic Services consulted with the Chair of the Committee in respect of the preferred start time, whereby it was confirmed of a continuation of the 3pm start times.
- 5.3 Some additional individual comments in respect of start times of Committees were noted by responders:
- I prefer 15.00 for Planning and Development because of the frequency and the long agendas
 - A lot of councillors work other jobs and so for full council meetings, I think it would be better to start at 6pm which might encourage more to

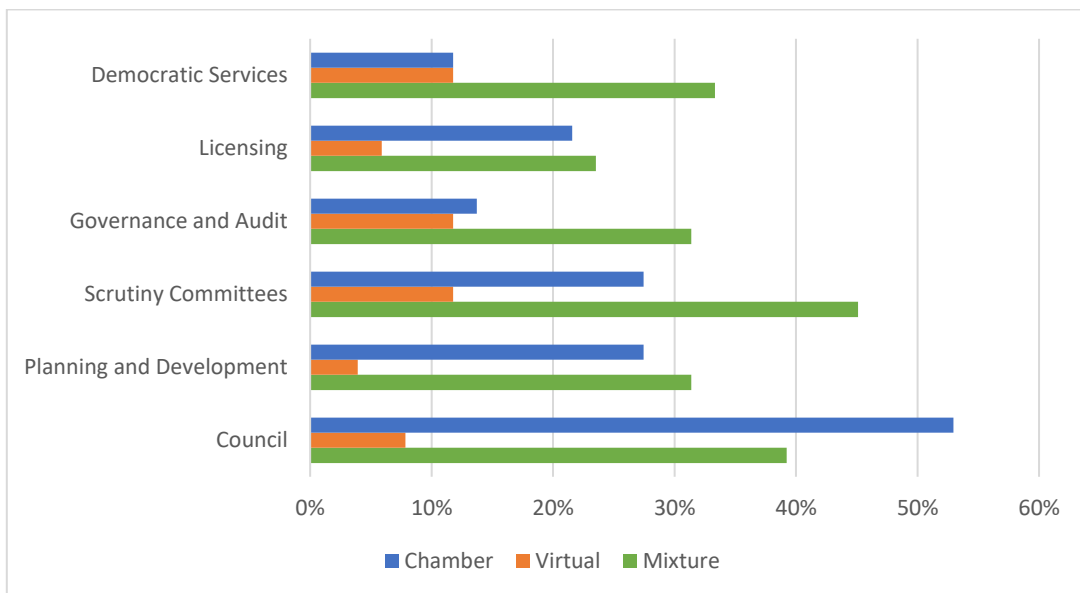
- attend the chamber
- Ref Planning and Development I've had a few complaints from residents that they're the time they are at - coinciding with school pick up time and working days
- When working as well, later meetings can often be exhausting and leaves little time. Earlier start times would help with work/life commitments
- Winter hours start early

5.4 When taking forward the proposed calendar of meetings to the AGM the Head of Democratic Services was mindful of the preference of start times for the majority of Members, the additional comments received regarding later start times and consideration was also given to the resourcing implications for hosting and supporting evenings meetings.

6 HYBRID MEETINGS

6.1 The Council has determined that all meetings must be able to operate as multi-location meetings to ensure that participants are able to attend remotely or physically should they wish to do so, subject to those meetings that were determined by Council, to be conducted as virtual only (June 2021 Council).

6.2 The Council have proactively taken forward hybrid meetings throughout the 2022 – 2023 Municipal year . When asked about their preference for attending in person or online or a mixture of both, Members responded as follows:



| Meeting | Chamber | Virtual | Mixture |
|------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Council | 53% | 8% | 39% |
| Planning & Development | 44% | 6% | 50% |
| Scrutiny Committees | 33% | 14% | 53% |
| Governance & Audit | 24% | 21% | 55% |
| Licensing | 42% | 12% | 46% |
| Democratic Services | 21% | 21% | 58% |

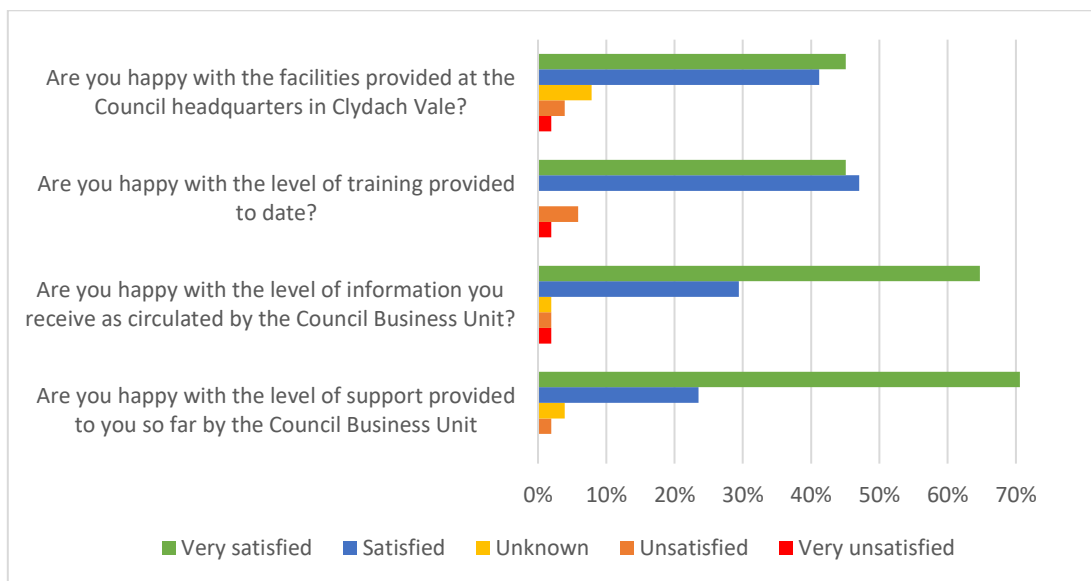
6.3 There is a clear view that the flexibility to attend either physically or remotely is a great benefit for members. The Council will continue to support the hybrid arrangements in place which will be strengthened by the Council’s Multi Location Meeting Policy

7. **COUNCIL BUSINESS UNIT**

- 7.1 Members were positive in their comments upon the support provided to them by the Council Business Unit. 71% were very satisfied and 24% satisfied of the support. 4% advised that their view on the support was ‘unknown’ as they felt that they had not utilised the support arrangements.
- 7.2 Members feedback in respect of this question was the lack of awareness of support that was available and it is suggested that a report on the support available is provided to Democratic Services Committee, highlighting the opportunities for all Members.
- 7.3 In respect of the level of communication provided to Members through daily updates and the Member weekly update, 94% were satisfied with the level of information provided.
- 7.4 In respect of training, 45% were very satisfied and 47% satisfied with training. 6% were unsatisfied and 2% were very unsatisfied. Although it is pleasing to see the majority of Members were content with training it is important that we ensure all Members receive the training that they require to undertake their role. Going forward the development of the Members development programme which will combine a mixture of both inhouse and external training opportunities and both Hybrid training sessions and online opportunities will ensure all Members are offered the training necessary to them. The scheduling of training throughout the Municipal Year will also assist Members in their attendance at the training.

7.5 The majority of Members (86%) were content with the meeting environment and facilities within the Council Headquarters, 8% unknow and 6% unsatisfied. Members commented on the lack of refreshments at Committee meetings and this is something that the Council Business Unit have reintroduced, promoting Members to be environmentally aware and bring recyclable cups and promoting the introduction of quarterly 'coffee catch up 'sessions, which promotes networking opportunities for Members. There was a concern regarding Member security in the Council Chamber, especially regarding objectors at meetings. Members safety is of paramount importance and this will be an important consideration with the development of the new Chamber during the office relocation.

7.6 The final question in respect of the Council Business Unit related to the Council's Memorandum of Understanding, and whether Members felt they had demonstrated mutual respect regardless of political opinions. It was pleasing to see that 94% of Members felt that they received this respect. It is important that all Members are provided with respect and dignity at each meeting and the Head of Democratic Services will look to work with Group Leaders to ensure all Members are treated with respect during Committee meetings.



8. DIGITAL SUPPORT

8.1 With the increased use of digital devices, it was more important than ever, that the Council Business Unit gain a better understanding of the devices Members utilise to carry out their duties and any requirements that may assist Members further.

8.2 91% of Members advised that they were comfortable in using their devices. For those Members that did not feel as comfortable, digital training and support has been identified through the Member Development Programme, which it is hoped Members will take forward. Digital bitesize training opportunities will also be promoted to Members going forward.

8.3 General Comments by Members:

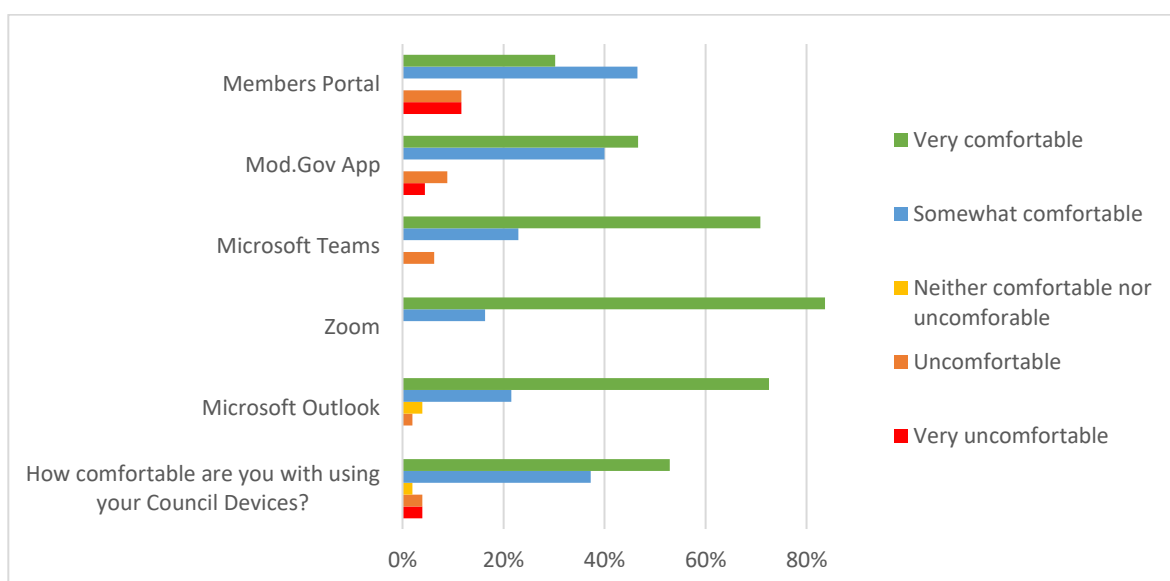
- Bite size support opportunities
- prefer not to use my council mobile phone
- Finding it difficult to use my mobile
- My technical expertise is not always great

8.4 In respect of the usage of the Council mobile phone and accessing Council emails through personal devices, Members are reminded that 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.

8.5 Members on Council provided devices are more protected from cyber 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.

8.6 It is suggested that digital support opportunities through open drop in sessions are provided going forward so that Members can sit with colleagues of ICT and the Council Business Unit to help develop usage of the Council mobile device.

8.7 Both during the Member Personal Development Review process and within the survey, Members were surveyed on the appetite for a case management system, to assist Members with constituent queries and casework. 73% of Members within the survey welcomed the introduction of such a system with 22% unsure how such a system would assist. Feedback through the PDR process was also positive and will be something that the Head of Democratic Services will scope going forward.



9. ADDRESSING MEMBERS COMMENTS – PROPOSALS GOING FORWARD

- 9.1 The completion of the survey by 51 of the Council's 75 Members, is a positive increase from previous years, and an open thank you is provided to all Members who provided this valuable input.
- 9.2 The responses have provided numerous opportunities for reflection or have supported projects already being taken forward. The following approaches are proposed to address Members comments within the survey
- 9.3 **Timing of Meetings** – The calendar of meetings is a decision by the Council however the Head of Democratic Services will always strive to present a calendar that is accessible for Members and Members of the Public. Trying to achieve a Committee calendar which balances the numerous commitments taken forward by Members, plus a healthy work life balance, in addition to any work and or caring commitments is difficult, however, with the opportunities available through hybrid meeting arrangements it is felt that the proposed and agreed times at the Council AGM support opportunities for attendance.
- 9.4 **Training** - The Member Development Programme presented to the Democratic Services Committee will hopefully address the comments raised in respect of training opportunities. It is important that the development programme remains a fluid document and is monitored by the Committee to ensure its delivery. As advised during the Committees April Committee meeting, it is proposed that a second phase of PDRs are taken forward towards the end of year with Members and will be an opportunity for the Head of Democratic Services to gauge Members responses to the development programme and whether it is delivering for each and every Member.
- 9.5 **Member Support** – A report detailing the support provisions available to Members will be taken forward to Democratic Services to further assist Members in the knowledge of support. The contents of the support will be shared with all Members following consideration by the Committee through the Members updates. In addition it is proposed that a Member briefing session is also taken forward which will look to encompass additional areas that may be useful to Members, such as referrals through the Member Customer Care hotline.
- 9.6 **Member Refreshments** – The Council Business Unit will look to host the recently re-introduced coffee catch up sessions on a bi-monthly basis. Members are encouraged to be environmentally aware and to support the Council through the use of 'travel mugs' when attending the sessions. In addition, refreshments will also be made available for Members to access when able, at the start of the majority of hybrid committee meetings.
- 9.7 **Members safety** – Although the Council are keen to encourage the public to be involved in the democratic process, Member Safety is always of paramount importance The Council Chamber is only accessible to Elected Members and Officers and access to the public gallery within the Chamber is only permitted

once the site supervisor allows. The Chamber is fitted with suitable alarm arrangements for Members safety. Going forward, the safety of Members will be a consideration in the development of the new chamber as part of the office accommodation review.

9.8 **Memorandum of Understanding** – Although it is pleasing to note the positive response in relation to this question, the Councils agreement to the undertaking of the Memorandum of Understanding was taken forward prior to the 2022 Local Government Elections. It is therefore deemed appropriate that all Members are encouraged to sign up to the Memorandum of Understanding and that the agreement is presented under each of the Members Profiles on the Council website. Discussions surrounding this will be taken forward by the Head of Democratic Services and Group Leaders.

9.9 **Digital Support** – Support in respect of Members devices is encompassed within the Member Development Programme. It is important to emphasize the opportunities that the Council Business will look to provide to Members with open drop in sessions, potentially utilising the coffee catch up session to maximise on this attendance so that Members have opportunities for any digital support they might require.

10 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

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

11. **CONSULTATION AND INVOLVEMENT**

11.1 Members Survey 2023.

12. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

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

13 **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

13.1 None

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

14.1 The work of all Councillors is fundamental to the work of the Council and subsequently the delivery of the Corporate Plan, hence ensuring Members are fully supported in undertaking their roles is important to the work of the Council overall.

14.2 Ensuring all Members are supported and have equal access to support and development links to the future generations well-being goals of a more equal Wales and a Wales of cohesive communities.

15. **CONCLUSIONS**

15.1 The Members survey is a valuable tool that allows the Head of Democratic Services to align arrangements within the service to better support Members.

15.2 It is hoped that the opportunities identified in section 9 of the report will address any issues raised by Members.

15.3 Members are reminded that the Head of Democratic Services runs an open door policy and if there were any support arrangements or concerns that Members wished to discuss then Members are able to do so at any point through the Municipal Year and not just through the Members survey.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

July 2023

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS – none.

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

5TH JULY 2023

DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME: 2023- 2024 MUNICIPAL YEAR.

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To present, for Members' comment and approval, a Work Programme on the proposed list of matters requiring consideration by the Committee for the 2023-2024 Municipal Year.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee approve the draft Work Programme for the 2023-2024 Municipal Year.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

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

4. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- 4.1 The proposed work programme is a rolling work programme for the 2023-2024 Municipal Year.
- 4.2 A draft work programme is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 4.3 During the period outlined, the Work Programme may be subject to further change to take into account any additional/deletion reports, including any new consultative documents or legislative initiatives from the Welsh Government, which require urgent attention.
- 4.4 Once agreed, the 2023 - 2024 Work Programme will also be published on the Council Work Programme page of the Website to again assist Members of the public, by improving transparency.

5. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

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

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

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

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 8.1 None

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

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

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 A draft work programme for the 2023-2024 Municipal Year is attached.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

5TH JULY 2023

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

Item: WORK PROGRAMME: 2023- 2024 MUNICIPAL YEAR.

Background Papers

- None.

Officer to contact: Emma Wilkins, Democratic Services

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DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE – WORK PROGRAMME 2023 -24.

| 5th July 2023 | | |
|---|---|---|
| ITEM | PURPOSE | AUTHOR |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Programme | To consider a draft work programme (2023/24) to assist Members in their work | Head of Democratic Services |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office Accommodation | To consider the recent decision of the Cabinet in respect of Office Accommodation and to discuss Member Facilities going forward | Head of Democratic Services |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members Training Programme – Draft Member Development Programme | To receive the Draft Member Development Programme | Head of Democratic Services |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member Survey | To consider the findings and comments of the Member Survey conducted in May 2023 and any actions to be taken forward | Head of Democratic Services |
| 2nd October 2023 | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office Accommodation Update | To receive an update from the Head of Democratic Services in respect of the progress with the relocation of the Council Chamber and Member facilities | Head of Democratic Services |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity in Democracy | To review the work undertaken to date in respect of diversity within democracy within RCT | Head of Democratic Services |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members Portal | To receive an update in respect of the Members’ Portal | Head of Democratic Services |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members ICT Policy | To review the Members ICT policy and consider whether it is fit for purpose | Head of Democratic Services / Head of ICT |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voting App Update | To receive an update in respect of an electronic voting app to be utilised for hybrid meetings | Head of Democratic Services |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member Support | To provide details of support arrangements available to Members | Head of Democratic Services |
| 19th February 2024 | | |

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| • Office Accommodation Update | To review the Office Accommodation move and any lessons learnt | Head of Democratic Services |
| • Webcasting Update | To receive feedback in respect of the Hybrid and webcasting approach to meetings including the voting app | Head of Democratic Services |
| • Resources Report | To receive an update in respect of the resource provision for Democratic Services | Head of Democratic Services |
| • IRP Annual Report | To consider the annual report of the IRP | Head of Democratic Services |
| • Members Training – Monitoring report | To receive an update from the Head of Democratic Services providing Members with details of training completed to date. | Head of Democratic Services |
| APRIL 2024 | | |
| Annual Report | To consider the draft Democratic Services Committee Annual Report 2023/24 | Head of Democratic Services |
| | | |