



CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL
RHONDDA CYNON TAF
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMITTEE SUMMONS

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

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

YOU ARE SUMMONED to a hybrid meeting of **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL** to be held on **WEDNESDAY, 25TH OCTOBER, 2023** at **5.00 PM.**

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

AGENDA

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No's**

TIME	ITEM	PAGE(S)
5 Minutes	ITEM 1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST To receive disclosures of personal interests from Members in accordance with the Code of Conduct <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Members are requested to identify the item number and subject that their interest relates to and signify the nature of the personal interest; and2. Where Members withdraw from a meeting as a consequence of the disclosure of prejudicial interest they must notify the Chairman when they leave.	
5 Minutes	ITEM 2. MINUTES To approve as an accurate record, the minutes of the hybrid Council Meeting held on the 20 th September 2023.	5 - 18
5 Minutes	ITEM 3. ANNOUNCEMENTS	
	OPEN GOVERNMENT:	

10 Minutes	ITEM 4. STATEMENTS In accordance with Open Government Council Meeting Procedure Rule 2, to receive any statements from the Leader of the Council and/or statements from Cabinet Portfolio Holders:	
20 Minutes	ITEM 5. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS To receive Members questions in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 9.2. (N.B a maximum of 20 minutes shall be allowed for questions on notice.)	19 - 28
	COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME - FOR MEMBERS INFORMATION Council Work Programme 2023/24	
	INFORMATION REPORT <i>The following update is for information purposes:</i> Notice of Motion (NOM) (Loneliness & Isolation 14.06.23)	
	OFFICERS' REPORTS	
10 Minutes	ITEM 6. COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS To receive the report of the Deputy Chief Executive & Group Director – Finance, Digital & Frontline Services.	29 - 32
10 Minutes	ITEM 7. GUIDE TO THE CONSTITUTION OF RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL To receive the report of the Director, Legal & Democratic Services containing the draft Constitution Guide for Rhondda Cynon Taf Council, as required by the Local Government and Elections Act (Wales) 2021.	33 - 80
10 Minutes	ITEM 8. PETITIONS SCHEME To consider the report of the Service Director, Democratic Services & Communication with proposed revisions to the Council's Petitions scheme, in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.	81 - 96
10 Minutes	ITEM 9. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STRATEGY To receive the report of the Service Director, Democratic Services & Communication containing the draft Public Participation Strategy for Rhondda Cynon Taf.	97 - 154
10 Minutes	ITEM 10. POLITICAL BALANCE To consider the joint report of the Director of Legal & Democratic Services and Service Director, Democratic Services & Communication.	155 - 162

10 Minutes	ITEM 11. MEMBERSHIP REPORT To receive the report of the Service Director Democratic Services & Communication.	163 - 166
10 Minutes	ITEM 12. RE-APPOINTMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT MEMBER OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE To receive the report of the Director of Legal & Democratic Services.	167 - 170
10 Minutes	ITEM 13. STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023 To receive the Standards Committee Annual Report 2022-23.	171 - 184
	ITEM 14. URGENT BUSINESS To consider any items which the Chair, by reason of special circumstances, is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency.	

Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication

To: All Members of the Council

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg / This document is also available in Welsh

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Council held on Wednesday, 20 September 2023 at 4.00pm

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 G Hughes (Chair)
Councillor B Stephens Councillor Sheryl Evans
Councillor J Bonetto Councillor D R Bevan
Councillor J Brencher Councillor S Bradwick
Councillor J Cook Councillor G Caple
Councillor S J Davies Councillor A Crimmings
Councillor S Emmanuel Councillor R Davis
Councillor J Edwards Councillor V Dunn
Councillor B Harris Councillor L Ellis
Councillor G Holmes Councillor W Hughes
Councillor K Johnson Councillor G O Jones
Councillor G Jones Councillor W Jones
Councillor W Lewis Councillor C Leyshon
Councillor C Middle Councillor M Maohoub
Councillor A Morgan Councillor N H Morgan
Councillor S Morgans Councillor W Owen
Councillor D Parkin Councillor M Norris
Councillor C Preedy Councillor S Rees
Councillor G Stacey Councillor L A Tomkinson
Councillor S Trask Councillor W Treeby
Councillor G Warren Councillor M Webber
Councillor R Williams Councillor T Williams
Councillor R Yeo

The following Councillors were present online:-

Councillor M Ashford Councillor L Addiscott
Councillor P Binning Councillor A Dennis
Councillor E Dunning Councillor J Elliott
Councillor P Evans Councillor D Evans
Councillor R Evans Councillor Sera Evans
Councillor D Grehan Councillor A S Fox
Councillor S Hickman Councillor G Hopkins
Councillor C Lises Councillor H Gronow
Councillor R Lewis Councillor D Owen-Jones
Councillor K Morgan Councillor M Powell
Councillor A Rogers Councillor A Roberts
Councillor D Williams Councillor J Turner
Councillor D Wood Councillor G E Williams
Councillor K Webb

Officers in attendance

Mr P Mee, Chief Executive
Mr B Davies, Deputy Chief Executive and Group Director, Finance, Digital and Frontline Services
Mr R Evans, Director of Human Resources
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal and Democratic Services

Apologies for absence

Councillor A J Ellis Councillor S Powderhill
Councillor J Smith Councillor J Barton

38 Welcome

The Presiding Member welcomed Members to the hybrid Council meeting.

39 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct and following advice given by the Council's Director of Legal Services & Democratic Services, the following declarations were made pertaining to the agenda and declaration (8) in relation to agenda item 7 was declared later in the meeting (Minute 45 refers):

Agenda item 7 – Review of the Council's Terms & Conditions:

1. Councillor D R Bevan declared the following personal interest- "I have two family members who may be affected by what is set out in the report"
2. Councillor A Morgan declared the following personal interest – "I have a close associate who may be affected"
3. Councillor G Hughes declared the following personal interest – "My mother works for the Local Authority"
4. Councillor W Hughes declared the following personal interest – "My wife works for the Local Authority"
5. Councillor G Stacey declared the following personal interest – "My daughter, Son and Grandson work for the Council"
6. Councillor T Williams declared the following personal interest – "My son works for the Council"
7. Councillor W Lewis declared the following personal interest – " My son works for the Council"
8. Councillor W Treeby declared the following personal interest – "Both my sons work for the Council"

40 Minutes

The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the Council meetings held on the 12th July 2023 as an accurate reflection of the meeting (subject to it being noted that Councillor S Trask was omitted from those in attendance at the 4pm meeting).

41 **Announcements**

The following announcements were made:

- Councillor R Harris wished to congratulate the Welsh rugby player Josh Adams who had recently achieved his 50th cap at the Rugby World Cup. He also wished the Welsh Rugby team good luck for their up-and-coming game against Australia on the weekend.
- Councillor M Maohoub led the Council in a Minute's silence in memory of all those who had lost their lives in the recent tragic events in Morocco and Libya.
- The Service Director Democratic Services & Communication made the following announcement in the absence of Councillor W Treeby which provided information in respect of Councillor Treeby's Charity Donations during her time as Mayor for Rhondda Cynon Taf during the 2022/23 Municipal Year:

Wales Air Ambulance £26,100

Stroke Association £26,100

These both include £24,000 each of ICCM money.

Green Meadow Riding School for the Disabled £2,100

Total Donations £54,300

42 **Members' Questions**

Council was advised that question 3 would fall due to the absence of the Member asking the question:

1. **Question from County Borough Councillor R. Evans to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:**

"Can the Leader give an update on the Britannia Bridge scheme?"

Response from County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:

The Leader commented that this question relates to the Eirw Road / Imperial Bridge scheme in Britannia which is now progressing to its conclusion. All the bearings which had seized have been replaced, the parapets and structural steel have been repaired with corroded sections also replaced. The whole bridge, at just under 3,000 square metres of surface, has been stripped and repainted.

The Leader added that the road surfacing has now been removed to re-waterproof the bridge deck and repairs will need to be made to the concrete infill first, and this will add a few weeks onto the programme. He commented that major schemes such as this one and other structural maintenance or replacement schemes can cause disruption locally and therefore the Council is

grateful to residents for their patience and cooperation.

Supplementary Question from County Borough Councillor R Evans:

“Can the Leader explain the importance of having a structural repairs and maintenance programme in RCT?”

Response from County Borough Councillor A Morgan:

The Leader commented that it is hugely important and the Council is currently replacing many bridges across the County Borough alongside the capital programme. The Leader acknowledged the disruption this involves but without investing in the structures, they would close which has long term implications for local residents until they are replaced.

The Leader explained that continued investment following Storm Dennis is inevitable and needed and four bridges will shortly be listed into placed. He added that structures will continue to be replaced as they age or else they will fail.

2. Question from County Borough Councillor H. Gronow to the Cabinet Member for Environment & Leisure County Borough Councillor A Crimmings:

“Could the relevant Cabinet Member please give us an update on fly tipping across the county borough”.

Response from County Borough Councillor A. Crimmings:

Councillor Crimmings responded that Rhondda Cynon Taf Council adopts a zero-tolerance approach to tackling fly-tipping, and we use all available powers to catch those responsible for illegally blighting own towns and countryside and holding them accountable for their actions.

Councillor Crimmings advised that the removal of fly-tipping in the County Borough costs hundreds of thousands of pounds which should be spent on key front-line services, which is obviously vital in the current financial climate. She added that the most frustrating thing is that many of the items recovered on the streets, towns and mountains could have been taken to a Community Recycling Centre or collected from the kerbside at no extra cost. Therefore, there is absolutely no excuse for this behaviour in our communities.

Councillor Crimmings confirmed that once again, Rhondda Cynon Taf has achieved more successful fly-tipping prosecutions than any other Welsh Local Authority, cementing its place as the top performing Local Authority in Wales in this area for a 3rd year in a row. This has resulted in 123 PACE interviews being undertaken, 64 Fixed Penalty Notices being issued, and 26 prosecutions administered to offenders across the County Borough in the last year.

Councillor Crimmings advised that as well as carrying out routine checks and responding to the reports they receive, the Council has a number of covert, roaming cameras placed in key locations to catch offenders red-handed. The

Council's Environmental Enforcement team remains committed to investigating every incident of fly tipping and prosecuting all offences where enough evidence is present.

Councillor Crimmings recounted one example where an offender was ordered to pay costs of over £2,000 and also given a custodial sentence after fly-tipping 7 times across RCT. The individual had dumped almost 200 black bags of waste across 3 locations, with the waste consisting of large amounts of cannabis waste and related materials, including venting pipes, heat lamps, soil and other items. She added that the particular individual was also a licensed waste carrier at the time, and their vehicle – which contained more black bags and evidence - was seized as part of the investigation. This was a particularly complex case involving different agencies but was very much driven by our Officers and highlights some of the behind-the-scenes work that goes into each case.

There was no supplementary question

(As advised question 3 fell due to the absence of the Member asking the question)

4. Question from County Borough Councillor R. Davis to the Cabinet Member for Social Services, County Borough Councillor G. Caple:

“Can the Cabinet Member provide an update on the works to deliver an Extra Care scheme in Porth?”

Response from County Borough Councillor G. Caple:

Councillor Caple thanked the Member for the opportunity to provide an update on the Council's £60M investment in modernising its residential care homes in order to ensure dignity and respect in old age with modern, state of the art extra care homes with provision for more complex needs such as dementia throughout the county borough. These changes will enhance the wellbeing and independence of older people in a modern-day setting. He added that the Council is able to provide real choice and quality care for the most vulnerable in its society against a background of budget cuts and a financial cost of living crisis together with economic turmoil.

Councillor Caple advised that last year, the Jehu Group, who were originally awarded the contract for the scheme, unfortunately entered into administration. Work on-site was temporarily paused and the site secured, consequently, the Council has been working closely with Linc – its partners for the scheme - to identify a contractor to take over and recommence the project.

Councillor Caple added that whilst there has been a delay, the scheme is still very much considered to be a priority project and the Council remains committed to providing further state-of-the-art, modern and fit-for-purpose Extra Care places and the additional community facilities that accompany it in Porth. He commented that once completed, it will house 60 extra care apartments over four storeys, providing modern accommodation with 24-hour support for older

people's assessed needs, allowing them to live as independently as possible.

Councillor Caple listed the on-site amenities to include a dining area, hair salon, activity room, day care centre and offices. Externally, 33 car park spaces will be provided along with cycle and buggy stores, while the site's existing access will be slightly reconfigured.

In conclusion, Councillor Caple advised that the extra care scheme in Porth at Dan-Y-Mynydd is currently awaiting funding approvals, with a view to signing the Pre-Commencement Agreement (PCA) shortly. However, completion of this stage will enable the detailed design work and further site investigation work to get back underway ahead of a resumption in full site activity in the new year.

There was no supplementary question

5. Question from County Borough Councillor V. Dunn to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:

"Can the Leader provide Members with an update on the rollout of the Council's Community Wardens team and outline what progress has been made in the further commitment to fund 10 PCSOs with South Wales Police?"

Response from County Borough Councillor A Morgan OBE:

The Leader advised that the Council has 14 Community Wardens in post and is funding 10 PCSOs, which have now been recruited by South Wales Police, which means the core manifesto commitment to introduce 24 individuals has been carried out. He added that there are 12 wardens, 2 senior wardens and 10 PCSOs. They can work 7 days a week if necessary, to include two shifts per day, in the morning and afternoon with an overlap during the day. Their main role is to patrol high footfall areas such as parks and town centres to provide a visible and reassuring presence in key locations across the communities. The Wardens are there to support the Police and are linked by radios to the CCTV centre and joint patrols are taking place and effective communication processes are in place between the Supervisors of each organisation.

The Leader explained that they have the necessary powers to issue fixed penalties for dog fouling, littering and dogs on sports pitches although not their main role they will deal with these issues if they see it. They are also supporting the alcohol related PSPO's in Taff Street, Mill Street and Ynysangharad Park in Pontypridd and Aberdare Town Centre and the Ynys and issuing significant numbers of fines for drinking alcohol in areas where it is banned and can make referrals for ASB and work closely with the Police.

The Leader advised that through SPF funding an additional member of staff is in post within the Community safety team to support the additional referrals and PSPO breaches. In conclusion, the Leader commented that their presence is already having a positive effect and they are visible and over time they will make

a difference.

Supplementary Question from County Borough Councillor V Dunn:

“What are the key priorities for the community wardens and PCSO’s in Aberdare East and what actions have been taken by the wardens and PCSO’s to tackle Anti Social Behaviour in our town centre?”

Response from County Borough Councillor A Morgan OBE:

The Leader confirmed there are key hotspots which have been identified through intelligence led information as a result of working with the Police and PCSO’s. He added that they are visible, wearing distinctive bright red uniforms so they can be easily identified and explained they have access to free public transport via the trains and with Stagecoach and other bus companies which is important in making themselves seen and approachable on public transport.

The Leader commented on the Member’s area of Aberdare and reassured that regular patrols are being increased in areas of anti social behaviour to provide a reassuring presence on the streets.

6. Question from County Borough Councillor G. E. Williams to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:

“Can the Leader please provide an update to residents on the progress of the Maindy Road bridge scheme?”

Response from County Borough Councillor A Morgan OBE:

The Leader acknowledged that this has been a particularly difficult scheme for the upper Rhondda Fawr especially due to the lack of trains at present. However, he confirmed he was on site with Officers to view the works first hand and added that a statement was published on the Council website recently to confirm that works were progressing well as the precast concrete replacement bridge deck slabs have been installed successfully and Wales and West Utilities now have access to carry out further utilities diversions over the top of the new slabs.

In mind of the disruption, this has been a scheme that we’ve really pushed to progress as quickly as practicably possible, and the replacement of the Maindy Road Bridge has progressed well, with a few weeks ahead of schedule saved on the programme to date. Council officers are continuing to work closely with the contractors for the bridge to be built and opened as soon as possible and before the scheduled date in December.

The Council is looking at the traffic flows in the area but the Leader advised that any changes have to be formally signed off by the approved traffic management companies and many of the options submitted and suggested by residents are not viable. The Leader assured the Member that additional options are being re considered which will be communicated with the local communities shortly. In conclusion, the Leader advised that if the bridge works had not been carried out

following Storm Dennis the bridge would have been closed for a lengthy period of time.

There was no supplementary question

7. Question from County Borough Councillor Sera Evans to the Cabinet Member for Public Health & Communities, County Borough Councillor R Harris:

“Can the Cabinet Member please update members on its preparations to host the National Eisteddfod in Pontypridd in 2024?”

Response from County Borough Councillor R Harris:

Councillor Harris responded by confirming that preparations are well under way for the 2024 National Eisteddfod of Wales to be held in Ynysangharad War Memorial Park in Pontypridd and Council officers have been working with Eisteddfod organisers for many months to make this a truly unique Eisteddfod, whilst ensuring the council can promote the public transport network as part of this being a green and sustainable event.

Councillor Harris added that in addition, plans are being developed for Park and Ride facilities, whilst caravan site locations are being identified for those who wish to stay in camp site arrangements, which is a traditional element of the Eisteddfod, of course. He advised that Officers are continuing to work with the Eisteddfod organisers around logistics and infrastructure, and a high level spatial plan is being finalised by the National Eisteddfod which will be subject to agreement with the Council as soon as practicably possible.

Councillor Harris was delighted to report that the Council had a really successful eight days at this year’s Eisteddfod in North Wales, selling RCT as a tourist destination with all the unique experiences that it has on its doorstep. He commented that the ‘Let’s Talk Eisteddfod’ consultation had received 740 responses with Officers currently working through these responses to inform a communications plan.

Councillor Harris informed Council that community fundraising activities in support of the Eisteddfod funding requirements is a key feature of every annual Eisteddfod and Officers are supporting the three Local Committees. He spoke of the National Eisteddfod as an important legacy for the Welsh Language in RCT and as part of that, the Adult Community Learning and Work and Skills teams have consulted with residents at various community engagement events throughout the summer period. The outcomes demonstrate an increase in the numbers of local residents starting to learn the Welsh Language. Councillor Harris added that additional opportunities will be offered to residents to access taster sessions across the County in partnership with Welsh for Adults (University of South Wales - USW) and Menter Iaith RCT.

In conclusion, Councillor Harris acknowledged the meeting that the Leader had with over 40 Pontypridd Traders / Businesses to discuss the business opportunities and economic boost the Eisteddfod will bring. It was the start of a

conversation and further meetings are planned with Officers but the feedback was extremely positive. This positivity also extends to the engagement Council Officers have had with key partners, sport and community groups in recent months to explore all opportunities for pre-event engagement, participation and the Eisteddfod legacy.

There was no supplementary question due to the lapse of the 20 minutes.

43 Council Work Programme 2023/24

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communication presented an update regarding the adopted and published Council Work Programme. He advised that any deferred items of business from this month will be considered at the subsequent council meeting on the 25th October. That meeting will also be the last hybrid Council meeting before work commences to decommission the Council chamber in Clydach Vale ahead of the office relocation to Pontypridd. The Service Director confirmed that an invitation to the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board to attend Full Council in November would now be postponed and reconvened following the office relocation in the New Year.

In conclusion the Service Director confirmed that a Political Balance report would need to be considered in October in view of the notification of the formation of a new political group, the Independent Group comprising Councillor W Jones and Councillor W Owen.

44 Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 - 2026/27

The Deputy Chief Executive and Group Director, Finance, Digital and Frontline Services presented an update on the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2023/24 to 2026/27 and Council Reserves through a Power Point presentation under the following headings:

- Council Budget
- Capital Investment
- Medium Term Financial Plan
- Context and Uncertainty
- Council Financial Health and Reserves

Following the presentation, the Director advised that updates will be provided to Council once the provisional settlement has been received from Welsh Government in December 2023. The Director advised that the updated MTFP would be presented to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee as part of the first phase of the Council's budget consultation process.

Following discussion there were contributions from the Group Leaders,

it was **RESOLVED:**

1. That Members note the current position modelled in respect of the 'Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 to 2026/27' and receive further updates in the autumn as part of the annual budget setting process.

An additional recommendation, which was not supported by the majority of Members, was moved and seconded as follows:

2. That this Council writes to all Party Leaders in the UK and Wales, putting them on notice that Wales is sick of having the crumbs off the UK Government's table and that the next UK Government must pledge to substantially increase funding to Wales and ask that the Leaders of all parties that we can call on their support.

45 Review of the Council's Terms & Conditions

The Director of Human Resources presented the joint report to advise Council of the proposal for change in respect of staff terms and conditions of employment.

The Director advised of the commitment to keep further terms and conditions matters, raised by the recognised trade unions, under review in light of operational and service need, following the change agreed by Council at its meeting on the 28th September 2022. The Director referred Members to the enhancement being proposed, as set out at section 4 of the report, for any hours worked on a Sunday, staff will be paid an enhanced rate of Time Plus a Half, starting from the 1st November 2023. The existing Time plus a Third payment will remain in place for any hours worked on a Saturday.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED:**

1. That Council agrees to introduce a revised rate of pay for Sunday working based on a Time plus a Half of Time payment;
2. That this change is introduced from the 1st November 2023.

(Note: Councillor W Treeby declared the following personal interest – “Both my sons work for the Council”).

46 Council Investment Priorities

The Deputy Chief Executive and Group Director – Finance, Digital & Frontline Services presented the report of the Cabinet which set out the position regarding the opportunity for the Council to further invest in its priority areas, aligned to the Corporate Plan, “Making a Difference” 2020 – 2024.

The report sought Council's agreement of the additional investment of £7.730M across the areas as set out in paragraph 4.1 of the report which, if agreed, will be incorporated into the Council's Capital Programme.

Following consideration of the report it was **RESOLVED** to agree the additional investment and funding arrangements as set out in paragraph 4, which will be incorporated into the Council's Capital Programme.

47 Multi Location Meeting Policy (MLM)

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communication presented the report which sought Members' endorsement of the draft Rhondda Cynon Taf Multi-Location Meeting policy (attached at Appendix 1) following its consideration by the Democratic Services Committee and Scrutiny Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs.

The Service Director commented that the draft policy seeks to capture the good working arrangements and practices the Council has adopted, initially meeting virtually only following the onset of the pandemic and more recently on a hybrid arrangement in line with the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Elections Act 2021. The broadcasting of meetings has strengthened the opportunity for the public to view proceedings and has promoted diversity within the Council chamber.

The Service Director advised that the draft policy seeks to formalise the approaches taken to date by recognising the need for the hybrid meetings to be conducted to the appropriate standards of professionalism. It also notes a number of important meeting etiquette rules (and general good housekeeping rules) in terms of the environment in which a Member may attend their meetings, contained within a formal multi location meeting policy for the first time.

In presenting his report, the Service Director stated that the draft policy had been considered and supported by the Democratic Services Committee and the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs, following which a number of amendments were proposed and are highlighted in red within the attached appendix. The amendments have also been supported by the Constitution Committee who have recommended adoption by Council.

In conclusion, the Service Director referred Members to two areas of more specific direction within the policy, in respect of the use of cameras at section 6 of the report and in respect of location attendance which ensures the same standards of professionalism are maintained. This is in line with the adopted and consistent approach with the expectation placed on all Council employees, which has recently been formalised as part of the Council's home and agile working arrangements.

In response to a query regarding attendance from remote locations specifically from vehicles, the Service Director referenced section 9 of the report and he emphasised the importance of attending a meeting from a confidential location, one which is professional and fitting for the formal meeting proceedings. He also confirmed the current arrangements for recording votes and the intention to implement the hybrid electronic voting system in the new office location in Lllys Cadwyn.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to endorse the draft Multi Location

Meeting policy (subject to the insertion of the full title of the 'Local Education Authority Governors Appointments Committee' at table 4.3), following which the Council Constitution be amended to include a copy of the agreed policy.

48 Establishment of a Corporate Joint Committee -Overview & Scrutiny Committee

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communication presented the joint report which sought Council's agreement for the creation of a Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee, as part of the Governance arrangements relating to the Southeast Wales Corporate Joint Committee (the CJC).

The Service Director advised that the process of 'lifting and shifting' the functions of the current CCRC into the corporate joint committee, due to its synergies which exist in respect of its remit for Economic Development is currently underway working towards fully functioning status next year in line with the requirements of the Local Government Wales & Elections Act.

The Service Director advised that the report proposes that the current Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee provides the Scrutiny arrangements for the CJC, under a separate term of reference, as this current arrangement would best satisfy the Welsh Government's intention, as set out in the statutory guidance. He also pointed out that as the report proposes, each local authority would each appoint one substantive member.

The Service Director stated that this would be a lift and shift of the current CCRC scrutiny arrangements into the new CJC and the regulations require that the 10 constituent Local Authorities would need to formally appoint the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee as the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the CJC

The Service Director confirmed that the JOSC met on 27th July 2023 and have indicated their agreement in principle to the proposal and as such a letter from the Chair of the JOSC to the Interim Monitoring Officer of the CJC dated 27th July 2023 is attached to the report at Appendix 1. Council was advised that included in the appendices are the draft terms of reference and the Service Director proposed that Council may wish to consider that opportunity is afforded to the new CJC JOSC to review the proposed terms of reference and that any amendments are reported to the constituent local authorities.

In conclusion, the Service Director confirmed that following a request by a number of Members for further information regarding the formation of CJC's, he confirmed that Members would be given the opportunity to be appraised by the Chief Executive in the future of the CJC of its priorities.

The Vice Chair of the CCRC JOSC, Councillor D R Bevan spoke of the opportunity they were provided to pre-scrutinise and support the proposals in the summer and he concurred with the proposal for the new CJC JOSC to have opportunity to review its terms of reference

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. To appoint the JOSC as the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the

- CJC;
2. To approve the Draft Terms of Reference for its functions in respect of the CJC, as attached at Appendix 2;
 3. Note the appointment of Rhondda Cynon Taf Council, as the host authority, for the JOSC.
 4. Note that the cost of administering the JOSC for the CJC will be dealt with by a service level agreement between RCTCBC and the CJC, to be concluded in due course.
 5. That opportunity is afforded to the CJC JOSC to review the proposed terms of reference and that any amendments are reported to the constituent local authorities.

49 Change to Outside Body Membership

The Service Director, Democratic Services & Communications presented his report which sought to consider the proposed change to the current representation on the Governing Body of Coleg Y Cymoedd for the remainder of the four-year term (culminating in 2025). The Service Director proposed that Council consider the appointment of Ms Kate Owen in place of Mrs G Davies, Director of Education & Inclusion Services, following her resignation from the position.

Following consideration of the report it was **RESOLVED**:

1. To receive member nominations to represent the Council on the Governing Body of Coleg Y Cymoedd for the remainder of the term of office;
2. To agree the appointment of Kate Owen as the nominated Officer in place of Mrs G Davies, Director of Education & Inclusion Services, following her resignation from the position; and
3. That correspondence be sent to Coleg Y Cymoedd advising them of the appointment (and change) to the Authority's nominated representatives.

50 Appointment of Director of Social Services

The Director of Human Resources presented the joint report which sought ratification of the decision of the Appointments Committee, regarding the appointment of the selected candidate to the post of Director of Social Services.

Members were informed that following completion of the formal recruitment and selection process, the Appointments Committee determined to unanimously recommend that Mr Neil Elliott be appointed to the post of Director of Social Services.

Members wished to express their support for the appointment and it was **RESOLVED** to:

- i. To ratify the recommendation of the Appointments Committee that Mr Neil Elliot be appointed to the post of Director of Social Services; and

- ii. To note that Mr. Elliot's start date in this post will be Thursday 21st September 2023.

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg / This document is also available in Welsh

This meeting closed at 6.18 pm

**Councillor G Hughes
Chair.**

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL

25 OCTOBER 2023

MEMBERS QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATION.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To present the order of questions in respect of the Members Questions on Notice, following the amendment to the process agreed at the [Council AGM 2019](#).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Receive the Questions and any supplementary questions proposed, as in accordance with the running order advised upon in 4.3 of the report, which should not exceed a 20-minute time period.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 As agreed at the Council AGM on the 15th May, 2019, Members agreed to amend Council Procedure Rule 9.2 in respect of Members Questions on Notice. A further amendment was made to Council Procedure Rule 9.2 at the Council AGM on the 26th May 2021 in respect of supplementary questions following expiry of the 20 minute time duration. [Council AGM 2021](#)

4. MEMBERS QUESTION ON NOTICE

- 4.1 The closing date for receipt of Members Questions on Notice to the Council Business Unit for the Council meeting on the 25th October 2023 was 5pm on the 12th October 2023.
- 4.2 Forty questions were received and put forward to the Council Ballot held on the 17th October 2023, to determine the running order of the questions at the Council Meeting.
- 4.3 The results of the ballot are outlined below:

Number	Corresponding Question
1	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor D. Wood to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:</p> <p>“I was recently contacted by a member of the emergency services who is extremely concerned about the traffic issues and delays into Pontypridd from the Rhondda every morning. This has meant that it is taking him between one hour and 30mins or even as long as 2 hours to arrive at work for 8am, when he is then struggling to find a parking space, which has meant that he is late for work. He would like to know whether there is an RCT plan to alleviate the ongoing traffic issues please?”</p>
2	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor T. Williams to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:</p> <p>“Could the Leader provide Councillors with an update on the Shared Prosperity Fund Community Fund and other Third Sector grants?”</p>
3	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor J. Bonetto to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:</p> <p>“Can the Leader make a statement on the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan?”</p>
4	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor C. Middle to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:</p> <p>“What progress is the Council making in achieving its commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030?”</p>
5	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor S. Emanuel to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:</p> <p>“What support is available to the hundreds of workers who recently lost their jobs following the closure of UK Windows and Doors?”</p>
6	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor M. D. Ashford to the Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language, County Borough Councillor R. Lewis:</p> <p>“Will the Cabinet Member provide an update on the progress of the new school for Pontyclun Primary?”</p>

7	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor L. Addiscott to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:</p> <p>“Following the wet winter we had, potholes have been an issue for councils across the country. Can the Leader therefore provide an update on the Council’s ongoing programme of investment in the County’s Highways network?”</p>
8	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor R. Williams to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:</p> <p>“Will the Leader make a statement on whether any Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) has been identified in RCT schools?”</p>
9	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor L. A. Tomkinson to the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities, County Borough Councillor B. Harris:</p> <p>“Will the Cabinet Member make a statement on the Muni Arts Centre redevelopment scheme?”</p>
10	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor J. Edwards to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:</p> <p>“Would the Leader update on the progress of the Welsh Government funded walking and cycling route along the river through the Rhondda Fach?”</p>
11	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor J. Smith to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:</p> <p>“With the introduction of the Social Partnership and Procurement Bill in Wales, can the Leader please outline what action RCT are taking to ensure compliance with the legislation?”</p>
12	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor M. Powell to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:</p> <p>"Could the Cabinet portfolio holder for highways say what measures or proposals the RCT Highways department are considering to alleviate the dire traffic congestion problems that the Pontypridd Town centre has been enduring for many, many years please?"</p>
13	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor G. Hopkins to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:</p> <p>“Will the Cabinet Member please confirm the latest position on the scheme to replace the Llanharan Railway Footbridge?”</p>

14	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor S. Powderhill to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:</p> <p>“Following the successful lift of the new bridge at Castle Inn, can the Leader outline what the next steps of the final phase of the scheme will be?”</p>
15	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor D.R. Bevan to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:</p> <p>“What impact is the UK Government’s pursuit of austerity having on councils and communities across Wales?”</p>
16	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor S. Hickman to the Cabinet Member for Development and Prosperity, County Borough Councillor M. A. Norris:</p> <p>“Will the Cabinet Member make a statement on investment in Porth town centre?”</p>
17	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor S. Bradwick to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:</p> <p>“Can the Leader make a statement on bus services in RCT and outline the latest position on providing support to providers?”</p>
18	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor N. H. Morgan to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:</p> <p>“Will the Leader provide an update on how the Council is progressing its work to upgrade and improve drainage on its highway network?”</p>
19	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor W. Hughes to the Deputy Leader of the Council and Armed Forces Champion, County Borough Councillor M. Webber:</p> <p>“What support does this Council provide to the local Armed Forces community?”</p>
20	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor G. O. Jones to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:</p> <p>“We have heard in recent months that the combined impacts of both Brexit and the war in Ukraine are having a profound effect on our construction industry. What does this mean for the Council and how can we mitigate these impacts?”</p>
21	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor R. Evans to the Deputy Leader of the Council and Armed Forces Champion, County Borough Councillor M. Webber:</p> <p>“Can the Cabinet Member make a statement on the Council’s programme of events?”</p>

22	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor J. Barton to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:</p> <p>“In light of the continuing Cost of Living crisis, what support is available for RCT residents as we approach the winter months?”</p>
23	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor S. J. Davies to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:</p> <p>“Can the Leader make a statement on capital investment across Rhondda Cynon Taf?”</p>
24	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor C. Lises to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:</p> <p>“Does RCTCBC intend to review any of the 20mph speed limits that were introduced on 17th September 2023.”</p>
25	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor A. Rogers to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:</p> <p>“It is important for us all to encourage our residents to use public transport. Unfortunately, our bus services are not the most reliable. How is the Council addressing the issues of cancellations, long waits and the knock-on effect of overcrowding on our buses?”</p>
26	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor Sera Evans to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:</p> <p>“Can the Leader please provide an update on the re-opening of Bailey Street in Ton Pentre and note whether the measure has been successful in alleviating traffic congestion in the Upper Rhondda due to the closure of Maindy Road?”</p>
27	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor E. L. Dunning to the Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language, County Borough Councillor R. Lewis:</p> <p>“Will the Cabinet Member please make a statement on outreach work and detached youth service provision in Rhondda Cynon Taf, particularly in the Ystrad area?”</p>
28	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor D. Grehan to the Cabinet Member for Development & Prosperity, County Borough Councillor M. Norris:</p> <p>“Mae nifer o ardaloedd yn fy ward i, sydd yn amlwg wedi eu hadeiladu gan y Cyngor neu wedi eu hadeiladu wrth greu ddatblygiadau newydd – llwybrau, grisiau, ardaloedd gwyrdd. Erbyn hyn mae'r Cyngor yn dweud nad yw'r ardalodd yma yn eiddo i'r Cyngor ac felly nad oes ganddyn nhw gyfrifoldeb dros drwsio neu</p>

	<p>gadw'r ardaloedd yma. Galla i ofyn i'r Cyngor yma cymryd cyfrifoldeb dros yr ardaloedd yma er diogelwch ein trigolion?"</p> <p>"There are a number of areas in my ward that have clearly been built by the Council or have been built when creating new developments - paths, steps, green areas. By now, the Council is saying that these areas are not the property of the Council and therefore they have no responsibility for repairing or maintaining these areas. Can I ask this Council to take responsibility for these areas for the safety of our residents?"</p>
29	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor Sheryl. Evans to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:</p> <p>"Will the Cabinet Member make a statement on the recent awarding of Welsh Government funding under the Resilient Roads and Local Transport Fund?"</p>
30	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor D. Williams to the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Corporate Services, County Borough Councillor C. Leyshon:</p> <p>"Would the Cabinet Member provide a further update on the progress of EV charging point rollouts in RCT?"</p>
31	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor L. Ellis to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:</p> <p>"Can the Leader provide an update on the programme of coal tip management across RCT?"</p>
32	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor C. Preedy to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure, County Borough Councillor A. Crimmings:</p> <p>"Can the Cabinet Member please give an update on the usage of the National Lido of Wales' and any information on how long the summer season will be this year?"</p>
33	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor A. S. Fox to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:</p> <p>"Can the Leader provide an update to Members on the discussions taking place given the significant financial pressures facing the public sector next year?"</p>
34	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor J. Brencher to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure, County Borough Councillor A. Crimmings:</p> <p>"Can the Cabinet Member please make a statement on the significant investment to Ynysangharad War Memorial Park?"</p>

35	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor G. Stacey to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:</p> <p>“Can the Leader update Members on the work and preparations to welcome the National Eisteddfod to Rhondda Cynon Taf in 2024?”</p>
36	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor S. Rees to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:</p> <p>“Can the Leader provide an update on the progress on the delivery of the Labour Group’s manifesto commitments?”</p>
37	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor W. Lewis to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:</p> <p>“Will the Cabinet Member make a statement on the rollout of the Welsh Government’s 20mph default speed limits across Wales and RCT?”</p>
38	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor S. Morgans to the Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language, County Borough Councillor R. Lewis:</p> <p>“Can the Cabinet Member provide an update on the progress of the new school for YGG Llyn Y Forwyn?”</p>
39	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor D. Owen-Jones to the Leader of the Council, County Borough Councillor A. Morgan OBE:</p> <p>“Can the Leader provide an update on the progress of the A4119 dualling works?”</p>
40	<p>Question from County Borough Councillor A. J. Dennis to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure, County Borough Councillor A. Crimmings:</p> <p>“Can the relevant Cabinet Member outline what investment has been made in children’s play areas across the Borough and provide an update on the delivery of new Multi-Use Games Areas?”</p>

4.4 At the Council meeting a maximum of 20 minutes shall be allowed for Questions on Notice. Any questions that are not dealt with in this time limit shall fall. Any questions on notice not answered will need to be resubmitted to the Proper Officer for the next full Council meeting in accordance with these rules.

5. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

5.1 The amendments to the Council Procedure Rule in respect of Members Questions was considered and agreed at the Council’s AGM 2019 and AGM 2021, following consultation with the Constitution Committee.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The amendment to the Council procedure rule taken forward at the Council AGM, allows the opportunity for more Members to ask a question at Council

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 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 Council Procedure Rule 9.2.

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

- 9.1 The opportunity for Members to propose questions at Council meetings allows Members to receive information which potentially detail the Council priorities. It also embraces the Future Generations Act as all work and decisions taken by Council seek to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of the County Borough.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 Detailing the procedure for Members Questions on Notice assists in transparency for both Members and for public engagement.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee – Overview & Scrutiny Committee

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL

25 OCTOBER 2023

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

Item: MEMBERS QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Background Papers

[Council AGM 2019.](#)

[Council AGM 2021](#)

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023/24

COUNCIL

25th OCTOBER 2023

COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS – PRESCRIBED CLASS OF DWELLINGS AND PREMIUM RELATED PROPERTIES

REPORT OF: THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE & GROUP DIRECTOR OF FINANCE,
DIGITAL AND FRONTLINE SERVICES

Author: Barrie Davies (01443 424026)

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report satisfies the requirement for Council to annually review and reaffirm (or amend) the level of discount for prescribed classes of dwellings.
- 1.2 The report also confirms the continuation of the Council Tax “premium” for long term empty dwellings as well as the introduction of the “premium” for Class B prescribed dwellings described in paragraph 4.1 of this report.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Council:
 - i) Agrees the continuation of no Council Tax **discount** in respect of Class A, B and C properties;
 - ii) Agrees the continuation of a 50% **premium** for properties that have been empty for between 12 and 24 months and a 100% **premium** for properties empty for longer than 24 months; and
 - iii) Notes and reaffirms the introduction of a 100% **premium** for Class B properties from 1st April 2024, as agreed in the Council meeting of 18th January 2023.

3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 To satisfy the requirement for Council to annually review and reaffirm (or amend) the level of discount for prescribed classes of dwellings and reaffirms the continuation (and implementation) of the premiums for long term empty properties and second homes.

4.0 **BACKGROUND**

COUNCIL TAX - PRESCRIBED CLASS OF DWELLING

- 4.1 In the case of a dwelling as defined in the Council Tax (Prescribed Class of Dwelling) (Wales) Regulations 1998, as amended, the Council has discretion to award up to 50% discount in respect of the two following prescribed classes of dwellings (usually described as second homes and/or holiday homes), i.e. Class A and Class B.

Class A

- (a) *which is not the sole or main residence of an individual;*
- (b) *which is furnished; and*
- (c) *the occupation of which is prohibited by law for a continuous period of at least 28 days in the relevant year.*

Class B

- (a) *which is not the sole or main residence of an individual;*
- (b) *which is furnished; and*
- (c) *the occupation of which is not prohibited by law for a continuous period of at least 28 days in the relevant year.*

- 4.2 The Council has previously determined not to allow a discount in respect of Class A and Class B properties.
- 4.3 The Council also has discretion to grant up to 50% discount on unoccupied and substantially unfurnished chargeable dwellings beyond the statutory 6 month exemption period, i.e. Class C.

Class C

- (a) *Unoccupied and unfurnished beyond a six month exempt period.*

- 4.4 The Council has previously determined not to allow a discount on Class C properties.

COUNCIL TAX – PREMIUMS

- 4.5 Section 139 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 included a discretionary provision for Councils to raise an additional “Premium” on dwellings that have been empty for 12 months or more (Section 12A) and second homes (Section 12B).
- 4.6 For the purposes of charging a premium, a long-term empty dwelling is defined as a dwelling, which is both unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a continuous period of at least one year.
- 4.7 A second home is defined in paragraph 4.1 of this report under Class B and in order for a premium to apply to dwellings occupied periodically, a Council must make its first determination at least one year before the beginning of the financial year to which the premium relates. The Council made this decision at its meeting of 18th January 2023, with the premium being applicable from 1st April 2024.

4.8 The level of premium for long term empty dwellings will continue at 50% where the property has been empty for between 12 and 24 months and 100% where it has been empty for longer than 24 months

4.9 For all Class B dwellings (second homes) the level of premium will be 100%.

5.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

5.1 A full Equality Impact Assessment is not required at this time as there is no change proposed to the existing arrangements.

6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 There are no consultation requirements as there is no change proposed to the existing arrangements.

7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

7.1 The implications of the above arrangements will be taken into account as part of determining the Council Tax Base calculations for the financial year 2024/25.

8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

8.1 The relevant legislation is referenced at paragraph 4 of this report.

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

9.1 The recommendation for the continuation of no Council Tax discount in respect of Class A, B and C properties and the continuation of the Council Tax premiums supports the Council's work in delivering its Empty Homes Strategy and in doing so contributes to the delivery of Corporate Plan priorities and well-being goals as set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

10.0 CONCLUSION

10.1 This report recommends that Council reaffirm the current arrangements with regard to Council Tax discounts for Class A, B and C dwellings and the current and previously agreed premium levels for long term empty dwellings and second homes.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL

25th OCTOBER 2023

**REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE & GROUP DIRECTOR OF FINANCE,
DIGITAL AND FRONTLINE SERVICES**

**Item: COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS – PRESCRIBED CLASS OF DWELLINGS AND
PREMIUM RELATED PROPERTIES**

Background Papers

None.

Officer to contact: Barrie Davies



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL

25th OCTOBER 2023

CONSTITUTION GUIDE

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Having regard to the provision in Section 45 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, to endorse the recommendations of the Constitution Committee in respect of the adoption of a guide to the Council's Constitution, known as the 'Constitution Guide'.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Council:

- 2.1 Subject to any amendments, endorses the Constitution Committee's recommendation to adopt the Constitution Guide as attached at Appendix 1 to this report.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The need to provide Members with the Council's draft Constitution Guide, for consideration and endorsement as required by statute.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Section 45 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (the Act) requires principal councils to publish a Constitution Guide which explains in ordinary language the content of the Council's Constitution. Principal Councils must also publish their Constitution and Constitution Guide electronically and provide on request a copy, either free of charge, or at a charge (representing no more than the cost of providing the copy).
- 4.2 The All-Wales Monitoring Officers' Group, via funding from the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) commissioned Browne Jacobson Solicitors to draft a model Constitution Guide having regard to Section 45 of the Act.

4.3 Attached at Appendix 1 to this report is a draft Constitution Guide based on the Browne Jacobson Model Guide which was presented to the Constitution Committee at its meeting on the 5th June 2023 for comment.

4.4 At the meeting, the Constitution Committee endorsed the Guide's adoption by Full Council.

5. OVERVIEW OF THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION GUIDE

5.1 The draft Constitution Guide is designed to help Members of the public understand how the Council makes decisions; delivers services and explains how the public can get involved in the democratic process. Its aim is to provide an overview of the Council's Constitution and explain key sections of the constitution in clear and simple language.

5.2 Section 1 explains why the Constitution is important and how it is reviewed and updated.

5.3 Section 2 explains how the Council is structured. It describes the Council's democratic bodies as well as how decisions are made and by whom.

5.4 Section 4 explains the roles and responsibilities of elected members and paid officers of the Council. It describes the jobs they do, and how they work together to deliver the Council's functions and priorities.

5.5 Section 5 provides a summary of the key policies and procedures that govern how the Council carries out certain functions.

5.6 The final section of the guide explains how the public can engage and get involved in local democracy. It explains how councillors are elected, details in respect of contacting Councillors and how questions can be raised through Council meetings.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct Equality and Diversity implications arising from this report and no Equality Impact Assessment is deemed necessary for the purposes of this report. The requirement to take forward a Constitution Guide to help members of the public to understand how the Council makes decisions and works to deliver services across the County Borough including details of how local people can get involved in democracy would further improve equality and diversity.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Section 45 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 ('the 2021 Act') places a duty on the Council to:

1. Prepare and keep up to date a Constitution Guide, which explains, in ordinary language, the content of its Constitution;
2. Publish the Constitution Guide electronically and in such other manner as it considers appropriate;
3. Ensure that copies of the Constitution Guide are available at its principal office for inspection by members of the public at all reasonable hours; and
4. Supply a copy of the Constitution Guide to any person who requests a copy and who pays such reasonable fee as the Council may determine.

9. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 9.1 In accordance with the terms of the reference of the Constitution Committee the draft Constitution Guide was presented before Members prior to presentation to Council.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 This report advises Members of the need to adopt a Constitution Guide to assist the public in understanding the democratic process and the need for Members to consider the draft Constitution Guide, as attached at Appendix 1 of the report.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

as amended by

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

COUNCIL

25th OCTOBER 2023

CONSTITUTION GUIDE

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

Background Papers

[Section 45 of the Local Government and Elections \(Wales\) Act 2021 \(the Act\)](#)



Guide to the Constitution of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Produced pursuant to section 30 of the Local Government Act 2000 (as amended by section 45 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

Introduction

The Constitution

The Council is made up of different individuals and bodies, who work together to deliver the Council's functions. The Council's constitution describes the different people and bodies that make up the Council, their functions, and the procedure rules that govern how those bodies work together to deliver services.

It is intended to: -

- enable the Council to make decisions efficiently and effectively;
- support you to participate in decisions that affect you;
- help Councillors to represent their constituents more effectively; and
- enable you to hold the Council to account.

One of the main aims of the constitution is to set out clearly what you can expect from the Council, and what you can do if your expectations are not met.

This guide

This guide is designed to help you to understand how the Council makes decisions and works to deliver services in your area and how you can get involved. It provides an overview of the Council's constitution and explains key sections of the constitution in clear and simple language.

It may also be of use to those organisations that work with the Council to deliver services in the Council's area.

The first section of this guide explains why the constitution is important and how it is reviewed and updated.

It aims to answer questions such as: -

- *Why does the Council have a constitution?* p.6
- *How can I get a copy of the constitution?* p.6
- *Who is responsible for keeping the constitution up to date?* p.6

The second section of this guide explains how the Council is structured. It describes the Council's democratic bodies as well as how decisions are made and by whom.

It explains the functions of the Council, its Cabinet and its committees, and which body of the Council is responsible for particular policies and decisions.

It aims to answer questions such as: -

- *What does my local Councillor do?* p.10
- *What does the Council do?* p.11
- *What happens at Council meetings?* p.132
- *How does the Council make decisions?* p.13
- *How can I find out what the Council decided about an issue that affects me?* p.14
- *What does the Cabinet do?* p.16
- *How does the Cabinet make decisions?* p.167
- *What do the Council's committees do?* p.18
- *What does the planning and development committee do?* p.18
- *Who is responsible for governance, audit and risk management?* p.19
- *What does the licensing committee do?* p.19
- *How are decisions scrutinised?* p.21
- *Who is responsible for upholding standards and holding Councillors to account for their conduct?* p.220

The third section of this guide explains the roles and responsibilities of elected members and paid officers of the Council. It describes the jobs they do, and how they work together to deliver the Council's functions and priorities. It also explains the codes of conduct that govern councillors' and officers' conduct and the standards of behaviour that you can expect from them.

It aims to answer questions such as: -

- *What role do Councillors perform?* p.24

- *What does the Presiding Member, as Chair of the Council, do?* p.26
- *What does the Leader do?* p.27
- *What happens if the Leader is unable to perform their duties?* p.27
- *My Councillor is a member of the Cabinet, what does this mean?* p.27
- *How are members of the Cabinet supported?* p.28
- *What does the Chief Executive do?* p.28
- *What responsibilities does the Monitoring Officer have?* p.28
- *Who is responsible for ensuring that the Council's democratic policies and procedures are complied with?* p.28
- *How should Councillors behave?* p.30
- *How should Officers behave?* p.32
- *Are there any special requirements when Councillors or Officers decide planning applications?* p.32
- *How can I complain about the behaviour of a Councillor?* p.33
- *How do I report concerns about the conduct of a paid Officer of the Council?* p.34

The fourth section of this guide provides a summary of the key policies and procedures that govern how the Council carries out certain functions.

It aims to answer questions such as: -

- *Where can I find the Council's key plans and strategies?* p.35
- *How is the Council's policy framework decided?* p.35
- *How does the Council set its budget?* p.36
- *Can decisions be taken that do not comply with the budget or policy framework?* p.36
- *Can money be moved from one budget head to another once the budget has been adopted?* p.37

- *What other policies and procedures govern how the Council manages its budget?* p.37
- *Are there any restrictions on how the Council buys in goods and services?* p.37
- *How does the Council enter into contracts and agreements?* p.38

The final section of this guide explains how you can engage with, and get involved in, your Council and local democracy. It explains how your councillors are elected, how you can contact your councillor, raise questions and speak at meetings, and how you can use petitions to raise issues that are important to you with the Council.

It aims to answer questions such as: -

- *What is the Council doing to engage with local people?* p.38
- *Can I send a petition to the Council?* p.Error!
Bookmark not defined.
- *How can I find out when meetings of the Council and its committees and bodies are taking place?* p.389
- *How can I find out what will be discussed at a particular meeting?* p.39
- *How can I find out when an issue I am concerned about will be decided?* p.39
- *Can I ask a committee or body of the Council to look into a particular issue?* p.39
- *Can I attend meetings of the Full Council?* p.39
- *Can I attend other meetings?* p.40
- *Can I speak at a meeting?* p.40
- *Can I ask a question at a meeting?* p.40
- *How can I find out what the Council decided?* p.41
- *Can I view the Council's accounts to understand how my council tax is spent?* p.42

Signposts to the most relevant sections of the constitution and to additional resources available on the Council's website are provided throughout this guide to enable you to read more on a particular topic if you wish.

If there is anything in this guide which is unclear, or anything is missing, please let us know so we can improve it.

You can contact us by emailing the Council's Monitoring Officer at director.legal@rctcbc.gov.uk or by writing to them at Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, the Pavilions, Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX.

Section 1 The Constitution

The constitution governs the way in which the Council, Councillors and officers working at the Council work together to deliver the Council's functions. It ensures that everyone at the Council acts lawfully, fairly and appropriately and that the Council's functions are performed properly and effectively.

The constitution is divided into seven parts:

Part 1 - Summary and Explanation

Part 2 - Articles of the Constitution

Part 3 (i) - Responsibility for Functions

Part 3 (ii) - Functional Areas Chart

Part 4 - Rules of Procedure

Part 5 - Codes and Protocols

Part 6 - Schedule of Member Remuneration

Part 7 - Management Structure



Article 1.3 of Part 2 of the constitution explains the purpose of the constitution.

You can obtain a copy of the constitution from the Council's offices and view it on the Council's website.



You can access the Council's constitution on the Council's website and by clicking [here](#).



Article 16.03 of Part 2 of the constitution explains where, when and how the constitution must be published.

The Monitoring Officer is responsible for maintaining and reviewing the constitution. The Monitoring Officer is also responsible for deciding how the constitution should be understood and applied. You can read more about the Monitoring Officer's role in Section 4 of this guide.

The Full Council is responsible for agreeing the constitution. Once the constitution has been agreed, it can only be changed by the Full Council. Usually, changes to the constitution are recommended to the Full Council by the Council's Constitution Committee.

In some circumstances, the Monitoring Officer may make changes to the constitution. For example, where there is a change in the law that affects the constitution, or where a minor change is needed to clarify a provision in the constitution that is unclear.



Article 15 of Part 2 of the constitution explain how the constitution is agreed and how it can be changed.

The constitution also governs how meetings of the Council and its committees should be conducted. The person chairing a meeting will be responsible for ensuring that the constitution is followed during that meeting.

Section 2 The Council’s democratic structures

The Council is made up of Councillors who are elected every five years to represent people living in different parts of the Council’s area (referred to in the constitution as ‘electoral wards’).

Councillors are responsible for everyone living in the Council’s area, but they have a special duty to people living in their ward.



Article 2 of the constitution provides an overview of how individual Councillors work together as the Council.

All Councillors meet together regularly as the Full Council. The Full Council is responsible for setting the Council’s budget, policy priorities and overall policy framework.

At the start of every year, the Full Council will elect one Councillor as its Presiding Member. The Presiding Member is responsible for chairing meetings of the Full Council and ensuring that decisions are taken properly and in accordance with the rules. Full Council also elects a Mayor who is responsible for carrying out certain ceremonial functions.

You can read more about these roles in Section 3 of this guide.

The Council appoints or elects a Leader (who may be the leader of the largest political group or coalition of political groups). Individual councillors will also be appointed to the Cabinet by the Leader. The Leader will generally appoint councillors from their own political group to the Cabinet, although they may appoint councillors from any political group to the Cabinet. Members of the Cabinet are responsible for specific policy areas, commonly referred to as portfolios. At each annual general meeting of the Council the Leader produces a document, known as

the Leader's Scheme of Delegation, which details the portfolios of the Cabinet Members. This is updated when portfolios or Cabinet Members change. The Leader's Scheme of Delegation can be found by clicking [here](#).

The Cabinet meets regularly to take collective decisions on those aspects of the Council's work which the Cabinet is responsible for.

Some of the Council's functions are carried out by committees. Committees are small groups of Councillors that meet together to carry out certain of the Council's regulatory and scrutiny functions. Committees have a number of members from each political group, in the same proportion as the number of councillors from each political group on the Council overall (referred to as 'political balance' or 'political proportionality'), unless everyone agrees otherwise.

Councils are able to meet using video conferencing software. Meetings may either be "remote" (where all councillors are in different places) or "hybrid" (where some people are present in one place, and others are in different places).

The Council may engage such paid staff (referred to as officers) as it considers necessary. The Cabinet, Full Council and committees may delegate functions to officers. Further information on delegations can be found in the officers' scheme of delegations contained in Part 3 (Section 5) of the constitution - 'responsibility for functions of the constitution'.

You can read more about these structures in the following sections of this section of the guide.

STRUCTURE CHART

THE PUBLIC, elect

COUNCILLORS (x75), who are members of the

FULL COUNCIL
(which is chaired by the PRESIDING MEMBER)

EXECUTIVE

LEADER
(elected by the FULL COUNCIL)

DEPUTY LEADER
(appointed by the LEADER)

CABINET/EXECUTIVE
(comprising COUNCILLORS appointed by the Leader)

ASSISTANTS TO THE EXECUTIVE (if appt)
(designated by the LEADER)

REGULATORY and OTHER COMMITTEES

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

LICENSING COMMITTEE

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

APPEALS/CHIEF OFFICER APPEALS COMMITTEE

PENSIONS COMMITTEE

CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE

APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE

VOLUNTARY EARLY RETIREMENT/VR COMMITTEE

Local Education Authority Governors (Appointments) Committee

SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

EDUCATION & INCLUSION SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

CLIMATE CHANGE, FRONTLINE SERVICES & PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

JOINT BODIES

SOUTH EAST WALES CORPORATE JOINT COMMITTEE (CJC)

CWM TAFF MORGANNWG JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

SOUTH EAST WALES CJC JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM (SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT)

PAID OFFICERS

(employees of the Council, appointed by MEMBERS or other senior PAID OFFICERS)

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

MONITORING OFFICER

CHIEF FINANCE (S151 OFFICER)

HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

OTHER CHIEF OFFICERS

Councillors

Councillors are elected by the people living in a particular ward to represent them on the Council. However, Councillors are also accountable to the wider community and must act in the best interests of everyone living in the Council's area.

If you want to raise an issue with the Council and are not sure who to contact, you may wish to contact your Councillor to ask for help.



You can find out who your local Councillor is and their contact details on the Council's website [here](#).

All Councillors are members of the Full Council, and they may also be members of one or more of the Council's members bodies (such as the Cabinet or a committee). Where Councillors act as a member of a particular Council body, they are referred to in the constitution as 'Members'.

Councillors have certain rights that are set out in the constitution, which enable them to raise issues and make representations on your behalf.

For example, Councillors may: -

- see any information which they need in order to fulfil their role as a member of the Council;
- attend any meeting of the Council, its committees or the Cabinet;
- speak at any meeting of any Council body which they are a member of;
- with the permission of the chair, speak at any meeting of any Council body (even if they are not a member of that body);
- talk to the Leader, or members of the Cabinet or Council officers about any aspect of Council business; and
- raise complaints.



Councillors' rights and duties are set out in Article 2 of Part 2 of the constitution.



Councillors' rights to information are set out in Rule 18 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules (contained in Part 4 of the constitution).

Councillors may also raise questions at meetings of the Full Council and the Council's committees and sub-committees, submit motions to the Full Council and call-in decisions.



The rules surrounding how these rights are exercised are set out in the procedure rules for each type of meeting (found in Part 4 of the constitution): Council Meeting Procedure Rules; Open Government Council Meeting Procedure Rules; Executive Procedure Rules and Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

Full Council



Article 4 of Part 2 of the constitution governs the Full Council.

What does the Full Council do?

The law requires that certain important decisions are taken by all Councillors meeting together as the Full Council. These are referred to in the constitution as functions of the Full Council. The Council may decide that other non-executive functions should be carried out by the Full Council too. These are referred to in the constitution as local choice functions because the Council has a choice about which person or body should carry them out.



Part 3 of the constitution explains the different types of functions that are carried out by the Council and which part of the Council is responsible for carrying them out.

The Full Council is responsible for, amongst other things: -

- agreeing the constitution, and any changes to the constitution;
- setting the Council's budget;
- developing the Council's Corporate Plan (which explains how the Council will deliver its legal duties in areas such as health and social care, children and young people and community safety);
- agreeing key plans and strategies (referred to in the constitution as the 'policy framework');
- reviewing and reporting on the Council's performance;
- electing the Leader, Mayor and the Presiding Member; and
- appointing the Chief Executive and other Chief Officers.

 All of the functions of the Full Council are listed in Article 4.1 of Part 2 of the constitution.

Meetings of the Full Council are chaired by the Presiding Member. They are responsible for ensuring that meetings are conducted in accordance with the constitution and that decisions are made properly, fairly and lawfully.

You can read more about the role of the Presiding Member in Section 3 of this guide.

What happens at meetings of the Full Council?

 The different types of full Council meetings, how they are called, the issues they decide and the rules for how meetings are run are set out in the Council Meeting Procedure Rules found in Part 4 of the constitution.

The Full Council will meet early in each financial year to elect Councillors to particular positions on the Council, to appoint Councillors to outside bodies and to establish committees and working groups to carry out the Council's business during the year. This is known as the annual meeting.

 The timing of the annual meeting and the issues to be decided at that meeting are described in Rule 1 of the Council Procedure Rules found in Part 4 of the constitution.

At the annual meeting, the Council will also decide how often all Councillors should meet together as the Full Council. These regular meetings of the Full Meetings are known as ordinary meetings.

 Ordinary meetings are carried out in accordance with Rule 2 of the Council Procedure Rules found in Part 4 of the constitution.

In some circumstances, it may be necessary for the Full Council to meet before its next scheduled meeting to discuss an issue that is particularly urgent or important. This is known as an extraordinary meeting of the Council.

 The process by which an extraordinary meeting may be called and the issues that may be discussed there are set out in Rule 3 of the Council Procedure Rules found in Part 4 of the constitution.

The full Council decides the dates for its programme of meetings for each year at the annual council meeting. The Head of Democratic Services notifies Councillors of this by issuing them with a summons to attend each Council meeting.

The Head of Democratic Services is also responsible for ensuring that the public are told about meetings of the Full Council, by publishing a notice in advance of each meeting. The notice must include certain information such as the date and time of the meeting, where it will be held and how you can access the meeting remotely using video conferencing.

You can read more about participating in meetings of the Council in section 4 of this guide.



Rule 4 and 5 of the Council Procedure Rules in Part 4 of the constitution govern meeting arrangements and notice requirements.

How does the Full Council make decisions?

Meetings of the Full Council are carried out in accordance with an agreed set of rules that are designed to ensure that debates are conducted fairly and efficiently, and that every Councillor has the ability to raise questions and to make comments on the public's behalf.



The rules and procedures for the conduct of meetings and debate are set out in the Council Procedure Rules.

Decisions are made by Councillors casting votes for or against a particular decision (referred to in the constitution as a motion). Councillors may also propose amendments (changes) to a particular motion, which must then be voted on.

Historically, votes were conducted by a show of hands, with Councillors asked to raise their hand to indicate whether they were voting for or against a particular motion, or whether they wished to abstain (i.e. to vote neither for nor against the motion). Councils now use a range of methods including electronic voting pads for meetings where Councillors are physically present and in-built electronic voting functions on video conferencing platforms where meetings are conducted remotely or in a hybrid format.

Decisions will usually require a simple majority of those present voting for a particular motion. In other words, more Councillors must vote for a motion than against it. Where a vote is tied once all Councillors have voted, the Chair will have a second or casting vote.

If a matter is uncontroversial and no Councillor raises any objection/dissent, the Chair may declare the motion or recommendation to be carried (agreed). However, if there are any objections, the Chair will initiate a vote. Councillors may also request that their individual vote on a particular motion is recorded in the minutes.

 The Council's voting arrangements are set out in Rule 20 of the Council Procedure Rules found in Part 4 of the constitution.

Does every Councillor need to be present before a decision can be taken?

Not every Councillor needs to vote on every decision. In fact, in some circumstances it may not be appropriate for a Councillor to vote on a particular issue (for example, where they have a personal and prejudicial interest in a decision). You can read more about this in section three of this guide.

However, in order for the Council to make a lawful decision a minimum number of Councillors must be present at a meeting. The minimum number of Councillors that must be present at a meeting is referred to in the constitution as the quorum for that meeting.

 Rule 7 of the Council Procedure Rules found in Part 4 of the constitution sets out the minimum number of Councillors that must be present so the Full Council can make a decision.

Are meetings recorded?

Meetings of the Full Council are webcast live on the Council's website. The live webcast can be viewed on the Council's website at the time of the meeting and remains available for a period after the meeting.

A record of each meeting will be kept in the form of minutes. The minutes will contain a record of the motions that were put to the meeting, and the decisions that were taken. They will also record who was present at the meeting.

The minutes of a meeting of the Full Council will be agreed by the next meeting of the Council and published on the Council's website in accordance with the Council's Access to Information Procedure Rules.

The Council also publishes a record of the decisions taken at every meeting of the Cabinet and Cabinet sub-committee meetings.

If you want to find out what the Council decided about an issue that affects you, you can read the minutes or the record of decisions for the meeting where that issue was discussed.

 Information on the Council's broadcasting arrangements can be found in Rule 26 of the Council Procedure Rules found in Part 4 of the constitution and on the Council's website [here](#).

 Information on the note of decisions taken and minutes of Council meetings can be found in Rule 7 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules Information found in Part 4 of the constitution.

 The Access to Information Procedure Rules can be found in Part 4 of the constitution.

 Minutes of meetings and records of decisions are available on the Council's website [here](#).

 The Council had adopted a Multi-Location Meetings Policy which can be found in Part 5 of the constitution.

The Cabinet

The Cabinet is made up of the Leader and individual Councillors appointed to the Cabinet by the Leader.

 Article 7 of Part 2 of the constitution explains the composition of the Cabinet and how Councillors are appointed to the Cabinet.

The role of Leader and any role on the Cabinet may be carried out by two or more Councillors on a job-share basis.

 Article 7.09 of Part 2 of the constitution explains the job-sharing arrangements for members of the Cabinet.

What does the Cabinet do?

The law classifies the functions of the Council as ‘executive functions’ or ‘non-executive functions’. The Cabinet is responsible for carrying out the Council’s executive functions. However, in practice the Cabinet cannot carry out every one of these functions, so the Council reserves responsibility for certain functions to the Cabinet and delegates responsibility for certain functions to the Cabinet, to members of the Cabinet, to officers of the Council or to other bodies like joint committees.

The Council decides which functions to delegate to whom. This is known as the Council’s Scheme of Delegations.

Each year the Leader also decides which executive functions to delegate to whom. This is known as the Leader’s scheme of delegation. It can be accessed [here](#)

 Article 7.06 of Part 2 of the constitution explain how functions are delegated by the Leader.

 The Council’s schemes of delegation can be found in Part 3 of the constitution - responsibility for functions.

Meetings of the Cabinet

The Leader will decide when the Cabinet will meet, and for how long. They will also chair meetings of the Cabinet.

The constitution prescribes certain matters that must be considered at every meeting of the Cabinet. Additionally, the Leader, members of the Cabinet and certain Chief Officers may require that an item of business is added to the meeting agenda.

Meetings of the Cabinet are carried out in accordance with the rules of procedure and debate set down in the constitution.

 The rules of procedure of the Cabinet are set out in the Executive Procedure Rules found in Part 4 of the constitution.

 Rule 2 of those procedure rules govern how meetings of the Cabinet are conducted.

How does the Cabinet make decisions?

The Cabinet is obliged to consult with individual Councillors and with certain committees before it makes certain decision on matters that are not urgent.

The Cabinet is also required by law to consult with the public in advance of taking certain decisions. The type and level of consultation will depend on the matter being decided. The outcomes of the consultation will be carefully considered to inform the Cabinet decision

 These consultation requirements are explained in Rule 2.3 of the Executive Procedure Rules found in Part 4 of the consultation.

The Cabinet must keep a record of every decision it makes, including every decision made by an individual member of the Cabinet and the Cabinet's committees.

 Rules 14 and 15 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules found in Part 4 of the constitution sets down the requirements for the Cabinet record of decisions.

 You can read the minutes of meetings of the Cabinet on the Council's website [here](#).

Why does the Council have committees and what do they do?

The law requires the Council to establish committees for the purpose of carrying out certain legal functions of the Council. The Council establishes its Committees and appoints Committee members and Chairs for the year at the annual general meeting of the Council. These Committees assist the Council to conduct its business efficiently and effectively with good governance.

A list of the regulatory and other committees established by the Council is set out in Article 8 of Part 2 of the constitution.



The functions of each committee are set out in the committees' approved terms of reference in Section 4 of Part 3 of the constitution.

The Council may also decide to establish other committees and working groups for the purpose of assisting the Council to conduct its business efficiently and effectively.

What do the Council's regulatory committees do?

Planning and Development Committee

The Council is responsible for operating the planning system in its area. This involves preparing local development plans and local planning policies (which govern development in the Council's area) and managing development (by granting or refusing permission for new development).

The Council will appoint individual Councillors to the Planning and Development Committee and agree terms of reference for, and the delegation of powers to, the Planning and Development Committee to enable it to discharge those functions.



The functions of the Planning Committee are set out in the committee's approved terms of reference found in Section 4 of Part 3 of the constitution.



The Planning and Development Code of Good Practice provides information and guidance for Councillors, officers and members of the public about the Council's planning processes - this is found in Part 5 of the constitution.



Meeting agendas, reports and minutes of the Planning and Development Committee are published on the Council's website [here](#).

Licensing Committee

The Council is responsible for deciding whether to grant licences for a wide range of different businesses, services and activities in its area. The Council's licensing functions are delegated to the Council's Licensing Committee.

The Council will appoint individual Councillors to the Licensing Committee and agree terms of reference for, and the delegation of powers to, the Licensing Committee to enable it to discharge those functions.

-  The functions of the Licensing Committee are set out in the committee's approved terms of reference found in Section 4 of Part 3 of the constitution.
-  Meeting agendas, reports and minutes of the Licensing Committee are published on the Council's website [here](#) .

Governance and Audit Committee

The Governance and Audit Committee advises the Full Council, the Cabinet and their respective committees and members on matters relating to good governance, financial oversight, risk management and complaints.

The Governance and Audit Committee monitors the effectiveness of the Council's rules and procedures for ensuring that the Council acts lawfully, responsibly and that it is accountable to the public (referred to in the constitution as the Council's governance systems and internal controls). The committee is also responsible for ensuring that the Council's decisions and finances are audited in accordance with agreed procedures. Lastly, the Governance and Audit Committee must review and comment upon the Council's own corporate self-assessment reports.

The Governance and Audit Committee comprises a mixture of Councillors and lay members (who are not members of the Council). Councillors are appointed to the Committee in accordance with the political balance rules (which ensure that the political make-up of the committee reflects the political make-up of the Council).

-  The functions of the Governance and Audit Committee are set out in the committee's approved terms of reference found in Section 4 of Part 3 of the constitution.
-  Meeting agendas, reports and minutes of the Governance and Audit Committee are published on the Council's website [here](#).

Democratic Services Committee

The Democratic Services Committee is responsible for designating an officer of the Council as the Head of Democratic Services, keeping under review the provision of resources to the Head of Democratic Services for discharging the democratic services functions of the Council and reporting annually on these matters.

The Democratic Services Committee is made up of Councillors appointed to the Committee in accordance with the political balance rules (which ensure that the political make-up of the committee reflects the political make-up of the Council), and includes no more than one Cabinet member or Assistant to the Cabinet, who cannot be the Leader of the Council.

 The functions of the Democratic Services Committee are set out in the committee's approved terms of reference found in Section 4 of Part 3 of the constitution.

 Meeting agendas, reports and minutes of the Democratic Services Committee are published on the Council's website [here](#).

Standards Committee

The Standards Committee is responsible for promoting high standards of conduct by Councillors and Community Councillors in Rhondda Cynon Taf, including by advising and training Councillors on the Member's Code of Conduct and advising the Council on changes to that code.

The Monitoring Officer is the senior officer responsible for advising and supporting the Standards Committee.

 The constitution, role and functions of the Standards Committee are set out in Article 9 of Part 2 of the Constitution including its approved terms of reference.

The Standards Committee is also responsible for investigating alleged breaches of the councillor code of conduct and censuring members who are found to have failed to comply with that code.

 The Council has adopted procedures for dealing with allegations made against Councillors.

The Standards Committee comprises a mixture of Councillors and independent members (who cannot be members or paid officers of the Council or related to members or paid officers of the Council).

The Committee includes one Councillor from each of the 2 largest political groups represented on the Council and a Community Council representative member and seeks to operate in a politically neutral manner, guided by shared ethical principles.

What do the Council's scrutiny committees do?

The Council has 4 different Scrutiny Committees responsible for holding the Cabinet and other bodies of the Council to account in relation to different aspects of the Council's work:

- (i) Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- (ii) Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee
- (iii) Community Services Scrutiny Committee
- (iv) Education and Inclusion Committee

Each Scrutiny Committee is comprised of 14 Councillors. Membership of Scrutiny Committees is restricted to those Councillors who are not members of the Cabinet or Assistants to the Cabinet.

The Scrutiny Committees can:

- review and scrutinise decisions made by the Cabinet and other parts of the Council;
- make reports and recommendations to the Council or to the Cabinet; and
- make proposals regarding changes to the Council's policies and procedures.



The terms of reference and general role of the Scrutiny Committees is set out in Article 6 of Part 2 of the Constitution.

Members of Scrutiny Committees have special rights to see Council documents.

Scrutiny Committees may also require any member of the Cabinet or any senior paid officer of the Council to attend a meeting of the committee to explain a decision that they have taken or their performance.

The rules around membership of Scrutiny Committees, the conduct of committee meetings and the carrying out of the functions of the committee are set out in the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, found in Part 4 of the Constitution.

What are Joint Committees?

The Council may carry out some of its functions jointly with one or more other local authorities in Wales, and with other public bodies. The Council may decide to do this where, for example, the Council considers that it could better promote the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of people living in its area by coordinating its activities with other local authorities, bodies or people.

The Council can establish a joint committee with other local authorities, bodies or people and delegate decisions and functions to that joint committee. By allowing decisions to be taken by a joint committee, the Council can ensure that decisions can be coordinated between all authorities and bodies represented on the committee.

The Cabinet may also establish joint arrangements with one or more local authorities in Wales for the purpose of jointly exercising executive functions together with those authorities.

The Council and the Cabinet may also delegate or contract out particular functions to another local authority or to another body or organisation.



Article 11 of Part 2 of the constitution explain the Council's delegations and contracting out arrangements.

Corporate Joint Committees

Corporate Joint Committees are made up of the Leaders of the constituent Councils, who may decide to co-opt other executive members or partner representatives as appropriate.

The South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee is responsible for the following functions: -

- transport;
- strategic planning; and
- economic development

The Council must work together with other members of the South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee when it performs these functions.

The South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee was established under regulations made by the Welsh Ministers. Consequently, many of the rules and standards that apply to the South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee are set down in regulations, rather than in the constitution.

-  You can read more about Corporate Joint Committee arrangements in Article 10 of Part 2 of the constitution.
-  You can read more about statutory joint committees generally in guidance published by the Welsh Government [here](#) .

Section 3 Roles and responsibilities

What roles do Councillors perform?

The key roles of all Councillors are to:

- (i) collectively set the Policy Framework and carry out a number of strategic functions;
- (ii) represent their communities and bring their views into the Authority's decision-making process, i.e. become the advocate of and for their communities;
- (iii) deal with individual casework and act as an advocate for constituents in resolving particular concerns or grievances;
- (iv) seek to balance different interests identified within the ward and represent the ward as a whole;
- (v) promote and ensure efficiency and effectiveness in the provision of Council services;
- (vi) be involved in decision-making;
- (vii) be available to represent the Authority on other bodies; and
- (viii) maintain the highest standards of conduct and ethics.

Councillors may also be elected or appointed to other specific roles, such as:

- Leader and Deputy Leader;
- Presiding Member and Deputy Presiding Member;
- Mayor and Deputy Mayor;
- Cabinet Member or Assistant to the Cabinet;
- Chair or Member of a Regulatory or Other Committee;
- Chair or Member of a Scrutiny Committee;
- Leader of the Opposition and Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

What roles do Officers perform?

The Council may engage such employees as necessary to carry out its functions. Officers are politically neutral and serve the whole Council and its Councillors by providing advice, implementing the Council's policies, and delivering services to the local community.

The Council has designated senior staff with specific statutory roles, including:

- the Chief Executive;
- the Monitoring Officer;
- the Chief Finance Officer (referred to as the 'Section 151 Officer'); and
- the Head of Democratic Services.

Article 12 of the constitution sets out information about the roles played by these senior paid officials of the Council.

This part of the guide provides more information about these important roles.

Presiding Member and Deputy Presiding Member

The Presiding Member and Deputy Presiding Member are elected by the Full Council every year.

The Presiding Member is responsible for: -

- promoting and upholding the constitution;
- presiding over meetings of the Full Council;
- ensuring that meetings of the Full Council are quorate and conducted in accordance with the Council's procedure rules; and
- ensuring that decisions are taken in accordance with the constitution.

The Deputy Presiding Member performs the Presiding Member's functions in their absence.



You can read more about the role and functions of the Presiding Member and the Deputy Presiding Member in Article 5 of the constitution

The Presiding Member is responsible for: -

- promoting and upholding the constitution;
- presiding over meetings of the Full Council;
- ensuring that meetings of the Full Council are quorate and conducted in accordance with the Council's procedure rules; and
- ensuring that decisions are taken in accordance with the constitution.

The Deputy Presiding Member performs the Presiding Member's functions in their absence.

Mayor and Deputy Mayor

The Mayor is the civil leader of the Council. They are responsible for promoting the interests and reputation of the Council and for encouraging public involvement in the Council's activities.

The Mayor undertakes civic, community and ceremonial activities on behalf of the Council and is responsible for fostering community identity and pride.

The Deputy Mayor performs the Mayor's functions in their absence.



You can read more about the role and functions of the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor in Article 5 of Part 2 of the constitution.

Leader and Deputy Leader

The Leader is elected by the Full Council.

The Deputy Leader is appointed by the Leader to exercise the Leader's functions in their absence.

The Leader is responsible for appointing members of the Cabinet and allocating specific policy areas and responsibilities (portfolios) to members of the Cabinet.

The Leader is also responsible for preparing a scheme describing which functions are to be carried out by which members of the Cabinet (this is referred to in the constitution as the Leader's Scheme of Delegation).



See section 3A of Part 3 of the constitution for more information.

The Leader chairs meetings of the Cabinet. The Leader will act as the Council member of the South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee and the Council's representative on the Cwm Taf Public Services Board.

The Leader may appoint other members of the Council to sit on other outside bodies.



See Article 7 of Part 2 of the constitution for more information.

Member of the Cabinet

Members of the Cabinet are responsible for: -

- taking decisions regarding issues that fall within their area of responsibility;
- playing an active role in Cabinet meetings and decision making;
- contributing to the development of the Council's forward work programme and to policies and procedures in their area of responsibility;
- providing political leadership to the Council's paid officers on matters they are responsible for;
- reporting to the Full Council, the Leader, the Cabinet and others on the performance of services which they are responsible for; and

- ▶ participating in the Council’s scrutiny processes and procedures, including by explaining decisions they have made and the performance of functions within their area to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.



You can read more about members of the Cabinet in Article 7 of Part 2 of the constitution.

Assistant to the Cabinet

Assistants to the Cabinet support members of the Cabinet by taking on certain tasks and responsibilities on their behalf. They may attend meetings, prepare reports, review papers and draft comments for the member they support.

Assistants to the Executive are not members of the Cabinet and cannot vote at Cabinet Meetings or Cabinet Committee Meetings. However, they are entitled to attend and to speak at meetings of the Cabinet and its committees.



You can read more about Assistants to the Executive in Article 7.7 of Part 2 of the constitution.

What roles do paid officers of the Council perform?

The elected members of the Council are supported by paid officers of the Council, who are accountable to the Council and responsible for delivering services to the public in accordance with the policies and procedures agreed by the Full Council, the Cabinet and their committees and bodies.

The **Chief Executive** has overall corporate and operational responsibility for the work of the Council and for all paid officers of the Council.

The **Monitoring Officer** is responsible for ensuring lawfulness and fairness in the Council’s decision making, maintaining and upholding the constitution and receiving reports of alleged breaches of the Council’s Code of Conduct.

The **Head of Democratic Services** is responsible for advising the Council, its committees and individual Councillors, on the proper discharge of the Council’s democratic functions and responsibilities.

The Section 151 Officer (**Chief Finance Officer**) is responsible for ensuring that the Council makes lawful and financially prudent decisions. They are also responsible for the administration of the Council’s financial affairs and providing advice to Councillors on the Council’s budgetary and other financial procedures.

 The Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer, Head of Democratic Services and Chief Finance Officer's role and responsibilities are described in Article 12 of Part 2 of the constitution.

The Council also employs a number of other Chief Officers, including: -

- Director of Social Services
- Director of Prosperity and Development
- Director of Education and Inclusion
- Director of Human Resources
- Director of Corporate Estates
- Director of Public Health, Protection and Community Services
- Director of Highways, Streetcare and Transportation Services

Chief Officers are each accountable to the Council for the financial management and administration of those services and activities allocated to them in accordance with the Council's policies.

The contact details for the Council's Senior Leadership Team can be found [here](#)

 The processes by which officers are recruited, appointed, disciplined and dismissed are set out in the Officer Employment Procedure Rules contained in Part 4 of the constitution.

 The senior management structure of the Council is set out in Part 7 of the constitution.

How should Councillors and Officers behave?

Councillors should comply with the Members' Code of Conduct

Councillors are expected to uphold the highest standards of personal and professional conduct. Those standards are described in the Code of Conduct for Members.

The Code of Conduct for Members is intended to help and guide Councillors in maintaining appropriate standards of conduct when serving their community. In turn, it provides reassurance to the public and helps build their trust in, and respect for, their local representatives.

The Code of Conduct for Members is based upon the 7 Principles of Public Life, which were first set out in the 1995 Nolan Report on Standards in Public Life. Three additional principles were added in the local government principles in Wales.

The Code of Conduct for Members is consistent with, and provides for the practical application of, these principles.

➤ **Selflessness**

Members must act solely in the public interest. They must never use their position as members to improperly confer an advantage on themselves or to improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on others.

➤ **Honesty**

Members must declare any private interests relevant to their public duties and take steps to resolve any conflict in a way that protects the public interest.

➤ **Integrity and propriety**

Members must not put themselves in a position where their integrity is called into question by any financial or other obligation to individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their duties. Members must on all occasions avoid the appearance of such behaviour.

➤ **Duty to uphold the law**

Members must act to uphold the law and act on all occasions in accordance with the trust that the public has placed in them.

➤ **Stewardship**

In discharging their duties and responsibilities members must ensure that their authority's resources are used both lawfully and prudently.

➤ **Objectivity in decision-making**

In carrying out their responsibilities including making appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, members must make decisions on merit. Whilst members must have regard to the professional advice of officers and may properly take account of the views of others, including their political groups, it is their responsibility to decide what view to take and, if appropriate, how to vote on any issue.

➤ **Equality and respect**

Members must carry out their duties and responsibilities with due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity for all people, regardless of their gender, race, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, age or religion, and show respect and consideration for others.

➤ **Openness**

Members must be as open as possible about all their actions and those of their authority. They must seek to ensure that disclosure of information is restricted only in accordance with the law.

➤ **Accountability**

Members are accountable to the electorate and the public generally for their actions and for the way they carry out their responsibilities as a member. They must be prepared to submit themselves to such scrutiny as is appropriate to their responsibilities.

➤ **Leadership**

Members must promote and support these principles by leadership and example so as to promote public confidence in their role and in the authority. They must respect the impartiality and integrity of the authority's statutory officers and its other employees.



You can read the Code of Conduct for Members in full in Part 5 of the constitution.

Councillors are expected to ensure that they understand their obligations under the Code and act in a way which shows that they are committed to meeting the high

standards of conduct that are expected of them. However, Councillors are provided with training when they are first appointed, and on a regular basis, to support them to comply with the Code of Conduct for Members.

Special requirements for Councillors who are members of the Council's Planning and Development Committee

Planning affects people's private and financial interests in land and property and the environment in which communities live, work and play.

The Council's Planning and Development committee is responsible for balancing the needs and interests of individuals and the community to make decisions that are open, fair and transparent and decided using sound judgment and for justifiable reasons.

For these reasons, members of the Council's Planning and Development Committee are expected to abide by an additional Code of Good Practice with planning matters.

The Code of Good Practice explains, amongst other things: -

- the factors that should be taken into account when deciding an application for planning permission and the factors that should not be taken into account;
- the legal duties which members of the committee must have regard to, such as the duty to have regard to the need to ensure that development contributes to the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales and the duty to have regard to the impact of development on the extent to which the Welsh language is used in the Council's area;
- the action members should take if they have a personal interest in a matter being determined by the committee (e.g. where an application relates to a property which they own); and
- how applications for development proposed by, or to be carried out by, the Council should be decided.



You can read the Code of Conduct for Members and Officers Dealing with Planning Matters in full in Part 5 of the constitution.

Officers should comply with the Officers' Code of Conduct

Paid officers of the Council are responsible for serving the council by providing advice to Councillors, implementing the Council's policies, and delivering services to the local community. In performing their duties, they must act with integrity, honesty, impartiality and objectivity.

The public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from all those who work for the Council. The Code of Conduct for Officers outlines the rules and conditions of service which apply to the Council's employees. It is designed to provide clear guidance to assist them in their day to day work and to allow the public to understand what they can expect when they interact with a Council employee.



You can read the Code of Conduct for Officers in full in Part 5 of the constitution.

How should Councillors and Officers work together?

Councillors and Officers have different roles, responsibilities and accountabilities, but it is imperative that they work effectively together to perform the Council's functions and to deliver services to residents living in the Council's area.

The Protocol on Member and Officer Relations is designed to clarify the respective roles and responsibilities of Councillors and Officers and to guide them in their dealings with one another. It explains what Councillors and Officers can reasonably expect from one another and how they should work together to achieve their common purpose.

Councillors are entitled to express political views and to support the policies of the party or group to which they belong. Conversely, officers are expected to carry out the Council's business in a politically impartial way and many are restricted from engaging in political activity. The protocol therefore explains how officers can support the policy deliberations by political groupings, while remaining politically neutral.



You can read the Protocol on Member and Officer Relations in full in Part 5 of the constitution.

How can I complain about Council Services or a Councillor?

Article 3.01 of Part 2 of the constitution explains that you have the right to complain to:

- (i) the authority itself under its Complaints Policy (for any complaints about the Council, its services or officers);
- (ii) the Ombudsman about any injustice you have suffered as a result of maladministration, but you are encouraged to use the Council's own Complaints Policy first; and
- (iii) the Ombudsman if you believe a Councillor or co-opted member of the Council has breached the Member's Code of Conduct. If you wish to

complain about a Councillor, then you should contact either the Council's Monitoring Officer (director.legal@rctcbc.gov.uk) or the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.



If you have a complaint about the Council, its employees or the services it provides you make a complaint via the Council's complaints process which can be found on the Council's website [here](#).



You can find out more about how to complain to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales on their website <<https://www.ombudsman.wales/how-to-complain/>>

Section 4 Policies and procedures

The Council's key plans and strategies (the policy framework)

Where can I find the Council's key plans and strategies?

The Full Council is responsible for setting the Council's key plans and strategies, which together form the Council's policy framework.

 The plans and strategies which form the Council's policy framework are listed in Article 4 of Part 2 of the constitution.

 Individual plans and strategies are published on the Council's website.

Additionally, the Council's Corporate Plan brings together the Council's plans and strategies for: communities; children and young people; health social care and wellbeing; and community safety.

 The Council's Corporate Plan is published on the Council's website [here](#).

How is the Council's policy framework decided?

The Cabinet is responsible for consulting with relevant stakeholders, considering any reports or recommendations made by the Council's Scrutiny Committees and working with the Council's senior officers to develop a draft policy framework.

Once the Cabinet has developed a draft policy framework, it will be considered by a meeting of the Full Council. The Full Council may decide to adopt the policy framework, make changes to it, refer it back to the Cabinet so that further work can be done on it, or substitute its own policy framework for the draft prepared by the Cabinet.

If the Full Council decides to adopt the policy framework then it shall take effect immediately. If the Full Council amends the policy framework then the Leader has an opportunity to object to the amendments and to reconvene the Full Council to reconsider the policy framework.

Once adopted, the Cabinet, their committees, individual Councillors and the Council's paid officers are bound to act in accordance with the policy framework.

 The process by which the Full Council adopts a policy framework is described in the Budget and Policy Framework Rules of Part 4 of the constitution.

Budget setting and financial management

How does the Council set its budget?

The Full Council is responsible for agreeing the Council's budget, and for agreeing changes to the Council's budget once it has been formally adopted.

The Council's budget is in two parts: -

- the revenue budget provides for day to day operating costs and expenditure like staff salaries, rent, and the ongoing costs of providing services.
- the capital budget provides for one-off costs like a major road improvement scheme, or the purchase or construction of a new car park.

The Cabinet, in consultation with the Senior Leadership Team, is responsible for developing initial proposals for the Council's budget and consulting over these.

Once this consultation has been completed, the Cabinet is responsible for preparing a final budget proposal for consideration by the Full Council.

The Full Council may adopt the budget without making any changes, amend the budget, or ask the Cabinet to reconsider it before adopting it.



The process by which the Full Council adopts its budget is described in the Budget and Policy Framework Rules found in Part 4 of the constitution.

Decisions outside the budget or policy framework

Can decisions be taken that do not comply with the budget or policy framework?

The Full Council may decide to make changes to the policy framework.

Other bodies and individuals may only take decisions that do not comply with the policy framework in a limited number of exceptional circumstances, which are set out in the constitution. For example, where an urgent decision must be taken to safeguard the Council's interests and it is not possible to arrange a meeting of the Full Council in time.

However, the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee may decide to refer such decisions to the Full Council for further consideration (this is referred to in the constitution as calling-in the decision).

 The Council's arrangements for urgent decisions which do not comply with the policy framework are set out in Rule 4 of the Budget and Policy Framework Rules of Part 4 of the constitution.

 The overview and scrutiny committee's powers are described in the Overview & Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules found in Part 4 of the constitution.

Can money be moved from one budget head to another once the budget has been adopted?

During the year the Cabinet and Chief Officers may need to transfer budgets from one service area to another to reflect changed service needs or priorities in order to deliver the Council's policy framework within the financial limits set by the Council.

 The mechanism by which the Cabinet and Chief Officers may move money between budget heads is set out in Rule 3 of the Budget and Policy Framework Rules of Part 4 of the constitution.

What other policies and procedures govern how the Council manages its budget?

The Council is bound by a number of different financial rules and procedures that govern how the Council's spending is planned, committed, reviewed and audited.

 The Council's detailed Financial Procedure Rules are set out in Part 4 of the constitution.

Are there any restrictions on how the Council buys in goods and services?

The Council can enter into contracts to purchase goods and services in much the same way as any other person or organisation. However, the Council must comply with the contract procedure rules in the constitution when it does so.

The purpose of the contract procedure rules is to ensure that the Council complies with relevant legal requirements and secures the most economically advantageous (best value) goods and services for taxpayers.

If you regularly sell goods or services to the Council then you may wish to familiarise with these rules and procedures.

How does the Council enter into contracts and agreements?

The rules and procedures that govern how agreements, contracts and deeds are authorised and executed on behalf of the Council are set out in Article 14 of Part 2 of the constitution.

Section 5 How can I get involved?

How can I find out when meetings of the Council and its committees and bodies are taking place?

The Council publishes a calendar of meetings, and notice of each meeting is published at least 3 clear working days before the meeting.

 The Council publishes the calendar of meetings and notices of meetings on its website [here](#).

 Meetings which have been, or due to be, webcast can be accessed [here](#).

How can I find out what will be discussed at a particular meeting?

The Council will publish agendas for meetings, together with any reports and background papers at least 3 clear working days in advance of the meeting taking place.

Hard copies of agendas and reports will also be available at the meeting, if a physical meeting is held, for those members of the public who wish to attend in person.

 The Council publishes meetings agendas and supporting documents and reports on its website [here](#).

How can I find out when an issue I am interested in will be decided?

The Council publishes a forward work programme, which sets out what decisions will be taken by the Full Council, the Cabinet and what issues the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be considering, and when these matters will be discussed.

 The Council publishes its forward work programme on its website [here](#).

Can I ask a committee or body of the Council to look into a particular issue?

Yes. You can ask the chair or a member of a particular body to add an item to the agenda for a future meeting, or to raise the issue when the committee is considering items of future business.

You can also submit petitions to the Council, using the Council's petition scheme.

The Council is obliged by law to operate a petition scheme, which sets out: -

- how a petition can be submitted to the Council;
- how and when the Council will acknowledge receipt of a petition;
- the steps the Council will take in response to a petition; and
- how and when the Council will make available its response to a petition to the person who submitted the petition and to the public.



The Council publishes details of its petition scheme on its website .

Can I attend meetings of the Full Council?

Yes, members of the public can come to observe meetings of the Full Council so long as they are being held in public.

Meetings of the Full Council are also broadcast live on the Council's website so you can watch them in real time remotely if you wish to do so.

The public must be excluded from meetings when confidential information would otherwise be disclosed. Confidential information means information given to the Council by a Government Department on terms which forbid its public disclosure or information which cannot be publicly disclosed by Court Order.

The Council may also exclude the public from a meeting, or part of a meeting, where exempt information would be disclosed. Exempt information includes information that relates to a particular individual or their financial or business affairs, information that is legally privileged or information relating to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of a crime, or other information specified in the constitution.

If you interrupt a meeting of the Council, then you are likely to be warned by the Presiding Member about causing a disturbance. If you continue to disturb the meeting, then you may be removed.

-  The rules around excluding the public from meetings are set out in the Access to Information Procedure Rules found in Part 4 of the constitution.
-  The rules around disturbance by members of the public are set out in Rule 18 of the Council Procedure Rules found in Part 4 of the constitution.

Can I attend other meetings?

Yes, members of the public can come to observe any meeting which the Council has resolved should be held in public.

-  Your right to attend meetings of the Council's Cabinet, the council's committees and other bodies are described in Rule 3 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules found in Part 4 of the constitution.

Can I speak at a meeting?

Members of the public can speak at any meeting which the Council has resolved should include participation by members of the public.

-  The Council has adopted a protocol for public speaking at Scrutiny Committee meetings which can be found in Part 5 of the Constitution. The agendas for Scrutiny Committee meetings are published on the Council's website at least 3 clear days before the date of the meeting. Members of the public wishing to speak must notify Democratic Services by no later than 5.00 p.m. on the penultimate working day preceding the relevant Scrutiny Committee meeting. Requests must include details of the agenda item of the relevant Scrutiny Committee at which you wish to speak. Applications will be dealt with in the order that they have been received. All those registered to speak will be advised prior to the meeting, either by email or through the contact telephone number that has been provided, if your request to speak has been accepted.

Can I ask a question or make a presentation at a Full Council meeting?

Public Questions

Any resident of, or Council taxpayer or non domestic ratepayer, in the County Borough may ask questions of Members of the Cabinet or the Chairpersons of Committees, or any Member of the Council at a Full Council meeting. A period of up to 5 minutes each shall be allowed for 6 questions to be put and answered at the meeting and for supplementary questions and answers thereto under these rules.

The 6 Questions to be asked will be selected by a draw to be undertaken by the proper officer, who is the Council's Head of Democratic Services.

A question may only be asked if notice has been given by delivering it in writing or by electronic mail to the proper officer not later than 5.00pm at least eight clear working days (not including the date of the meeting) before the date of the meeting. Each question must give the name and address of the questioner and must specify the Member to whom it is to be put.

At any one meeting no person may submit more than one question and no more than one such question may be asked on behalf of one organisation.

A questioner who has put a question in person may also put one supplementary question without notice to the Councillor who has replied to his or her original question.

Public Presentations

Any resident of or Council taxpayer or non domestic ratepayer in the County Borough may make a presentation to Council at a Full Council meeting on a matter for which the Council has responsibility.

Presentations will be selected by a draw to be undertaken by the Proper Officer which shall take place as soon as possible after the period for submission of presentations has expired.

A maximum of two, 5 minute presentations will be permitted per meeting provided that a written submission summarising the presentation(s) is received by the Proper Officer not later than 5.00pm at least eight clear working days (not including the date of the meeting) before the date of the meeting.

The relevant Cabinet Member will, if appropriate, subsequently provide a brief response.



You can read more about asking a question or making a presentation in the Open Government Council Meeting Procedure Rules found in Part 4 of the constitution or by contacting the Council's Democratic Services team.

How can I find out what the Council decided?

The Council publishes the agenda, reports and the minutes of meetings. These papers are available for inspection by the public for a minimum of six years from the date of the meeting.

The Council also has arrangements in place for publishing written records of decisions taken by the Cabinet (which can be accessed [here](#)) and Officers taking key delegated decisions (which can be accessed [here](#))

 You can read meeting minutes, reports and agendas on the Council's website [here](#).

Can I view the Council's accounts to understand how my council tax is spent?

Yes. The Council is required to publish its accounts and to make them available for inspection by the public. You may raise questions of concerns about the Council's accounts with the Council or with the Council's external auditor.

 You can find out more about the Council's performance, budget and spending including the statement of accounts [here](#).

How is the Council engaging with local people to encourage them to participate in local democracy?

The Council will publish a public participation strategy which explains how it will encourage local people to participate in the Council's decision-making processes. The Council's public participation strategy describes how the Council will:

- promote awareness of the Council's functions;
- promote awareness of how people can become a Councillor and what the role entails;
- facilitate access to information about decisions made, or to be made, by the Council;
- promoting arrangements by which people may make representations to the Council about decisions it has made or will make in the future;
- ensure that the public's views are brought to the attention of its Overview and Scrutiny Committees; and
- promote awareness amongst Councillors of the benefits of using social media to communicate with local people.

The Council also engages with local people through citizen panels and surveys and consultations around specific policies and services. These may be initiated by the Council, service departments within the Council or through the work of the Council's committees or sub-committees.

 The Council's public participation strategy will be published on the Council's website [insert hyperlink]* . Details of consultations being conducted by the

Council can be accessed via its 'Get Involved' page on its website and accessed [here](#)

Can I send a petition to the Council?

Yes, you can submit petitions to the Council using the Council's petition scheme. The Council is obliged by law to operate a petition scheme, which sets out: -

- how a petition can be submitted to the Council;
- how and when the Council will acknowledge receipt of a petition;
- the steps the Council will take in response to a petition; and
- how any by when the Council will make available its response to a petition to the person who submitted the petition and to the public.



You can read more about submitting a petition to the Council in section XX* of the constitution.



The Council publishes details of its petition scheme on its website <insert hyperlink>. *

details to be inserted once approved by Full Council

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL

25th OCTOBER 2023

PETITIONS SCHEME

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATION.

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To endorse the recommendations of the Constitution Committee in respect of proposed revisions to the Council's current petitions scheme, as in accordance with the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021;
- 1.2 To consider and agree to the proposed amendments to the current arrangements to allow for greater engagement in the democratic process

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Council:

- 2.1 Endorse the Constitution Committees proposed amendments to the Council's current petition scheme as set out within section 5 of the report and subject to Members comments, agree to the proposed revisions
- 2.2 Subject to 2.1, to instruct the Monitoring Officer to amend the constitution to reflect these changes
- 2.3 Approve the development of a petition scheme 'guidance booklet' to assist members of the public in taking forward a petition and for this booklet to be developed by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (the Act) places a duty on a Principal Council to make and publish a Petitions Scheme setting out how the Council intends to handle and respond to Petitions (including Electronic Petitions - ePetitions).
- 3.2 The Act outlines that a petition scheme must, in particular, set out—

- i. how a petition may be submitted to the council;
 - ii. how and by when the council will acknowledge receipt of a petition;
 - iii. the steps the council may take in response to a petition received by it;
 - iv. the circumstances (if any) in which the council may take no further action in response to a petition;
 - v. how and by when the council will make available its response to a petition to the person who submitted the petition and to the public.
- 3.3 A Principal Council must review its petition scheme from time to time and, if the council considers it appropriate, revise the scheme. If a Principal Council revises or replaces a petition scheme, it must publish the revised or new scheme.
- 3.4 Due to the requirements of the Act, a review of the current processes has been undertaken to ensure that the arrangements are still fit for purpose.
- 3.5 The Welsh Government Statutory Guidance in respect of Petition schemes advises that a scheme should be developed not just to ensure a fair and robust process but also to provide a helpful and positive experience for those people who take the time to submit and promote petitions.
- 3.6 The guidance highlights how petitions fit in with other opportunities for the public to be involved – and signposting to other opportunities, either as complementary to a petition or instead of it, including connecting the potential petitioner with their ward councillor.
- 3.7 The Council already provides arrangements for public participation in Council committee meetings, including public presentations at full Council and scrutiny.
- 3.8 The statutory guidance in respect of reviews of petitions schemes can be found at Appendix 1.
- 3.9 A comparison of other Authorities Petitions schemes has been undertaken and is illustrated in Appendix 2.

4. PETITIONS

CURRENT PETITIONS SCHEME

- 4.1 At the Council's constitution Committee in [May 2019](#), the Committee agreed to adopt an agreed set of procedures for the receipt and processing of petitions, which was endorsed at the Council AGM. The requirements for submission of a petition were subsequently developed by the Democratic Services Committee at its meeting in [July 2019](#).
- 4.2 To ensure local Members and the public receive appropriate information in respect of their concerns / requests as highlighted within a petition the following procedure is now undertaken:
- a) Upon receipt, a copy of the petition is provided to both the appropriate Cabinet Member and the relevant Senior Officer for information and action.
 - b) A list of Petitions which have met a set criteria (i.e. Number of signatories to the petition, affects more than ward) will be listed on the Council Website for the public to view.
 - c) The relevant Cabinet Member will respond to the petition, either to the lead petitioner or local member (depending on how the petition has been received) and a copy will be made available on the Council website.
 - d) The action taken forward (if appropriate) in respect of the petition will also be published on the Council website.
- 4.3 The current process formalises the procedures in respect of Petitions and provides an opportunity for the Council to publicly demonstrate the actions taken forward once petitions are received. The webpage for the petitions received to date that hit the relevant criteria can be found [here](#).
- 4.4 In comparison to other Council petitions pages RCT proves favourably with the level of information provided in the public domain.
- 4.5 The Council welcomes petitions submitted on paper or electronically using an online petition system which meets the requirements of a valid petition, or a combination of the two.
- 4.6 It has been the practice that Members present petitions received at a full meeting of the Council, however, a petition does not require such presentation to be recorded and responded to in line with this approach.

5 PROPOSED REVISIONS - PETITION SCHEME GOING FORWARD.

- 5.1 On the [5th June 2023](#) the Council's Constitution Committee undertook a review of the current arrangements in respect of petitions and resolved to endorse to Council the following suggested improvements to the current process, which looks to link and strengthen the wider public participation strategy that the Council are building upon. It is suggested that the level of information displayed on the Council website in respect

of petitions will continue to ensure transparency and accountability and the receipt of petitions through paper format will also not be changed.

EPETITIONS / ONLINE PETITIONS

- 5.2 To further promote engagement in the process and with the rise in online working it is important that the Council develop processes to make sure provisions are in place for the potential creation and submission of online petitions through the Council website as well as submission via email to the Council Business Unit.
- 5.3 This development will potentially further increase engagement opportunities with the petitions scheme and would hopefully streamline the process for those creating the petition.
- 5.4 A recommended template and criteria for a petition will be included within the proposed guidance booklet.

RESPONSES TO PETITIONS

- 5.5 The Council welcome the opportunity for feedback and values the voice of local communities through the petitions scheme. Although the current process allows for transparency of responses the review has allowed for the opportunity to further strengthen this area, taking advantage of digital mechanism to support public engagement through petitions.
- 5.6 It is proposed that the Council’s response to a petition would be taken forward on a tiered approach depending on the number of people who have signed the Petition. The table sets out the potential thresholds:

Tier	Number of Signatures	Response
1	1-500	Response from the relevant Director / Head of Service
2	500 +	Response from the relevant Cabinet Member and publication of response on the dedicated Council webpage
3	1000+ Hybrid petition – Electronic and or paper	As above, with a petition being referenced for information only on a Council agenda. When noting petitions, Council may determine the referral of the matter to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

- 5.7 Due to these proposed changes it would be important that all petitions clearly illustrate the names and addresses of the signatory to allow the Council to determine that there are no duplication of signatures and to ensure that the signatory lives within the County Borough. It is also important that a lead signatory is identified within the Petition.
- 5.8 If taken forward a guidance document in respect of the requirements for a valid petition would be created and made available on the Council website to assist the public going forward. It is proposed that such a document is taken forward by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
- 5.9 If a petition exceeds 1000 signatures but does not capture all of the petitions requirements (i.e address information is not provided to confirm that the signatory is a resident of RCTCBC) then such a petition would automatically receive a tier two response.
- 5.10 In respect of a petition that reaches a tier 3 level response then the following procedures would be taken forward. Responsibility for validation of a petition would rest with the Proper Officer.

TIER 3 RESPONSE

- 5.11 As an enhancement to the current petition arrangements, and in response to the statutory guidance of the Welsh Government, if a Petition (whether electronic or paper based) contains 1000+ signatures, the matter will be referenced for information only on the Council's agenda.
- 5.12 When noting this detail, Council may determine to refer a subject matter to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for consideration.
- 5.13 When a Member proposes a motion to refer the matter they will have a maximum of 5 minutes to present their motion. The motion must be seconded, but the seconder will not be permitted to speak. A member of the Executive and / or the Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee has the discretion to respond to such request before a decision by Council, with the permission of the Presiding Member.

Consideration by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

- 5.14 Following referral the Overview & Scrutiny committee will endeavour to consider the Petition at its next meeting, although on some occasions this may not be possible and consideration will then take place at the following meeting.
- 5.15 Where appropriate a request will be presented with an officer report, providing the appropriate advice.

- 5.16 The relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holder will be provided with the opportunity to respond to the content of the petition to inform the committee's deliberations.
- 5.17 The Overview & Scrutiny Committee may decide to make recommendations or further scrutinise the content of the Petition request, or to commission consideration into the matter, by referral to one of the thematic Scrutiny Committees or Democratic Services Committee. Any recommendations arising out of the referral would be presented to Cabinet or the relevant Executive Member through the usual process for their consideration.
- 5.18 The Lead Petitioner would be invited to attend the meeting, in line with the parameters of the Council's 'public speaking at scrutiny Committee arrangements' (guidance document can be found [here](#)). The Lead Petitioner will also receive written confirmation of the decision as soon as practicable following the decision having been made. Confirmation of the outcome will also be published on the Council's website.
- 5.19 When a petition has been heard at a scrutiny meeting no further petition on a similar topic and seeking a similar outcome shall be considered and no further address shall be heard on that item, within six months of the meeting at which the petition was considered.
- 5.20 In the event that more than one Petition is received on a similar theme / topic, which meets the relevant criteria and seeking a similar outcome, only one Lead Petitioner will be permitted to present the Petition. The Council Business Unit will notify each Lead Petitioner and ask them to liaise with each other to consider amalgamating the Petitions and agree which Lead Petitioner will present the Petition to Council. In the absence of such agreement, the Proper Officer may determine in consultation with the Chair, at their discretion how many petitioners should be afforded speaking rights.
- 5.21 Under the amended petition arrangements, petitions presented by Elected Members will be considered in accordance with the above arrangements as outlined in 5.6 of the report.
- 5.22 Petitions relating to live planning applications will continue to be dealt with under the current planning petitions process, as the Council has one of the most generous public speaking arrangements of a planning committee for the public.

6. DETAILED GUIDANCE & CONSTITUTION REVISIONS

- 6.1 If Members are in agreement with the revisions suggested within the report, then appropriate amendments will need to be taken forward within the Council's constitution by the Monitoring Officer.

- 6.2 A guidance document will need to be developed to assist members of the public in producing a petition that meets the required criteria. This document will be taken forward by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
- 6.3 When developing this guidance members may wish to consider further, areas where this process can most add value and support local residents to highlight matters important to them. They may also wish to consider highlighting areas which may be outside the scope of the Council or matters which need to follow a set process or procedure for resolution, to effectively manage petitioners reasonable level of expectation.**
- 6.4 When developing detailed guidance, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee may wish to consider the parameters for online petitions received, to ensure the Council can be confident that the subject matter reflects a majority of view of a local community.
- 6.5 Ensuring such guidance provides the opportunity for the scheme to be accessible to all, aimed to increase participation and engagement should be key considerations.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The proposed revisions to the petitions process will allow for further transparency and engagement with the public and will demonstrate how the 'voice of the people' is being heard.
- 7.2 The public are able to submit petitions in both English or Welsh, which will not lead to a delay in response.
- 7.3 The improvements proposed to the online submission of petitions as well as the continued receipt of paper based petitions allows for greater equality of provision.
- 7.4 The relevant impact assessments have been completed in respect of the revisions to the scheme. The discretion of the proper officer may be sought in respect of any queries as to the residency of a signatory to a petition.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The Constitution Committee considered the proposed revisions at its meeting on the 5th June 2023, where Members debated in detail the proposals presented before them and agreed to amend the tier 3 threshold to ensure that this catered for the receipt of 'hybrid petitions' (a combination of both electronic and paper based petitions.)
- 8.2 At the meeting Members also suggested that a review of the threshold be considered following a reasonable period of implementation.

8.3 The development of a guidance booklet will be taken forward by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee if agreed by Committee.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 If taken forward the Council Constitution will need to be amended to reflect the new way of working.

10.2 The revisions contained within the report have been undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021

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

11.1 These proposals will support the ability for the public to become involved in key matters. If agreed, the proposed approach will strengthen the voice of the public on matters which may impact upon them.

11.2 Ensuring appropriate governance arrangements are in place is also essential to the smooth operating and sustainability of the Council when undertaking Council Business and the proposals in relation to petitions will allow for further transparency to the public.

11.3 The proposals are also linked to the Future Generations Well-being goals of a more equal Wales and a Wales of cohesive communities.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL

25th OCTOBER 2023

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

Background Papers

Democratic Services Committee – [17th July 2019](#)

[Constitution Committee – 5th June 2023.](#)

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Statutory Guidance on Petitions

Status of this Guidance

2.1 This is statutory guidance made under section 44 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (the 2021 Act).

Purpose of this Guidance

2.2 This guidance is to support councils in the preparation and maintenance of petition schemes aimed at enabling communities to explore support for specific issues to inform council deliberations.

What the Act requires

2.3 Section 42 of the 2021 Act requires principal councils to make and publish a petition scheme setting out how the council intends to handle and respond to petitions including electronic petitions.

2.4 The petition scheme must as a minimum set out:

- a) how a petition may be submitted to the council;
- b) how and by when the council will acknowledge receipt of a petition;
- c) the steps the council may take in response to a petition received by it;
- d) the circumstances (if any) in which the council may take no further action in response to a petition;
- e) how and by when the council will make available its response to a petition to the person who submitted the petition and to the public.

2.5 A principal council must review its petition scheme from time to time and, if the council considers it appropriate, revise the scheme.

2.6 If a principal council revises or replaces a petition scheme, it must publish the revised or new scheme.

Designing a petition scheme

2.7 A petition scheme should not be considered as the sole method of receiving public views on matters. Its design and parameters should be set in the context of the council's public participation strategy and informed by the other participation pathways available to members of the public. Therefore, as part of a suite of pathways used as part of the council's wider public participation strategy, it can be a powerful tool in gauging support for specific courses of action.

2.8 Well designed and resourced petition systems, working in conjunction and harmony with other participation pathways can have a range of benefits for the public and councils. For example, petitions enable communities to quickly highlight the issues which are of the most concern to them to the council, they can add weight to representations made by ward councillors on their behalf and provide a focus for community discussion. In turn, councils gain valuable insight into the concerns of their communities and can then support communities in addressing these issues.

2.9 Petitions should not be considered as a nuisance or threat and should be considered as a good opportunity to hear the views of the public, whether in support or not of something the council may be considering or intending to do.

2.10 Councils should, when designing petition schemes, think about the process from the point of view of petitioners, including understanding what petitioners might think "success" will look like at different stages in the process, and how the process can be made as transparent and streamlined as possible.

2.11 Councils should have regard to their statutory duties in respect of equalities, Welsh language and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 when preparing their petition scheme.

2.12 Petition schemes should be developed not just to ensure a fair and robust process but also to provide a helpful and positive experience for those people who take the time to submit and promote petitions. This is likely to involve consideration of the

following issues:

- A clear explanation of the matters about which the council will accept petitions, including the criteria for making a decision to accept or reject a petition;
- How and where advice will be given to petitioners to enable them to engage productively with the process, including measures in place for disabled people and individuals with long term health conditions and neurodiversity;
- A clear understanding of the different stages in the petitions scheme, with an explanation of what thresholds will be used to determine the transition from one stage to another;
- How petitions fit in with other opportunities for the public to be involved – and signposting to other opportunities, either as complementary to a petition or instead of it, including connecting the potential petitioner with their ward councillor;
- The correct body to consider a given petition. It is right for petitions to be heard by a variety of different bodies, although the default is likely to be full Council unless it is seen as especially useful for the petition to be heard by a committee that focuses specifically on the subject matter of the petition itself;
- Petition schemes will need to consider where petitions are considered in scrutiny committees. These committees have no power to act on petitions but could (for example) adopt petitioners' arguments as formal recommendations;
- The rights of petitioners to speak in meetings, and how this engages with wider public speaking rights, and rights to make deputations;
- How and within what timeframe the council will provide feedback to the petitioner on the success or otherwise of their petition.

2.13 Councils are encouraged to explore what would constitute good practice around the framework for petition schemes set out in this guidance. For example, what might be an appropriate signature threshold for the consideration of a petition and how and when this threshold would be kept under review. This would support a balance between local discretion based on the size of the council, the nature of the scheme and its relationship to other participation pathways in the council and consistency for the members of the public who may be engaged with multiple councils or move

from one council area to another

Council	Minimum number of signatures and other thresholds
Blaenau Gwent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at least 10 people but the Council will use its discretion where there are fewer than 10 signatories in cases where there is clear local support for action (e.g. where the residents of a small community have petitioned for traffic calming measures). • at least 1,500 signatures, the relevant senior officer will give evidence at a public meeting of the relevant overview and scrutiny committee • signed by more than 5,000 people it will be debated by the full council (unless it is a petition asking for a senior council officer to give evidence at a public meeting).
Bridgend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50 - 200 signatures - Response from the relevant Director / lead Member (treated as normal correspondence) • At least 200 signatures - Referred to the Leader / Executive for a response • At least 500 signatures - Referred for a debate at a meeting of the Full Council • At least 500 signatures - Senior Officers called to provide evidence at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee where such action is requested in the petition.
Cardiff	<p>Petitions shall be divided into three classes and shall be addressed as follows:</p> <p>(i) A petition bearing less than 20 signatures shall be dealt with by normal correspondence.</p> <p>(ii) A petition bearing 21-50 signatures shall be noted at the meeting and passed to a relevant officer of the Council for a written response.</p> <p>(iii) A petition bearing 51 or more signatures shall be noted and passed to the relevant Cabinet Member for consideration and a written response</p>
Swansea	<p>Number of Signatures Response</p> <p>1-49 Response from the relevant Director / Head of Service</p> <p>50-499 Response from the relevant Cabinet Member</p> <p>500+ Referred for debate at a meeting of the Full Council</p>
Pembrokeshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Any petition above the threshold will trigger a debate at Council: 1000+ ➤ Any petition within the threshold will trigger a debate at an Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 500+ ➤ Response from relevant Cabinet Member: 100+ ➤ Response from relevant Director/Head of Service Up to: 100

	<p>➤ Single ward issues will be referred to the relevant Cabinet Member: 0</p>
Rhondda Cynon Taf	<p>Petitions of 60 or more signatories, where the issue could reasonably be expected to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. affect the Communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions; or ii. result in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant.
Hereford	<p>If a petition is signed by 5% (approximately 7,000 residents) of the people on the electoral roll and has not been rejected, the lead petitioner can request that it is debated at the next ordinary meeting of full Council.</p>
Telford	<p>Any petition must contain 100 or more valid signatures A petition with signatures of more than 5% of the population of the Borough will automatically be debated at a meeting of the Full Council.</p>
Hull	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at least 50 for a petition to be accepted as valid into the petitions procedure • 50 but less than 1500 signatures - for a referral of a petition to council without debate • At least 1500 signatures - for a petition to be debated at a meeting of the council.
Guilford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer than 50 signatures - response from relevant director/ service leader [treated as standard correspondence] • 50 - 299 signatures - Response from the relevant councillor • At least 300 signatures - referred to Leader/ Executive for response • At least 500 signatures - Referred for a debate at a meeting of the Full Council • At least 500 signatures - Senior Officers called to provide evidence at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee where such action is requested in the petition.
Manchester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100 signature - any other, non excluded, petition, requesting action or response within six weeks • 1000 signatures - any petition above the threshold will trigger a debate at a scrutiny committee • 4000 - any petition above threshold will trigger a debate at a full council meeting.
Warwickshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than 1000 signatures - the Monitoring Officer will decide whether the petition should be referred to a Cabinet member, Local Forum or Officer for response. • 1000 or more signatures - formal presentation of a petition to a meeting of the Council

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL

25th OCTOBER 2023

DRAFT PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATION IN CONSULTATION WITH THE DEPUTY LEADER, CLLR WEBBER.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To present to Council, Rhondda Cynon Taf's draft Public Participation Strategy, following a public consultation as required by the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021.
- 1.2 The Draft Public Participation Strategy was presented and discussed at the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 24th May 2023.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- 2.1 Following Members consideration of the draft strategy and public consultation responses to agree the draft Public Participation Strategy attached as Appendix 1 of the report.
- 2.2 Subject to 2.1, the Strategy and relevant guides are made available in the public domain, following appropriate formatting of the documentation.
- 2.3 Monitoring and reviewing of the Strategy is taken forward by the Democratic Services Committee.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Section 40 of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 places a duty on each Principal Council to prepare and publish a Public Participation Strategy.
- 3.2 In preparing the Strategy, the Council must consult with local people and such other persons as it considers appropriate.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Local authorities in Wales must, under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, publish a Participation Strategy that sets out the ways in which local people are encouraged to participate in the decision-making process of the council.
- 4.2 In developing its public participation strategy a council must consult people who live, work or study in the council's area and anyone else it thinks appropriate.
- 4.3 The Act places a number of duties on local authorities regarding participation. These are to:
- Promote awareness of the functions the council carries out to local residents, businesses and visitors.
 - Share information about how to go about becoming an Elected Member and what the role of a Councillor involves.
 - Provide greater access to information about decisions that have been made, or that will be made by the Council.
 - Provide and promote opportunities for residents to provide feedback to the Council, including comments, complaints and other types of representations.
 - Arrangements made to bring the views of the public to the attention of Overview & Scrutiny Committees
 - Promote awareness of the benefits of using social media to communicate with residents to councillors.
- 4.4 In contrast to the broad areas of approaches and interventions which can support public participation, this strategy is confined for the purposes of meeting the statutory requirements of the Local Government & Elections Act (Wales) 2021 to six areas listed above.
- 4.5 Broader areas of public engagement are included within the Council's Involvement & Engagement Framework (2020-2024). This framework will be revised as part of the development and implementation of the new Corporate Plan in 2024.

5 CONSULTATION & ENGAGEMENT WITHIN RHONDDA CYNON TAF

- 5.1 Rhondda Cynon Taf Council have well established engagement processes and are committed to involving residents and other stakeholders in the democratic process.
- 5.2 The Participation Strategy, in reaffirming these commitments in line with the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, seeks to

build further on this work, ensuring the Council is open and responsive to the needs of its communities in respect of the democratic process.

- 5.3 The Draft Strategy, appended as Appendix 1 complements the RCT Involvement & Engagement Framework (2020-2024) and associated guidance. The Strategy aims to enable residents to better understand the democratic process and the role they can play in local democracy.
- 5.4 Through May - June 2023, the Council undertook a 4 week consultation on the proposed draft strategy through the Council's Consultation arrangements via the Council Website. In addition to this other engagement opportunities were taken forward which are outlined in section 6 of the report.
- 5.5 At its meeting on the [24th May, 2023](#) the Overview & Scrutiny Committee pre-scrutinised the draft strategy and Members feedback is contained within the consultation responses report.

6. **CONSULTATION RESPONSES**

- 6.1 The Council undertook a 4 week public consultation in respect of the draft strategy the results of which are attached as Appendix 2 of this report.
- 6.2 The consultation included;
 - An online SNAP survey
 - A staff email promoting the consultation.
 - An email to a wide range of key stakeholders;
 - Inclusion of the draft strategy in the Member daily updates and open consultation links
 - The option of a dedicated email address and freepost.
 - A telephone consultation option, through the Council's contact centre.
- 6.3 The proposals were presented and discussed at the [Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 24th May 2023..](#)
- 6.4 Of the 70 responses received the majority agreed that each of the themes would encourage local people to participate in the Council's decision making.
 - 88% agreed with promoting awareness of the functions the council carries out to local residents, businesses and visitors.
 - 75% agreed with sharing information about how to go about becoming an elected member – or Councillor – and what the role of a Councillor involves.
 - 88% agreed with providing greater access to information about decisions that have been made, or that will be made by the Council.

- 94% agreed with providing and promoting opportunities for residents to provide feedback to the Council, including comments, complaints and other types of representations.
 - 84% agreed with arrangements made to bring the views of the public to the attention of Overview & Scrutiny Committees.
 - 72% agreed with promoting awareness of the benefits of using social media to communicate with residents to Councillors.
- 6.5 Respondents were asked if there was anything else that they thought should be included in the Draft Public Strategy. The comments suggested that the Strategy could be more accessible and more clearly communicated. There were concerns that the use of social media for engagement may exclude certain sections of the community and there must be a range of methods used, in addition to online.
- 6.6 42% of respondents said that the draft Public Participation Strategy assisted in their understanding of the local democratic process and encouraged them to get involved, with 26% unsure. A number of comments were made about the need to make the Strategy easier to read, with suggestions to improve the presentation, including case studies and graphics.

7 OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – PRE-SCRUTINY

- 7.1 During the consultation period the Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertook pre-scrutiny of the draft strategy and highlighted the following areas to further improve the strategy:
- I. The need to compliment the strategy with a strategy guide allowing the document to be presented in a way that is very easy to understand and in its simplest form.
 - II. For the Council’s customer services contact details in the “contact us” section in the Strategy to be included within the strategy and for this to also be reflected in the guide when developed.
- 7.2 Members also discussed aspects of the strategy and the proposals within to promote public engagement within the democratic process

8 DRAFT STRATEGY GOING FORWARD

- 8.1 Following the feedback obtained the draft strategy has been strengthened to incorporate the following:
- i. Easy Read version of the document has been developed and a link to which now sits within the overarching document.

- ii. Improved signposting of information in respect of the provision of printed copies of documents / information to be available upon request.
 - iii. Glossary of terminology
 - iv. Redrafting in part to provide further clarity of information and strengthening of the message that the strategy relates specifically to engagement in the democratic process rather than overall Council engagement.
 - v. The improved addition of 'Impact goals', outlining how specific aims will have a positive impact on the public and or Council rather than the use of generic measures.
- 8.2 The strategy will be a living document, continuously evolving to ensure it remains fit for purpose, providing the public with the most up to date information in respect of the democratic process and engagement in the process.
- 8.3 The strategy will reside on the Council Business pages of its website, along with each of the engagement guides to public speaking at Committee meetings. Although the Council has taken forward a Commitment to become a paperless Council due to environmental impact and associated printing costs, this will not be to the disadvantage or detriment of those who cannot access the information in this manner and printed versions of the documents can be made available.
- 8.4 It is proposed that the Strategy is monitored and reviewed by the Democratic Services Committee to ensure it remains fit for purpose and that the aims identified are delivered upon.
- 8.5 Once the strategy content has been agreed, colleagues in design will be asked to review the document to assist in making it more engaging for the public.

9 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The draft strategy looks to improve the equality and diversity of participation across all areas of Rhondda Cynon Taf, ensuring all those that live, work or study within the Authority have the opportunity to engage in the Democratic Process. Equality Impact assessments and Welsh language impact assessments have been drafted and have been considered by the Council's Review Panel prior to its presentation to Council.

10 CONSULTATION

- 10.1 A formal Consultation was undertaken as outlined within section 6 of the report.

11 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

11.1 All costs associated with the Strategy will be contained within existing budgets.

12 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

12.1 Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

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

13.1 The Plan encompasses all of the Council's corporate plan priorities as well as the duties and goals of the Well Being of Future Generations Act.

- A public body must take account of the importance of involving other persons with an interest in achieving the well-being goals and ensure those persons reflect the diversity of the population;
- Effective involvement of people and communities in decisions that affect them is at the heart of improving well-being currently and in the future; and,
- It is vital to factor people's needs; ensuring engagement is meaningful and effective.

14 CONCLUSION

14.1 The draft Participation Strategy reaffirms the council's commitment to listening, conversing with and responding to the needs of our communities within the democratic process- building clear, shared expectations and two-way engagement, and clearly demonstrates how the participation duty is being fulfilled.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee – Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL

25th OCTOBER 2023

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & ENGAGEMENT IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, COUNCILLOR M WEBBER.

Background Papers

None.

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PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STRATEGY



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

FOREWORD

Public participation is essential to ensuring that the voices of citizens are at the heart of decision-making. It provides an opportunity for the needs and aspirations of communities to be heard and allows public service providers to respond. Our Public Participation Strategy sets out how we will talk and listen with all of those who live, work and study in Rhondda Cynon Taf in relation to the democratic process. The Strategy focuses on how people can get involved in the Council's decision making and looks to improve public awareness

of the democratic process and how the Council works. It runs alongside the Council's Involvement and Engagement Framework 2020-24, which sets out how we will inform, engage and consult with and involve people who live and work in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The framework provides guidance to Council services and partner organisations on how to involve stakeholders in decision making and ensure that the voices of people and communities are heard.

Our Public Participation Strategy details how the Council aims to promote:

- awareness among local people of the council's functions;
- awareness among local people of how to become a member of Rhondda Cynon Taf Council, and what membership entails;
- ways of facilitating access for local people to information about decisions made, or to be made, by the Council;
- ways of promoting and facilitating processes by which local people may make representations to the Council about a decision before, and after, it is made;
- arrangements made, or to be made, for the purpose of the Council's duty in bringing views of the public to attention of overview and scrutiny committees
- ways of promoting awareness among members of the Council of the benefits of using social media to communicate with local people

A plain English Summary of the Strategy is available [here](#).

Our Public Participation Strategy seeks to make it easier for everybody in Rhondda Cynon Taf to have a voice in our decision-making process, in-line with the requirements of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021. As part of fulfilling these statutory requirements we want to build and maintain relationships with our communities, and we want to ensure that all engagement undertaken by the Council is effective, efficient

and consistent as outlined in the Council's Involvement and Engagement Framework . There are difficult times ahead, and a key focus of our approach will be to ensure the broadest understanding of these challenges and the necessary decisions required by the Council, to make best use of the resources available to us.



The Council's Vision is for Rhondda Cynon Taf to be the best place in Wales to live, work and play, where people and businesses are independent, healthy, and prosperous. The continuing involvement and feedback from our residents and communities have shaped Council decisions that are helping to achieve this Vision and deliver the priorities set out within the [Corporate Plan 2020 - 2024 Making a Difference.](#)



Cllr Andrew Morgan

Leader & Chair of the Cabinet



Cllr Gareth Hughes

Presiding Member of the Council



Cllr Julie Edwards

Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee



Cllr S Rees

Chair of the Planning & Development Committee



Cllr A Fox

Chair of the Licensing Committee

SUMMARY

- The Council comprises seventy-five elected Councillors representing Electoral Wards local communities across Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- The Council normally meets on a monthly basis and has a list of functions that include;
 - » adopting and changing the Constitution (a written legal document that guides the council on its decision making processes)
 - » approving and adopting the Budget
 - » appointing the Leader
 - » determining and agreeing Committees (smaller groups of Councillors tasked with certain roles) and their terms of reference.
- Up to ten of the Council's members make up the Cabinet (also known as the Executive), including the Leader of the Council.
- The Cabinet is responsible for carrying out functions which are not the responsibility of the Council. Cabinet Members are responsible for decision making within specific areas of interest, known as portfolios.
- Scrutiny Committees act as a 'critical friend' 'friendly challenge' to the Cabinet and other decision makers in order to promote better services, policies and decisions. Working in a similar way to parliamentary select committees, scrutiny involves councillors who are not in the cabinet.
- The Planning Committee, Licensing Committees and Governance & Audit Committee make the Council's regulatory decisions.
 - » Planning Committee determines planning applications
 - » Licensing Committee determines licences to drive a hackney carriage or a private hire vehicle (taxis), public entertainment licences for premises amongst others
 - » Governance & Audit Committee reviews and scrutinises the Council's financial affairs
- Democratic Services Committee reviews the adequacy of provision by the Authority to support the democratic process.
- Standards Committee promotes high standards of conduct and supports Councillors to comply to such standards of behaviour

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THIS DOCUMENT

Section 1

How will the Council comply with the requirements of the Local Government & Elections Wales Act 2021?

Section 2

Reference to the following documents to assist the public with participation with the Council

- The Council's Involvement & Engagement Framework 2020-24
- Council Participation Guide for Residents
- Scrutiny Participation Guide for Residents
- Cabinet Participation Guide for Residents
- Regulatory Committees Participation Guide for residents

Section 3

How we will measure success?

A Glossary of some of the terminology used through the Strategy can be found at the end of the document.



[A plain English version is also available here](#)

(N.B. All documents linked within this strategy are available in paper copy upon request by contacting the Council Business Unit in any of the following ways:

By writing to: Council Business Unit, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale, CF40 2XX

By telephone: 07385 401845

By email: Councilbusiness@rctcbc.gov.uk)

An aerial photograph of a park area. In the center, there is a large, modern building with a glass facade, surrounded by green lawns and trees. The background shows a residential area with houses and a hillside. The sky is clear and blue.

SECTION 1

How will the Council comply with the requirements of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021

Section 40 of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 places a duty on each Council to prepare and publish a Public Participation Strategy (this document).

This Public Participation Strategy will complement the Council's Consultation & Engagement Framework. The Strategy is required to promote six Duties:

- 1. The Council's functions.**
- 2. How to become a Member (Councillor) of the Council, and what membership (Being a Councillor) entails.**
- 3. Accessing information about decisions made, or to be made, by the Council.**
- 4. Making representations to the Council about a decision before, and after, it is made.**
- 5. Arrangements made, or to be made, for the purpose of the Council's duty in section 62 of the 2011 Measure (bringing views of the public to attention of overview and scrutiny committees).**
- 6. Benefits of Councillors using social media to communicate with local people.**

DUTY 1. THE COUNCIL'S FUNCTIONS

Promoting awareness of the functions the council carries out to local residents, businesses and visitors

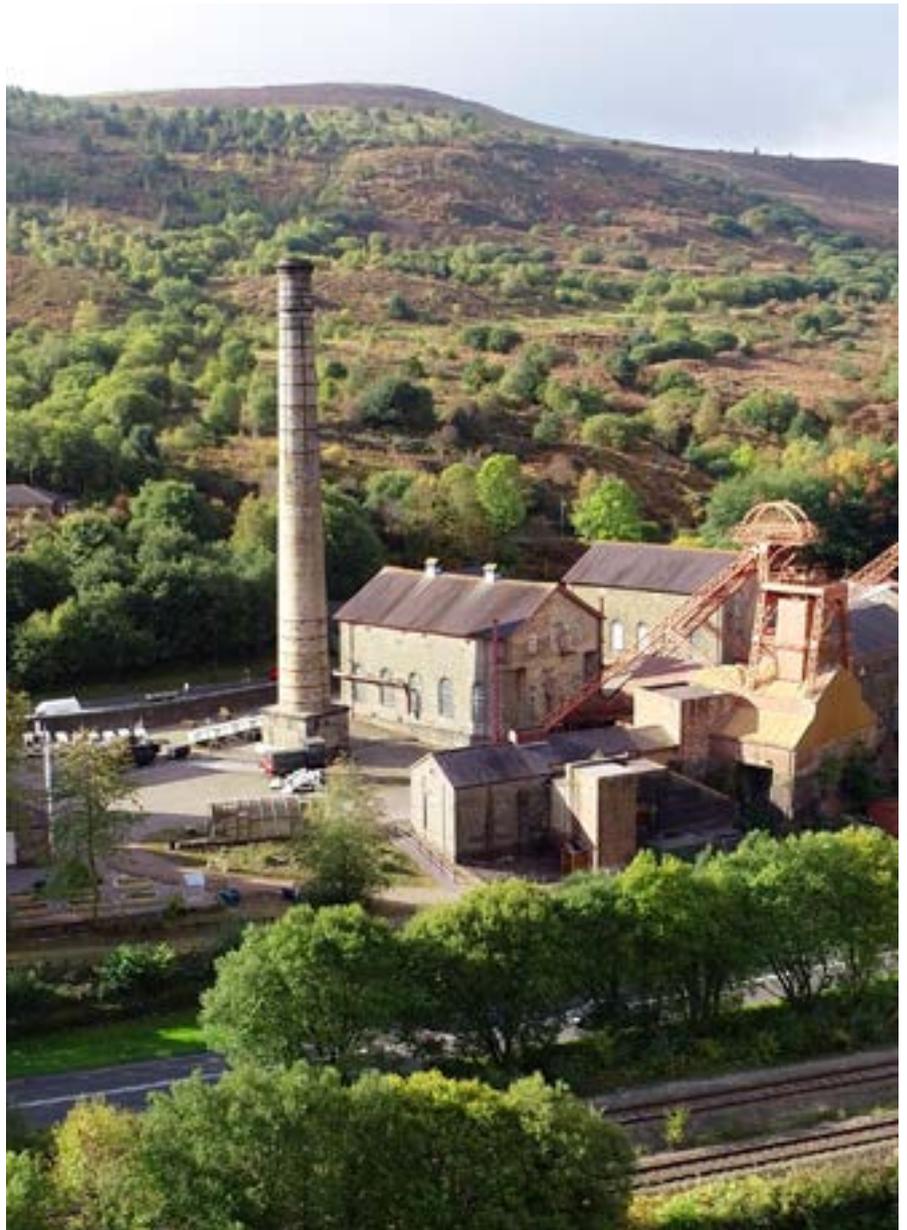
This information is available in printed format and can be found at the Council Headquarter building through documents such as the Council Constitution and the Council's Corporate Plan. Electronic copies of these documents can also be found on the Council website.

We will further promote this information by looking to ensure copies of the documentation are available at other Council businesses such as Libraries upon request.

How the Council Operates

All 75 Councillors meet as the Council of Rhondda Cynon Taf. All meetings of the Council are open to the public, but occasionally the Council will resolve to go into private session if confidential or exempt business is to be transacted, as outlined on the Committee agenda. Private sessions of Council are rare.

At Council meetings Councillors decide the Council's overall policies and set the budget each year (these are termed as Non-Executive Functions). The Council has a Cabinet which is responsible in turn for implementing policies agreed by the Council and taking executive decisions on matters which are not the responsibility of the Council or its Committees (these are termed as Executive Functions).



How the Council Works

The Council comprises 75 Councillors representing 46 Electoral Wards. Further information may be found [here](#).

The Council normally meets monthly and has a list of functions including adopting and changing the Constitution, approving and adopting the Budget and Policy Framework, appointing the Leader of Council, determining and agreeing Committees and their terms of reference. The Council has a fluid work programme identifying the business to be addressed at each Committee, which is available [here](#)

Several Councillors (this can include Job Share Cabinet Members) make up the [Cabinet](#) (the Executive). The Leader of the Council is the Chair of Cabinet. The Cabinet is responsible for carrying out all the Local Authority functions which are not the responsibility of the Council. The Cabinet take forward 'Key Decisions.' Cabinet Members are responsible for decision making within specific areas, known as Cabinet Portfolios.

It is at the discretion and decision of the Leader of the Council as to how Executive functions are discharged. At the Annual Meeting of the Council, the Leader will present a document for inclusion in the Scheme of Delegation containing the following information about Executive functions for the ensuing municipal year:

- the extent of any authority delegated to Cabinet Members individually, including details of any limitation on their authority;
- the terms of reference and constitution of such Cabinet Committees are determined by the Leader



[A copy of the Leader's Scheme of Delegation can be found here.](#)



Senior Officers within the Council's [Senior Leadership Team](#) are able to take forward decisions on behalf of the Council, which are termed as 'Officer Delegated Decisions'. A record of delegated decisions can be found [here](#). The nature and extent of any delegation to Officers, with details of any limitation on that delegation, and the title of the Officer to whom the delegation is made is also contained within the Leader's Scheme of Delegation.

Scrutiny Committees act as a 'critical friend' to the Cabinet and other decision makers to promote better services, policies, and decisions. Working in a similar way to Parliamentary Select Committees, scrutiny involves Councillors who are not in the Cabinet.

The Planning Committee, Licensing Committees and Governance & Audit Committee make the Council's regulatory decisions.

- i. Planning Committee determines planning applications.
- ii. Statutory Licensing Committee determines public entertainment licences for premises amongst others.
- iii. General Licensing Committee determines licences to drive a hackney carriage or a private hire vehicle (taxis).
- iv. Governance & Audit Committee reviews and scrutinises the Council's financial affairs.

The Council's Governance Committees carry out certain roles within the Local Authority in ensuring high standards of conduct are adhered to.

- i. Democratic Services Committee reviews the adequacy of provision by the Authority to discharge the democratic services function.
- ii. Standards Committee seeks to promote high standards of conduct and support Councillors to comply with the Code of Conduct.



The Council's Decision-Making Structure

Council

All 75 Councillors, normally meet monthly and are responsible for agreeing the budget and the corporate policy framework. A link to the Council's Corporate Plan can be found [here](#).

Council determines the political management framework of the Authority and appoints a Leader of the Council and specific committee chairs, such as scrutiny Chairs. Council is also responsible for appointing its Chief Executive & Directors.

Cabinet

The Cabinet is comprised of eight voting Councillors, including the Leader of the Council (from a maximum of ten). Job Share Cabinet Members are permitted. The Cabinet is appointed by the Leader of the Council and each Cabinet Member is assigned a thematic Cabinet Portfolio.

The Cabinet proposes the budget strategy to the Council and is responsible for taking decisions upon Council policies under the political guidance of the Leader of the Council.

The Leader agrees his scheme of delegation and provides delegated authority for executive decisions to Cabinet Members and senior Officers, in accordance with Council policy and budget.

Scrutiny

There are 4 Scrutiny Committees, including co-ordination of scrutiny activity by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Scrutiny Working Groups undertake detailed consideration on specific matters of concern.

Scrutiny holds the Cabinet (Executive) to account, including responsibility for pre-decision scrutiny and call-in of decisions. Ultimately it is the role of scrutiny to monitor and challenge the effectiveness of service delivery, polices and performance and improvement.

A full list of the Council's scrutiny committees and their respective terms of reference can be found [here](#).

Other Committees



[Further information relating to Committees may be viewed here.](#)



DUTY 2. HOW TO BECOME A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL, AND WHAT MEMBERSHIP ENTAILS

Sharing information about how to go about becoming an elected member – or councillor – and what the role of councillor involves

This information can also be found on the Council website with additional information including case studies of Members, providing examples of their roles and the reasons they became involved in the democratic process. Information about the role of a Councillor is also provided at the Council electoral registration offices. Democratic Services Officers are happy to take forward meetings or calls with anyone who is interested in becoming an Elected Member.

Further general details of how to become an Elected Member can be found on other websites and offices such as the Welsh Local Government Association and Electoral Registration Office.

We will further promote this information by producing a booklet in respect of the essential information to becoming a Councillor which will be located at central Council locations across the County Borough such as libraries. Work will also be undertaken to take forward the promotion of the role of a Councillor through attendance at certain Council Events across the County Borough.



How to become a Councillor

The next Local Government Elections will be held in May 2027. This section provides you with information on how to stand for election and what is expected of you should you be elected as a Councillor for Rhondda Cynon Taf.

The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) has produced the “Be a Councillor. Be the Change” website. This is a useful guide for prospective candidates. This may be viewed at

 www.beaCouncillor.wales

Rhondda Cynon Taf Council has a “Becoming a Councillor” website, including useful ‘questions and answer’ section and video footage of comments from current and past Members about their experiences as a Councillor.

 [This may be viewed here](#)

How much time does it take up to do a Councillors role?

It is estimated that on average, Councillors spend the equivalent of three to four days a week taking forward work associated with their role as a Councillor, such as responding to queries, attending meetings with constituents, attending meetings of the Council.

There are some Councillors who spend more time than this, and some less, which can be dependent on your role within the Council or

the number of queries you receive from your constituents. If you are in employment and intend to stand as a candidate you may wish to ask your employer what provisions they may have in place to allow you to take time away from work, to allow you to attend to your Council duties including attendance at Council meetings.



Standing as a Candidate

A candidate for election must complete a set of nomination papers that must be signed by the candidate in the presence of a witness who must attest the signature. You then need to win a majority of the votes cast at the ballot box (if there is a contest for the seat). Some electoral wards have up to three Councillors, therefore the top three would be elected.

Nomination packs will be available early in 2027. If you would like to register your interest, please contact electoralservices@rctcbc.gov.uk

 [Further useful information may be viewed here](#)

If you are thinking of standing as a candidate for a particular political party, then you should first contact that party's local organisation. If you plan to stand for election as an independent Councillor, contact us and we will be pleased to give you more information.

Councillors receive a salary which is determined annually by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) and can also claim travel and subsistence costs (subsistence is paid for 'out of county' meals and accommodation only) when undertaking official duties. Councillors can also claim towards the costs of care and personal assistance for them to carry out their approved duties.

 Further information on Councillor Salaries & allowances may be viewed at <https://gov.wales/independent-remuneration-panel-wales>



Support for Disabled Candidates Seeking Election

The Welsh Government has approved funding for a pilot scheme to fund reasonable adjustments and support for disabled candidates seeking election to the Local Government.

Further information may be viewed at <https://www.disabilitywales.org/projects/access-to-elected-office-fund-wales/>



What being a Councillor entails

Councillors are elected every five years. Councillors are democratically accountable to residents of their electoral ward. The overriding duty of Councillors is to the whole community, but they have a special duty to their constituents, including those who did not vote for them.

Once elected, Councillors are expected to attend various training and development sessions during their term of office. A Councillor Induction programme is provided for all new and returning Councillors during the first 12 months in office with further training provided on an ongoing basis through member development events. Councillors should set aside time during the first 3 months after the election for the Councillor Induction Programme.

Councillors are expected to attend meetings and committees and must observe the provisions of the Councillor's Code of Conduct. Further information may be viewed [here](#).

The Council fully support hybrid meetings, where Councillors can physically or remotely

Councillor Facilities & Support

The Council Business Unit, often known as Democratic Services, is responsible for supporting and arranging meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Committees etc., and provides a dedicated support service to all Elected Members, providing advice on the practice of meetings to Councillors, Officers, and the public. The service also helps Councillors with queries and admin related requests as well as supporting Councillors' health and wellbeing.

The Head of Democratic Services whose role is to support Members in non-executive roles will offer all Members the opportunity to undertake a Personal Development Review at least once a year, to provide in confidence an opportunity for all Members to discuss their role, training opportunities and other areas of support if required. A dedicated training programme is developed following the review process.

attend Council, Cabinet, and the majority of Committee Meetings. These are called hybrid / Multi-Location Meetings (MLM). They can be useful for people with responsibilities such as work, caring etc., by allowing them to participate from a location convenient to them.

As local representatives, Councillors have responsibilities towards their constituents and local organisations. These responsibilities and duties often depend on what the Councillor wants to achieve and how much time is available and may include: attending governing body meetings of schools within their ward, attending meetings of local organisations such as tenants' associations, bodies affecting the wider community, raising issues on behalf of members of the public, holding surgeries for residents to raise issues and meeting with individual residents in their own homes.

Councillors are entitled to a basic salary (£17,600 per annum in 2023-2024). Senior Salaries and other allowances / expenses are paid dependent on the roles and responsibilities the Councillor may have after the election.

Digital devices, broadband provision and ICT support are essential to enable Councillors to carry out their responsibilities effectively and securely. All Councillors have been provided with suitable digital devices and telephony provision following the Member Induction Programme following the 2022 Local Government Election.



DUTY 3. ACCESSING INFORMATION ABOUT DECISIONS MADE, OR TO BE MADE, BY THE PRINCIPAL COUNCIL

Providing greater access to information about decisions that have been made, or that will be made by the council

This information can also be found on the Council website through the provision of Cabinet Decision Notices / Minutes (in respect of Decisions taken by the Council at certain Council meetings) and through Committee work programmes which provide an overview of the forthcoming business to be considered at different meetings of the Council. Glamorgan Archives also hold information in relation to Council Committee business for the public to access.

Notices of Meeting

The Council will give five clear working days' notice for any formal meeting of the Council by posting details electronically on the Council's web site (in some circumstances it may be necessary to publish committee papers no-later than three clear working days). Committee summons will also be sent electronically to core Council services, such as libraries and one for all centres. Members of the public will be able to enquire about any forthcoming meetings at these locations where officers will be able to assist.

However, an exception will arise where the Council has received an application from the Police under section 53A of the Licensing Act 2003 for the summary review of a premises

We will further promote this information by taking forward Decision Notices for every Committee of the Council, in addition to the production of Council minutes. These Decision Notices will further promote transparency by providing a succinct overview of a meeting including attendees, decision taken and the outcome of any vote, which will be published within 7 days of the meeting.

licence (The Council being required to decide on whether to take any preliminary measures within 48 hours of receiving the application), the Council may give less than 3 clear days' notice of the meeting of the Licensing Committee meeting called to consider the application.



Access to Agenda & Reports Before the Meeting

Copies of the agenda and reports open to the public shall be available for inspection [here](#) and at the Council Headquarters following a request for such information.

If an urgent item is added to the agenda following its original publication, the Head of Democratic Services will publish the amended agenda and report to the website once available. The period of public inspection will be from the time the item was added to the agenda.

Access to Minutes etc., After the Meeting

The Council will make available copies of the following on its website for a period of six years after a meeting:

1. Minutes of formal Council, Cabinet & Committee meetings or record of decisions taken by the Cabinet.
2. The agenda for the meeting.

If a Member of the Public would like a hard copy of the above then this can be produced, following receipt of request through the Democratic Services team, located at the Council Headquarters.

From May 2023, the Council will introduce Decision Notices to assist the public in understanding the outcome of reports relating to items when the meeting was open to the public. A decision note will detail, attendance, any interests declared, and decisions will be published on the Authority's website within 7 days of the meeting.

Access to View Meetings

The Council will ensure members of the public can attend or view meetings that are open to the public either:

1. In person
2. Through the Council's online meeting platform (zoom) if making representations /asking questions.
3. By watching a meeting live via our webcast page or in archive (the webcast will be available to view for 6 months). Requests for copies of archived webcasts beyond 6 months can be made through Democratic Services.

Note: This does not apply when exempt or confidential information is being discussed. In these instances, Members of the public would be asked to leave the meeting whilst this item of business is considered. To ensure the smooth running of meetings, where possible any exempt or confidential items will be noted on an agenda as the final items of business, so that once these items are considered the meeting is closed to avoid the public having to return to the meeting. If an item was considered during the middle of a meeting, the Democratic Services Officer would ensure that the press and public were removed from the meeting for the duration of the item and would then be invited back into the meeting once a decision had been taken. The outcome of a confidential item will still be displayed within the Committee minutes and decision notice for transparency. Reports are determined to be confidential due to the view that due to the nature of the business to be transacted, exempt information would be disclosed. Exempt information means information falling within the 7 categories outlined in 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended). Report authors would need to choose which category of exemption relates to their report and authorisation for the exemption needs to be obtained from the relevant Senior Leadership Officer and the Council's Monitoring Officer.



DUTY 4. MAKING REPRESENTATIONS TO THE COUNCIL ABOUT A DECISION BEFORE, AND AFTER, IT IS MADE

Providing and promoting opportunities for residents to provide feedback to the Council, including comments, complaints and other types of representations

This information can also be found on the Council website on Committee agenda's and further information regarding speaking at Committee meetings can be found on the general Council business information pages. The Council's 'news feed' also highlights items to be presented to Cabinet and Council to assist in promoting this information. Details of access to the Council's comments, compliments and complaints scheme will also be made available at the Council Headquarters as well as other Council locations.

We will further promote this information by providing the public speaking engagement guidance information booklets linked within this document as hard copies within the Council Headquarters and other central locations such as Council libraries, Leisure Centres.

As part of this public participation strategy, the Council has created useful engagement guides to enable the public to understand how to submit a question or address a Committee. These guides can be found under the links in section 2 of this strategy.



The Council's accompanying Involvement and Engagement Framework outlines a number of approaches to allow people to be involved and provide feedback before decisions are made. This Framework focuses on four levels of Involvement: Providing Information, Consulting, Engaging and Co-producing and provides a commitment to;

- Strengthen the culture of involvement
- Make sure our Involvement is focused and has a purpose
- Make it easy for everyone to be involved
- Train and enable staff so that they have the skills they need
- Provide feedback to people about how their views have been used
- Evaluate what we have done so that we can improve in future

We provide a range of methods to allow a wide range of views from a wide range of stakeholders, this includes digital online platforms as well as face to face engagement, postal and telephone options. As a Council we value all customer feedback, good or bad, and use this information to both improve and develop services to meet

the needs of both customers and local communities. The Council's Comments, Compliments and Complaints [policy](#) outlines the Council's process for dealing with complaints and other customer feedback such as compliments and comments and explains what we do with the feedback we receive.

If a Member of the Public wished to submit a comment or complaint about a service received by the Council the following options are available:

- Contacting a local County Councillor
- Contacting the member of Cabinet responsible for the service area
- Using the Council's Comments, Compliments and Complaints [procedure](#)
- Contacting the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales at 1 Ffordd Yr Hen Gae, Pencoed, CF35 5LJ. Telephone: 0845 601 0987 or via the website www.ombudsmanwales.org.uk.

Comments or complaints regarding the conduct of a councillor should be directed to the Council's Monitoring Officer (director.legal@rctcbc.gov.uk) or the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.



DUTY 5. ARRANGEMENTS MADE, OR TO BE MADE, FOR THE PURPOSE OF THE COUNCIL'S DUTY IN SECTION 62 OF THE 2011 MEASURE

bringing views of the public to attention of overview and scrutiny committees)

How can I become Involved in Scrutiny?

Scrutiny provides an opportunity for the public (residents, community organisations, partners, etc.), to become involved in Council activities. If you are a resident you may ask questions at Scrutiny meetings. Further information is included in the Scrutiny Participation guide.

Getting involved in scrutiny is one of the best ways to influence decision making at the Council, as Councillors will hear your experiences first hand. There are several ways you can get involved in the work of scrutiny at the Council:

1. Attending a Scrutiny meeting.
2. Contribute views / evidence on issues being examined by scrutiny.
3. Keeping up to date with what's happening in scrutiny.
4. UserVoice Feedback

All scrutiny meetings are open to the public except where exempt information must be discussed. A list of meeting dates and agenda items can be found [here](#). If you would

like to attend a meeting (physically or remotely) simply follow the instructions on the agenda.

Regardless of the thematic Scrutiny Committee and the business going forward, all Scrutiny Committees value the user voice to assist them in undertaking their role. Therefore whenever possible, Committees take forward pre-scrutiny of a decision, which means to scrutinise a policy or service change prior to a decision being made, to ensure the proposed decision is robust before considered by Cabinet. As part of this process, any consultation undertaken is provided to Scrutiny to allow both Scrutiny and then Cabinet / Council the opportunity to hear the UserVoice in respect of the matter. This information and feedback allows Members to gain a better understanding of a potential impact of a decision both positive and negative. Scrutiny will use this information before them to seek further clarity on an item or to propose alternatives that might not have been considered, before all of this information is presented to Cabinet and or Council for the final decision to be made.

Going forward, we will look to utilise the service user voice following public consultations to engage in work programme planning for the appropriate scrutiny committee.

We will also further strengthen the existing arrangements we have in place to evaluate the impact the Council's work has had on service users and the achievement of outcomes, and incorporate this into our performance management processes.

In line with the legislative requirements in respect of petitions scheme, the Council's revised petition scheme will further promote the opportunity for the UserVoice to become part of the democratic process by allowing petitions to be presented to Council, and for this to be referred to the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee for the petition content to be scrutinised in full, if deemed appropriate, subject to the petition adhering to certain criteria.



DUTY 6. BENEFITS OF COUNCILLORS USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO COMMUNICATE WITH LOCAL PEOPLE

Promoting awareness of the benefits of using social media to communicate with residents to councillors

Social media is a powerful tool for Councillors, helping them to engage with communities, raise awareness of community issues, events, or Council initiatives and to seek views and receive feedback.

Social media has changed how politics works. It makes politicians and public institutions more accessible, allows individuals to have their voices heard and helps share ideas or promote campaigns.

By using social media Councillors can:

1. Learn about local issues and concerns.
2. Find the latest news and publications from Rhondda Cynon Taf Council, other Local Authorities, the Welsh Government, and organisations such as the Welsh Local Government Association.
3. Promote their role and what they do on a day-to-day basis.
4. Share information quickly and gain opinions of their constituents.



Many Councillors already use social media; however, Councillors must remember that they are bound by the Code of Conduct as it equally applies to online and social media content. Councillors are personally responsible for the content they publish and must abide by the Code of Conduct when posting information.

Councillors have been provided with social media training opportunities to help with the managing of their Council social media accounts. Councillors 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 is also available.

Infographics to assist Councillors with online activity have been promoted by the Council Business Unit, for Councillors to utilise.

Councillors' social media accounts are listed under each Councillors profile on the Council website to assist with constituents being able to access Councillors.

It should be noted that the use of social media by Councillors and the Council in general is in addition to the other offline methods of engagement and face to face approaches. The Council provides a range of methods to ensure a range of views that include those who may be digitally excluded.

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

The Welsh Local Government Association has provided free guidance for Councillors along with tips and advice in terms of handling on-line abuse.

 www.wlga.wales

 [Handling online abuse](#)

 [Rules of Engagement](#)





SECTION 2

Details of how the public can participate with the Council can be found here.

The following links will provide detailed information and advice to assist you in participating with the Council in respect of Committee meetings, however, a brief overview is also provided below.

- **The Council's Involvement & Engagement Framework 2020-2024**
 [can be found here](#)
- **Council Participation Guide for Residents**
 [can be found here](#)
- **Scrutiny Participation Guide for Residents**
 [can be found here](#)
- **Cabinet Participation Guide for Residents**
 [can be found here](#)
- **Regulatory Committees Participation Guide for residents**
 [can be found here](#)

(N.B. Where Members of the public are not able to access the hyperlinks referenced above hard copies of the documents can be made available by the Democratic Services team, whose contact details are listed at the end of Section 2 of this document.

Participating in meetings of Rhondda Cynon Taf Council.

Full Council meets once a month and details of the calendar of meetings can be found [here](#).

Any resident of or Council taxpayer or non-domestic ratepayer in the County Borough may ask questions of Members of the Executive or the Chairpersons of Committees, or any Member of the Council. You can only submit one question per Council meeting and no more than one question may be asked on behalf of one organisation.

A question may only be asked if notice has been given by delivering it in writing or by electronic email to the Proper Officer not later than 5.00pm at least eight clear working days (not including the date of the meeting) before the date of the meeting.

Each question must give the name and address of the questioner and must specify the Member who will need to respond to the question.

Participating in meetings of Rhondda Cynon Taf Scrutiny Committees.

A schedule of all the Scrutiny Committee meetings for the current municipal year is available on the Council website on the following [link](#).

Anyone who lives or works in Rhondda Cynon Taf and who has registered in advance is entitled to speak at a scheduled meeting of one of the Council's Scrutiny Committees

The number of speakers will be limited to two per agenda item with the discretion for the Chair to increase this limit if they feel it appropriate to do so.

Members of the public wishing to speak must notify Democratic Services by no later than 5.00 p.m. on the penultimate working day preceding the relevant Scrutiny Committee meeting.

Requests must include details of the agenda item of the relevant Scrutiny Committee at which you wish to speak. Applications will be dealt with in the order that they have been received.

At the meeting itself, a participant will have up to a period of 5 minutes for their question and they will be permitted to ask an additional supplementary question, without notice. However, this question must relate to the answer given to the initial question asked. This supplementary question must be within the 5-minute allocation time.

There is a criteria for the types of questions that are permitted and details of which are found in the detailed guidance linked above.

To participate at meetings of Full Council then please see the full guidance provided or please contact us on the contact details listed at the bottom of this section.

A maximum of 10 minutes 'speaking time' will be allocated to each agenda item therefore, individual speakers will be limited to 5 minutes per agenda item

To participate at meetings of Scrutiny Committees then please see the full guidance provided or please contact us on the contact details listed at the bottom of this section.



Participating in meetings of Rhondda Cynon Taf Cabinet Committee.

A schedule of all the Cabinet Committee meetings for the current municipal year is available on the Council website and can be found [here](#).

Anyone who lives or works in Rhondda Cynon Taf has the opportunity to address the Cabinet at a scheduled meeting, subject to the discretion of the Chair, as long as they have registered in advance their intention to speak.

The number of speakers permitted to speak to an agenda item will be at the discretion of the Chair, and where appropriate the Chair may request that one speaker addresses the Cabinet on behalf of a group if a number of requests are made to the same agenda item.

Members of the public wishing to speak must notify the Executive and Regulatory inbox by no later than 5.00 p.m. on the penultimate working day preceding the relevant meeting.

Requests must include details of the agenda item of the relevant Cabinet meeting at which you wish to speak. Applications will be dealt with in the order that they have been received.

All those registered to speak will be advised prior to the meeting, either by email or through the contact telephone number that has been provided, if your request to speak has been accepted.

Individual speakers will have a maximum of 5 minutes to address the Cabinet. If there a number of public speakers on a specific agenda item the Chair, through their discretion may reduce the time allocation to allow for the number of speakers and speakers will be advised of this amendment in advance of the meeting.

To participate at meetings of Cabinet then please see the full guidance provided or please contact us on the contact details listed at the bottom of this section.



Participating in meetings of Rhondda Cynon Taf Planning and Development Committee.

A schedule of Planning and Development Committee meetings for the current municipal year is available via the Council's website [here](#).

The most simple and appropriate way for members of the public and other interested parties to comment on a planning application is by expressing any views they may have in writing. Comments must be submitted within a specified time period, typically 21 days from the date of the consultation letter. This will ensure that any comments received can be fully considered before a decision on the application is made. Further guidance on such can be found [here](#)

Should an application require determination by the Council's Planning and Development Committee, you can address the Committee on the relevant application as it is presented during the meeting.

Alternatively, should you be unable to attend the relevant Planning and Development Committee meeting to address the Committee on an application, a written representation can be submitted.

Applicants, professional advisors or agents, and members of the public are entitled to speak at a scheduled meeting of the Planning and Development Committee, providing they have registered their intention to address the Committee by the specified deadline.

General Information

In respect of all our committee meetings, simultaneous translation facilities can be made available should a participant wish to make their address through the medium of Welsh. If a participant has a disability or any additional needs and require assistance to participate in any of the processes outlined above then support arrangements can be provided. Should a person aged under 16 years of age wish to address any of the Council Committees, arrangements will be made for them to be accompanied by an adult and the relevant GDPR documents will need to be completed.

Non-committee members and members of the public may request the facility to address the committee at their meeting on the business listed. It is kindly asked that such notification is made to planningservices@rctcbc.gov.uk by 5pm, on the penultimate working day preceding the relevant Planning and Development Committee meeting. Alternatively, a person can register an interest to speak via the Council website through the following [link](#).

Public speakers are afforded a maximum of 5 minutes to address the Committee on an application. It should be noted that a further 5 minutes is offered for response by the applicant or their professional advisor to new material or detail introduced by the objector(s) or by their professional advisor(s).

To participate at meetings of Planning and Development Committee then please see the full guidance provided or please contact us on the contact details listed at the bottom of this section.



To participate at any of the above listed meetings of the Council then please see the full guidance which is linked above at the start of section 2. If you have any questions concerning public speaking at a meeting, then please do not hesitate to contact one of our team on the contact details as shown below:-

By writing to: Council Business Unit,
Democratic Services, The Pavilions, Cambrian
Park, Clydach Vale, CF40 2 XX

By telephone: 07385 401845

By email: Councilbusiness@rctcbc.gov.uk



SECTION 3

How will we measure success?

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 places a number of duties on local authorities regarding participation, listed below:

- Promote awareness of the functions the council carries out to local residents, businesses and visitors
- Share information about how to go about becoming an elected member – or councillor – and what the role of councillor involves
- Provide greater access to information about decisions that have been made, or that will be made by the council
- Provide and promote opportunities for residents to provide feedback to the council, including comments, complaints and other types of representations
- Arrangements made to bring the views of the public to the attention of Overview & Scrutiny Committees
- Promote awareness of the benefits of using social media to communicate with residents to councillors

Specifically in relation to the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, we will look to take forward the following actions to improve experiences for Members of the Public and the Council as a whole. The intended impact of such actions are listed below and where appropriate, Measures have also been included to assist us with our aims:

AIM:

Promote awareness of the functions the council carries out to local residents, businesses and visitors:

Existing	Actions to Improve	Impact/Measure
<p>Council Website, where people can access agendas, minutes and decisions – Committees</p>	<p>Reviewing the Council webpages to ensure they are engaging and are updated as and when necessary. Utilising the promotional banner to display information regarding special meetings of Council that may be of general interest. i.e Leader’s Debate / Large Planning applications</p>	<p>Impact - Members of the Public feel better informed due to the information made available and ease of access to obtain the information.</p>
<p>Corporate Plan and associated strategies that are publicly available</p>	<p>New Corporate Plan for 2024, will be informed by residents and stakeholder priorities</p>	<p>Impact - Publish Corporate Plan 2024, shaped by residents and stakeholders.</p>
<p>Live streaming of Council meetings</p>	<p>Taking forward live streaming of Hybrid meetings that are conducted within the Council</p>	<p>Measure - No. of views/ attendance</p>
<p>Let’s Talk RCT Engagement website provides an online platform to engage with the public on key projects</p>	<p>Evaluate the site annually and continue to build and promote the use of the site for digital engagement</p>	<p>No. of projects and engagement levels</p>

AIM:

Share information about how to go about becoming an elected member – or councillor – and what the role of councillor involves

Existing	Actions to Improve	Impact/Measure
Local Democracy Week – The role of the councillor promoted through the Council’s social media platforms / Attendance at the Council’s local Job Fair and face to face engagement whenever possible	Take forward a further campaign during Local Democracy Week	Impact - The public have a better understanding of the role of a Councillor and how they can potentially become a future candidate
Dedicated ‘Becoming a Councillor’ section on the Council Website, including videos (with Members experiences of the role) and details of remuneration and allowance entitlement.	To review the website to ensure accuracy of information – utilising the ideas of Newly Elected Members as to what additional information would be helpful	Impact - The public have a better understanding of the role of a Councillor and how they can potentially become a future candidate.
Promotion of training and support provision to equip Councillors to undertake their role	To promote the provisions of support on the Council’s website	Impact - Prospective candidates are able to access information to assist them in their knowledge of the support opportunities available to Councillors to assist them in their roles.
Bilingual provisions	To continue to provide bilingual opportunities and support arrangements for all Elected Members including provisions of materials / translation facilities / training opportunities	Impact - To support all Members with their preferred language choice and to provide learning opportunities to all Members in respect of the Welsh language.

AIM:

Provide greater access to information about decisions that have been made, or that will be made by the council

Existing	Actions to Improve	Impact/Measure
Council Website – Decision Notices / Minutes / Key Delegated Decisions / Cabinet Member Decisions / Leaders Debate.	Ensuring the website is easily navigated to in respect of the decision-making arrangements within the Authority	Measure - Take forward meeting Decision Notices following every Committee of the Council. Impact – Greater transparency and access to information.
Live streaming of Council meetings	Taking forward live streaming of Hybrid meetings that are conducted within the Council	Measure - No. of views/attendance
Forward Work Programmes	Ensuring Forward Work Programmes add value to the scrutiny process and are outcomes based focussed.	Measure - No. of items taken on the work programme versus the no. of items actually considered.
Annual Reports	Ensuring Annual reports are provided for some of the main Committees of the Council to provide context and information about the work undertaken	Measure - Publication of Reports

AIM:

Provide and promote opportunities for residents to provide feedback to the council, including comments, complaints and other types of representations

Existing	Actions to Improve	Impact/Measure
<p>Consultation – The Council consults on all service change and policy development and promotes the process, with the aim of obtaining a wide range of feedback from a wide range of stakeholders</p>	<p>Continue the approach, ensuring the hard to reach and digitally excluded groups are included.</p>	<p>Measure - No. of consultations, engagement figures</p>
<p>Council Website gives people the opportunity to provide feedback</p>	<p>Increase prominence/ease of access to feedback portal</p>	<p>Measure - No. of comments, complaints, compliments</p>
<p>Petition Scheme</p>	<p>The Council are looking to review their current petitions scheme to promote the tool of engagement and ensure accountability and transparency</p>	<p>Measure - Increased engagement in the scheme</p>
<p>Attending and speaking at a Committee meeting – Cabinet / Council / Planning</p>	<p>Webcast of Meetings showing Public engagement at meetings. Taking forward an area on the Council webpages for ‘involvement’</p>	<p>Measure - Number of residents attending and engaging at Committee meetings.</p>

AIM:

Arrangements made to bring the views of the public to the attention of Overview & Scrutiny Committees

Existing	Actions to Improve	Impact/Measure
Attending and speaking at a Scrutiny Committee	Continue to promote the availability of this opportunity through the publication of the Scrutiny Participation Guide for Residents	Measure - Number of residents attending and engaging with the scrutiny process
Suggest a topic for scrutiny to consider on its forward work programmes via the dedicated scrutiny mailbox	Continue the current approach of publishing/updating the scrutiny work programmes to provide transparency and forward planning	Measure - Public engagement with the forward work programmes
Use of Social Media platforms to share information about Scrutiny Committees and encourage participation	Develop plans to use social media to promote and share information. Investigate the best avenues to facilitate engagement with the public	Measure - Interaction/comments from the public
View the live streaming of scrutiny committees	Continue to publish the link to the council webcasting pages on the scrutiny committee agendas	Measure - Number of views on the council webcasting pages

Aim:

Promote awareness of the benefits of using social media to communicate with residents to councillors

Existing	Actions to Improve	Impact/Measure
Comprehensive Member Induction programme/ training (and ongoing training) Which is strengthened through the Members Personal Development Reviews (PDR's) process.	Taking forward refresher training to Elected Members as and when requested and asking Members specifically about Social media usage and training opportunities at PDR reviews	Measure - No. of Members engaging in training and feeling confident in taking forward a social media presence Impact – Members can learn of the benefits of social media through PDR process
Availability of Infographics to assist Members with communication	Surveying Members on the infographics needed	Measure - No. of Members engaging with the provision
Social media contact details e.g. Twitter promoted on each Member's profile page on the council website	Survey Members for Useful contact details including social media accounts	Measure - Increased promotion of engagement details

GLOSSARY

Attest	To be a witness to something
Ballot Box	A sealed box that votes are put into on an election day
Budget	The Budget is an amount of money that the Council can spend on delivering services (schools, social care, collecting rubbish etc) each year. The budget comes from money raised from Council tax and from Government funding
Budget and Policy Framework	A name for all the Council policies that must be used when making any decisions
Cabinet	The Cabinet is a smaller group of Councillors chosen by the Council Leader to lead Council work and decisions. They each have a set area of responsibility.
Candidate	Anyone who is standing for election is called a candidate
Chief Executive & Directors	The Chief Executive is in charge of all RCT staff (not elected Councillors). The Directors are in charge of specific parts of RCT County Borough Council.
Code of Conduct	A set of rules that describe how Councillors are expected to behave in different parts of their job as a Councillor
Committees	Smaller groups of Councillors who meet regularly to discuss specific issues
Constitution	A written legal document that guides the council on its decision making processes
Council	The full group of elected Councillors who make decisions.
Senior Leadership Team	The Chief Executive and Directors of RCT who are in charge of different parts of Council work and services
Councillor Induction Programme	The training that all Councillors take part in to learn how to be a Councillor
Councillors	Elected representatives from each part of the Rhondda, Cynon and Taf area
Critical Friend	A person or group of people who help make sure that work is being done properly and within the rules
Democratic Services	A group of staff who work to make sure that Councillors have the support they need, and who help carry out meetings and training of Councillors
Democratically accountable	Being held responsible for your work by the people who can vote for you in elections
Digital devices and telephony provision	The computers, internet and phones that are needed for Council work
Discretion and decision	This means it is only the Leader's choice, not a group decision
Duties	The responsibilities and work that a person must do

Elected Members	Another name for Councillors
Electoral Wards	The smaller local areas and communities in RCT that vote for local Councillors
Executive Functions	Decisions that can be made by individuals or groups such as Cabinet, Committees or officers
Fluid work programme	A list of topics that need to be considered by Committees and that can change over time
Functions	The different types of work being done
Hybrid meetings	Meetings that people can take part in online and in person
In confidence	Privately
Infographics	Pictures and graphs that explain information
Initiatives	New ideas and plans
Job Share	Two or more people share the work of one full-time job
Key Decisions	High-level or very important decisions that affect a lot of other decisions
Making representations	Speaking to and giving information or opinion to the Council
Municipal year	This runs from the date following the Councils Annual General Meeting until the next Annual General meeting. The Annual General Meetings are usually held in May
Officer Delegated Decisions	Decisions that are made by RCT staff rather than by Councillors
Officers	People who work for RCT/Members of staff
Portfolio	The list of work areas that a group is responsible for
Pre-decision scrutiny	Examination of information and evidence by the Scrutiny Committee before a decision is made by an officer or Cabinet
Reasonable adjustments	Changes that can be made to make sure everyone can access and do a job, attend a meeting and so on, taking into account any disability or other needs they have
Remuneration	Money that is paid in return for work or to cover costs
Returning Councillors	Councillors who have been re-elected
Salary	An annual sum which is usually paid monthly in exchange for doing a job
Scheme of Delegation	A plan for who is responsible for different parts of work given to them
Subsistence	Money paid for food, drinks, travel and other essential costs whilst working
Surgeries	Times when members of the public can visit their Councillor in a public place to discuss issues in their communities
Terms of reference	The agreed plan of what the group is for and how they will do their work
Constituents	People who live in the area and vote for Councillors

CONTACT US:

General Enquiries:

01443 425005

Email:

CustomerServices@rctcbc.gov.uk

Web:

www.rctcbc.gov.uk/Contactus



RHONDDA CYNON TAF



Consultation Report
June 2023

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STRATEGY DRAFT



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This report presents the findings of the consultation on Rhondda Cynon Taf Council's Public Participation Strategy.
- The consultation was conducted in-house. The consultation period ran from the 17th May until the 16th June 2023.
- Section 40 of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 places a duty on each Principal Council to prepare and publish a Public Participation Strategy. In developing its Public Participation Strategy a council must consult people who live, work or study in the council's area and anyone else it thinks appropriate.
- The Draft RCT Public Participation Strategy and accompanying action plan that was put out to consultation, sets out how we will talk and listen with all of those who live in Rhondda Cynon Taf. This means engaging and consulting about the way we do things, promoting awareness of how people can become a member of the Council and making sure that local people can easily give us their views about a decision before, and after, it is made.
- The majority of respondents agreed that each of the themes would encourage local people to participate in the Council's decision making.
 - 88% agree with Promoting awareness of the functions the council carries out to local residents, businesses and visitors.
 - 75% agree with Sharing information about how to go about becoming an elected member – or Councillor – and what the role of Councillor involves.
 - 88% agree with Providing greater access to information about decisions that have been made, or that will be made by the council.
 - 94% agree with Providing and promoting opportunities for residents to provide feedback to the council, including comments, complaints and other types of representations.
 - 84% agree with Arrangements made to bring the views of the public to the attention of Overview & Scrutiny Committees.
 - 72% agree with Promoting awareness of the benefits of using social media to communicate with residents to Councillors.
- Respondents were asked if there was anything else that they thought should be included in the Draft Public Strategy. The comments suggested that the Strategy could be more accessible and more clearly communicated. There were calls for feedback mechanisms to be improved and providing evidence of views being taken into account in Council decisions. There were concerns that the use of social media for engagement may exclude certain sections of the community and there must be a range of methods used, in addition to online.
- 42% of respondents said that the draft Public Participation Strategy assisted in their understanding of the local democratic process and encouraged them to get involved, with 26% unsure. A number of comments were made about the need to

make the Strategy easier to read, with suggestions to improve the presentation, including case studies and graphics.

- A number of detailed suggestions on the text and layout of the document were also suggested and these will be considered in the development of the final Strategy.
- Feedback from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee is provided in section 5.
- Overall, 70 responses were received to the consultation survey.

DRAFT

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of the consultation on Rhondda Cynon Taf Council's Public Participation Strategy.
- 1.2 Section 2 outlines some brief background to the consultation process
- 1.3 Section 3 details the methodology.
- 1.4 Section 4 provides the results of the survey.
- 1.5 Section 5 provides some of the key questions to arise from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

DRAFT

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Section 40 of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 places a duty on each Principal Council to prepare and publish a Public Participation Strategy
- 2.2 The Public Participation Strategy needs to complement the Council's Consultation & Engagement Strategy. The Strategy is required to promote:
- A. The Principal Council's functions.
 - B. How to become a Member (Councillor) of the Principal Council, and what membership (Being a Councillor) entails.
 - C. Accessing information about decisions made, or to be made, by the Principal Council.
 - D. Making representations to the Principal Council about a decision before, and after, it is made.
 - E. Arrangements made, or to be made, for the purpose of the Council's duty in section 62 of the 2011 Measure (bringing views of the public to attention of overview and scrutiny committees).
 - F. Benefits of Councillors using social media to communicate with local people.
- 2.3 In developing its Public Participation Strategy a council must consult people who live, work or study in the council's area and anyone else it thinks appropriate.
- 2.4 Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC values the contribution that local people can make to develop and evaluate Council services that will work well for us all. The Draft RCT Public Participation Strategy and accompanying action plan that was put out to consultation, sets out how we will talk and listen with all of those who live in Rhondda Cynon Taf. This means engaging and consulting about the way we do things, promoting awareness of how people can become a member of the Council and making sure that local people can easily give us their views about a decision before, and after, it is made.
- 2.5 This Draft RCT Public Participation Strategy details how the Council aims to promote the requirements set out in section 2.2 above.
- 2.6 The Strategy seeks to make it easier for everybody in Rhondda Cynon Taf to have a voice in our decision-making process, in-line with the requirements of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021. As part of fulfilling these statutory requirements we want to build and maintain relationships with our communities, and we want to ensure that all engagement undertaken by the Council is effective, efficient and consistent.

3. METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The Public Participation Strategy consultation was conducted in-house and ran from the 17th May and ended on the 16th June 2023. This section presents the methodology which was utilised to promote and collect the data.
- 3.2 The consultation used an online survey which was built using Snap XMP. The survey aimed to gain feedback on the draft strategy.
- 3.3 To ensure wide outreach and involvement of the wider community the consultation was promoted on the Councils online consultation webpage to encourage engagement. An email was also sent to key stakeholders to promote the consultation and encourage participation in the survey, and RCT council staff were also asked to take part.
- 3.4 Respondents were encouraged to write in using a dedicated email address consultation@rctcbc.gov.uk, in order to allow them to share their views.
- 3.5 A telephone consultation option was in place, through the Council's contact centre. This option allows people to discuss their views or request consultation materials. Individual call backs were available on request and a consultation Freepost address was available for postal responses.
- 3.6 The proposals were presented and discussed at the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 24th May 2023.
- 3.7 Overall, 70 survey responses were received to the consultation.

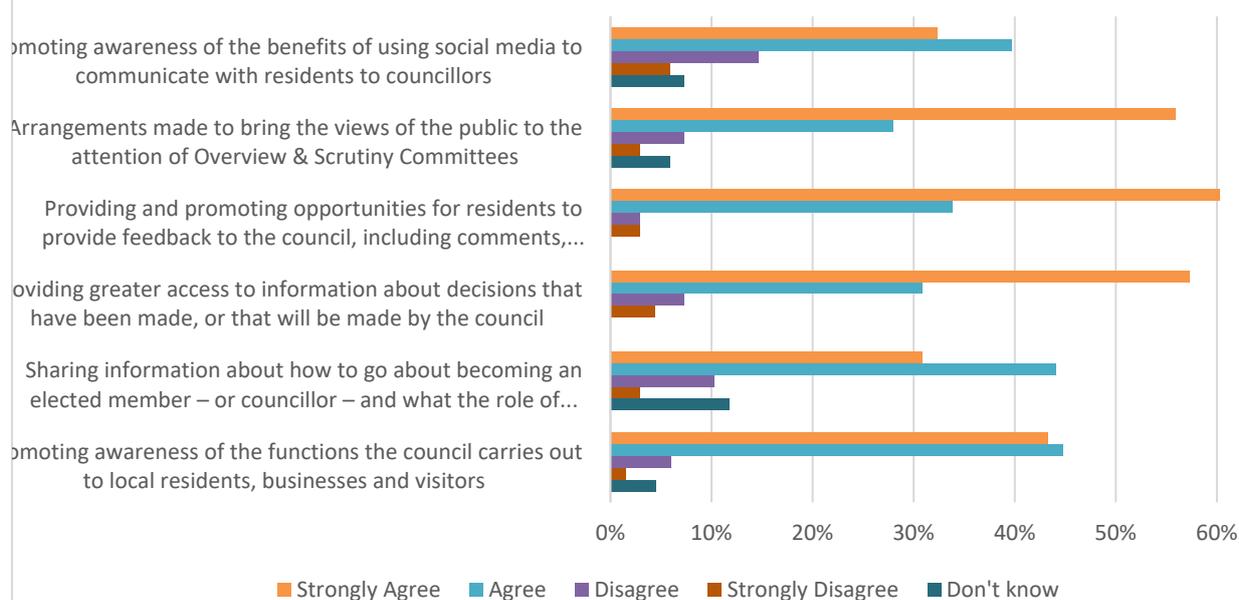
4 Questionnaire Results

- 4.1 The following section outlines the results from the questionnaire, which received 70 responses.
- 4.2 The Draft Participation Strategy states 6 themes that Council's should follow to meet the requirements of the duty outlined in the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021.
- 4.3 The table and graph overleaf outlines the levels of agreement with each of the 6 themes. As seen the majority of respondents agreed that each of the themes would encourage local people to participate in the Council's decision making.

In terms of encouraging local people to participate in the Council's decision making we can see that;

- 88% agree with Promoting awareness of the functions the council carries out to local residents, businesses and visitors.
- 75% agree with Sharing information about how to go about becoming an Elected Member – or Councillor – and what the role of Councillor involves.
- 88% agree with Providing greater access to information about decisions that have been made, or that will be made by the council.
- 94% agree with Providing and promoting opportunities for residents to provide feedback to the council, including comments, complaints and other types of representations.
- 84% agree with Arrangements made to bring the views of the public to the attention of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
- 72% agree with Promoting awareness of the benefits of using social media to communicate with residents to Councillors.

To what extent do you agree that the following will encourage local people to participate in the Council's decision making?



To what extent do you agree that the following will encourage local people to participate in the Council's decision making					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Promoting awareness of the functions the council carries out to local residents, businesses and visitors	43%	45%	6%	1%	4%
Sharing information about how to go about becoming an elected member – or councillor – and what the role of councillor involves	31%	44%	10%	3%	12%
Providing greater access to information about decisions that have been made, or that will be made by the council	57%	31%	7%	4%	0%
Providing and promoting opportunities for residents to provide feedback to the council, including comments, complaints and other types of representations	60%	34%	3%	3%	0%
Arrangements made to bring the views of the public to the attention of Overview & Scrutiny Committees	56%	28%	7%	3%	6%
Promoting awareness of the benefits of using social media to communicate with residents to councillors	32%	40%	15%	6%	7%

- 4.4 Respondents were asked if there was anything else that they thought should be included in the Draft Public Strategy. The following are a selection of the comments received;

Communication/Accessibility

“The channels of communication used and the vocabulary used could be made more appropriate and accessible.”

“The main point here for me is to ensure all parties who would be impacted by council decisions are given the opportunity to participate in the process. Communication is key to successful outcomes”

Feedback/Evidence

“Easier access to feedback”

“Providing evidence that the public are listened to, especially once you obtain better engagement.”

“Provision of detailed feedback from consultation to the consultees”

“Council to be transparent in all its decisions so as the public know how you are going to implement whatever the decision is!”

Councillor information

“Details of what councillors earn, what expenses they are paid and what they undertake, in easy access, or a link advertised on facebook”

Social Media

“Clarity on how people can engage fully if they do not want to use social media”

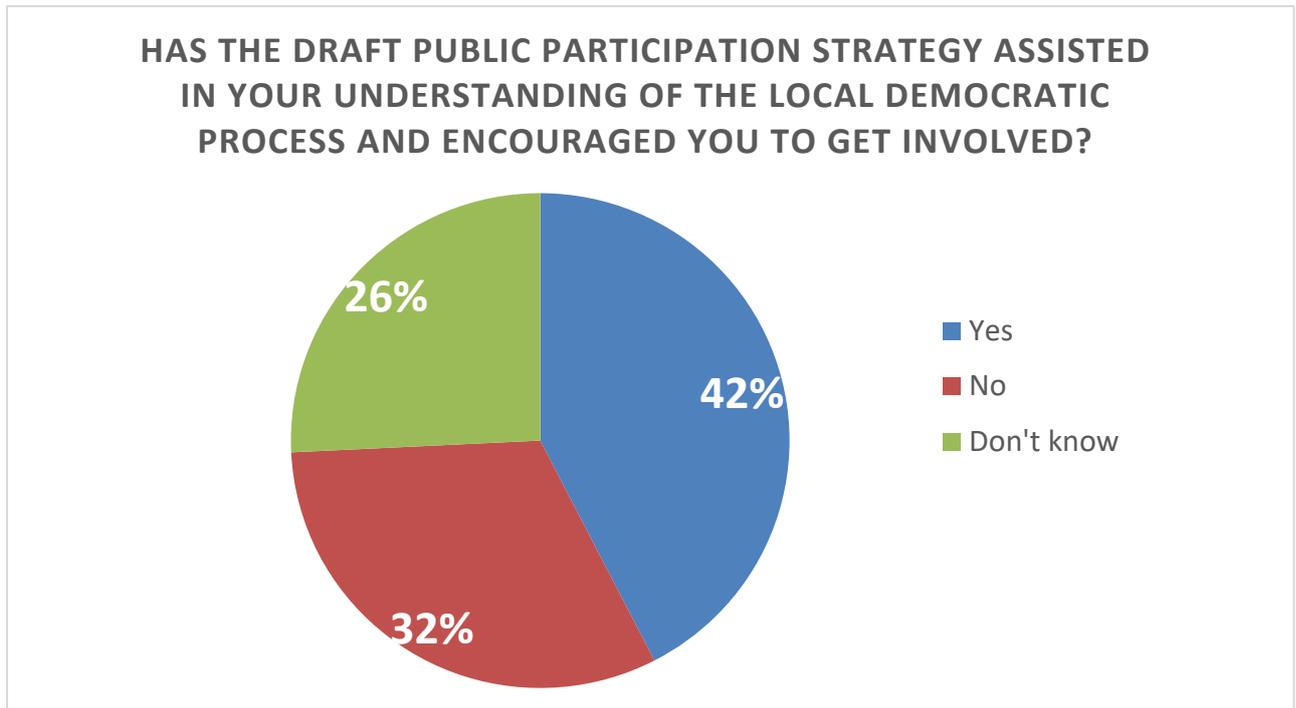
“It's important to remember that many people - older people in particular - are digitally excluded for a host of reasons. It's important that online means of communication don't come at the expense of the digitally excluding otherwise some very important voices won't be heard that have a lot to say and a lot to lose through digital exclusion.”

“Ensure there are a variety of comms models in place to make sure no one is left behind. We know older people for instance struggle with social media. There are also a lot of people whose first language isn't English.....”

Third Sector

“.....If it's truly about participation then maybe working with the third sector to better represent people and hear people's views would be a good starting point....”

- 4.5 42% of respondents said that the draft Public Participation Strategy assisted in their understanding of the local democratic process and encouraged them to get involved, with 26% unsure.



- 4.6 A number of comments were made about the need to make the Strategy easier to read, with suggestions to improve the presentation, including case studies and graphics.

“It was a really helpful, comprehensive document. But, as below, it might benefit from some revision and changes to presentation to make it less ‘Council Report’ like and more interesting and engaging for the intended readers”

- 4.7 Respondents were asked if they had any other comments to make on the Draft Participation Strategy. In addition to detailed suggestions on the text and layout of the document (which will be considered in the development of the final Strategy), the following are a selection of comments received;

Young people

“The voice of children and young people is not being heard. I welcome this initiative in that it may open the dialogue and widen the variety of voice that the Council can hear.”

Resources

“This is all well and good some of the suggestions made, but has the Council got the resources of implementing them? What would be deemed a success? Are you going to continually monitor the progression?.....”

Plain English

“Information surrounding projects should be simpler and more concise, facts often buried in the technical aspects and takes days of digging. At least clearer summaries, a proper overview not just principals should be clear. My experience is that council ataff need coaching in writing information for the public

About you

4.8 Under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duties, the Council has a legal duty to look at how its decisions impact on people because they may have particular characteristics. Respondents were asked how the proposals affect you because of?:

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Ethnicity
4. Disability
5. Sexuality
6. Religion / belief
7. Gender identity
8. Relationship status
9. Pregnancy
10. Preferred language

The following are a selection of the comments received.

Age

“Proposals are ageist. Many older people do not use, know how to use or do not want to use social media so why encourage communication with council and Councillors by social media?”

“Age - because of Digital Exclusion - there needs to be a bigger focus on maintaining other engagement methods that do not rely on access to an electronic device”.

“As working adult and taxpayer council meetings etc are more often than not during the general working hours.

Other

“Perhaps there should be more representation, training and better understanding of the needs of minority groups living in the locality. Please come into communities and spend time with alongside people instead of instigating additional and unwieldy processes”

“They don't affect me personally but, more generally, there are opportunities unseized in each of these areas.”

- 4.9 With regards to the proposals, and the impact it may have, respondents were asked how they could impact opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh Language (Positive, Negative or Neutral) and if, in any way, it treats the Welsh Language less favourably than the English Language? How neutral effects could become positive, how positive effects could be increased, or negative effects be decreased?

In addition to a number of comments suggesting that there is too much emphasis on the Welsh Language. The following are a selection of the comments received;

“As long as the process is available in the Welsh language then there would be no negative, only positive effects”

“Enabling us to support Welsh speaking is always a positive. not having that barrier can help and being able to have someone who could offer a translation service would really help so many organisations”

“You need to indicate that you wish to speak in Welsh before coming to a meeting. Someone whose first language is Welsh might overlook that requirement, it could also be seen as an extra hurdle to jump through”

The comments received for the above 2 questions have been made available to officers for the development of the associated impact assessments.

5 Feedback from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

- 5.1 The full minutes of the meeting and a webcast are shown [here](#) and will be included as part of the review of the Draft Strategy, along with the consultation responses received.
- 5.2 The key points/questions raised included;
- A Member referred to Section 3 of the report and asked how success will be measured and what are the benchmarks to ensure targets are being met.
 - A Member commented on the accessibility of the Strategy and recommended an easy-read version to be made available for the public which would be more engaging and easier to understand.
 - A Member asked if there was more we could do to engage the public in the Scrutiny process to ensure as many people as possible are aware that the Scrutiny meetings are taking place.
 - A Member asked what work has been undertaken to understand the challenge of the general understanding from the public of the democratic process of the Council and are we doing enough work with young people.
 - The Chairperson asked what engagement opportunities the Council provides to the public to allow them to engage with the Council to ensure engagement and transparency is available to all our residents.
 - Members commented on the use of Councillors using their social media pages to engage with the public and commented that some members aren't as confident to use the platform as others due to the potential negative impacts this platform can have.
 - A Member recommended including the customer services contact details in the "contact us" section in the Strategy and for this to also be reflected in the easy read document when developed.

RESOLVED: The Overview and Scrutiny Committee authorised the Service Director Democratic Services and Communications to take forward Members comments and reflect in the Draft Public Participation Strategy prior to its approval at Council.



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023 - 2024

COUNCIL

25TH OCTOBER 2023

JOINT REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR – DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATION AND DIRECTOR OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

THE POLITICAL BALANCE OF THE COUNCIL, APPOINTMENT OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE CHAIR AND ALLOCATION OF NOTICES OF MOTION

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Members of the outcome of the review of the Political Balance of the Council following the formation of a new political group known as the 'Independent Group', and the consequential effect upon committee membership.
- 1.2 In doing so, Council is provided with the opportunity to review the allocation of Notices of Motion.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the scheme for the allocation of seats to the different political groups and bodies to which Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 applies, as detailed in the Appendix to the report, be adopted;
- 2.2 That the Service Director – Democratic Services & Communication be authorised to make appointments to politically balanced bodies upon receipt by him of notification of the wishes of the political groups subject to any subsequent requests for amendment of membership of Committees being referred to Council;
- 2.3 To seek Council's instruction in respect of the recommendation of the Statutory 'Head of Democratic Services' to amend the representation of members upon the Council's Democratic Services Committee (as set out in table B);

- 2.5 To seek Council's instruction as to whether the allocation of Notices of Motion for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2023 – 2024 is to be amended.

3. POLITICAL BALANCE

- 3.1 Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 makes provisions for securing the political balance on certain relevant authorities, committees and bodies.
- 3.2 I have received notification of the formation of a new political group known as the 'Independent Group', consisting of two Members previously allocated to the RCT Independent Group, namely Councillors Will Jones (Group Leader) and Wayne Owen (Group Deputy Leader), which necessitated a review of the political balance of the Council.
- 3.3 Following the review I would inform Members that the appointment of the available seats is as set out in Tables A, B and C of Appendix 1 to this report.
- 3.4 Amendments arising from this change of the political balance include the requirement for Council to determine how to proceed with representation upon the Democratic Service in line with the committee membership size determined by full Council in May 2022 (17 members) and reaffirmed by Council at its AGM in May 2023. Members are referred to section 4 of this report in respect of this matter.
- 3.5 Other specific changes include a change in representation upon the Council Pensions Committee to include 4 Labour and 1 Conservative member.
- 3.6 There is also a consequential revision to the membership of the Constitution Committee to include 6 Labour, 1 Plaid Cymru and 1 Independent Group.
- 3.7 Finally, membership of the Licensing Committee would also be revised to include 9 Labour, 1 Plaid Cymru and 1 RCT Independent Group members.
- 3.8 Appointments to the Committees will be made following notification given to me by each political group as to their nominations for appointments to the respective Committees. It has been previous practice for power to be delegated to the Proper Officer (The Head of Democratic Services) to accept and make the appointments notified to me by the political groups. However, in the case of subsequent requests for amendments to the membership of Committees they should be the subject of a report to full Council.

4. REPRESENTATION UPON THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

- 4.1 At its Annual General meeting in May 2022, Council recognised the importance of enabling all political groups to be represented upon the Democratic Services Committee.
- 4.2 Members noted the statutory role of the committee in ensuring all non-executive members are effectively supported to fulfil their role and for these reasons supported the importance of cross-party representative in respect of the areas which rest with this committee.
- 4.3 Members will note that, in accordance with the revised political balance, should the number of available seats remain at 17 for the Democratic Services Committee, the Conservative Group and the newly formed Independent Group would have one seat allocated between them. In this circumstance it was be matter for Council to determine, by a majority vote, which of these two groups would be allocated that role.
- 4.4 To enable all political groups to play a role in determining matters relating to resources and support for non-executive members, **as the Statutory Head of Democratic Services, I am recommending that the representation upon this committee be extended to 21**, which will enable all political groups to be represented with both the Conservative Group and Independent Group having one seat each on this committee (as set out in Table C). ultimately, it is however the duty of Council to determine the representation on its Democratic Services Committee,
- 4.5 I would also inform Members that the formation of a new political group **could** have a consequential effect on the appointment of the Chair of the Democratic Services Committee. As Councillor Will Jones (formerly a member of the RCT Independent Group) was appointed as Chair of the Committee at the AGM on the 10th May 2023. It is dependent on members determination on the above proposal (as recommended at 4.4), in respect of the Committees numbers or which group should be represented based upon the current committee size, whether or not there would be a requirement for Council to appoint a new Chair of the Democratic Services Committee.
- 4.6 Members are advised that the Democratic Services Committee Chair must be appointed from a political group which does not form part of the Council's Executive arrangements.

5. ALLOCATION OF NOTICES OF MOTION

- 5.1 At the Council's AGM on the 10th May 2023, and in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10.2(a), Council allocated the 20 Notices of Motion for Municipal Year 2023 - 2024

- 5.2 In light of the change to political balance Members' instructions are now sought as to whether the allocation of Notices of Motion for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2023 – 2024 is to be amended to include the new political group.

APPENDIX 1**POLITICAL BALANCE 2023/24****TABLE A**

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Labour</i>	<i>Plaid Cymru</i>	<i>RCT Ind</i>	<i>Conservative</i>	<i>Independent</i>
Members	75	59	8	4	2	2
Political Balance		78.67	10.67	5.33	2.67	2.67
Committee	<i>Available Seats</i>	<i>Labour</i>	<i>Plaid Cymru</i>	<i>RCT Ind</i>	<i>Conservative</i>	<i>Independents</i>
Planning & Development	11	9	1	1	0	0
Licensing	11	9	1	1	0	0
Constitution	8	6	1	0	0	1
Appointments	5	4	1	0	0	0
Pensions	5	4	0	0	1	0
Appeals	5	4	1	0	0	0
Total Seats	45	36	5	2	1	1

TABLE B**INDIVIDUAL COMMITTEES SUBJECT TO POLITICAL BALANCE**

Committee	Available Seats	Labour	Plaid Cymru	RCT Ind	Conservative	Independent
Overview & Scrutiny	14	11	2	1	0	0
Education & Inclusion	14	11	2	1	0	0
Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity	14	11	2	1	0	0
Community Services	14	11	2	1	0	0
Democratic Services	PROPOSED AT 21	16	2	1	1	1
Governance & Audit Committee	6	5	1	0	0	0

TABLE C

TABLE TO CALCULATE POLITICAL BALANCE FOR INDIVIDUAL COMMITTEES

Total Seats	Labour	Plaid	RCT Ind	Conservative	Independent
3	3	0	0	0	0
4	3	1	0	0	0
5	4	1	0	0	0
6	5	1	0	0	0
7	6	1	0	0	0
8	6	1	1	0	0
9	7	1	1	0	0
10	8	1	1	0	0
11	9	1	1	0	0
12	10	1	1	0	0
13	10	2	1	0	0
14	11	2	1	0	0
15	12	2	1	0	0
16	13	2	1	0	0
17	13	2	1	*	*
18	14	2	1	*	*
19	15	2	1	*	*
20	16	2	1	*	*
21	16	2	1	1	1
22	17	2	1	1	1
23	18	2	1	1	1
24	19	2	1	1	1
25	20	3	1	*	*

* 1 seat to be allocated between the two Groups

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

as amended by

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

COUNCIL

25th OCTOBER 2023

JOINT REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR – DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATION AND DIRECTOR OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

REPORT

The Political Balance of the Council, Appointment of Democratic Services Committee Chair and Allocation of Notices of Motion

Freestanding matter

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL

25th OCTOBER 2023

CHANGE TO MEMBERSHIP

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATION

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Members of the need to appoint to the position of Vice Chair on the Education & Inclusion Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the 2023/24 municipal year.
- 1.2 To provide authority to the Service Director Democratic Services & Communication to make any consequential appointment changes to scrutiny committee membership.

2. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council:

- 2.1 Nominate a member to the role of Vice-Chair of the Education & Inclusion Scrutiny Committee; and
- 2.2 Subject to the above, authorise the Service Director Democratic Services & Communication to make any consequential membership changes, following receipt of nominations from the appropriate political group.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To seek nominations for the role of Vice-Chair of the Education & Inclusion Scrutiny Committee; and
- 3.2 The potential need to change the membership of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee as a politically balanced committee.

4. CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP

- 4.1 In accordance with the decision taken, ([Minute No.7 \(5\)](#) of the Council meeting held on the 10th May 2023 refers) I have received notification that Councillor K Webb wishes to stand down from her role as Vice Chair of the Education & Inclusion Scrutiny Committee. As a result of

this, there is a need to appoint a Vice-Chair to the Education & Inclusion Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the 2023/24 Municipal Year.

4.2 Members will recall that at its Annual General Meeting (AGM) in 2022, Council considered and agreed the proposed changes to the Council's Scrutiny arrangements which set out that "***the Chairs & Vice Chairs of the other three Scrutiny Committees should form part of the membership of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee***"

4.3 In view of 4.2 and as a direct result of the need for Council to appoint a Vice Chair to the Education & Inclusion Scrutiny Committee, there is also a requirement for the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to authorise the resulting change to its membership at its earliest opportunity.

4.4 Council is advised that the Labour Group has indicated that Councillor K Webb will remain a member of the Education & Inclusion Scrutiny Committee.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Members are encouraged as part of the Local Government & Elections Act Wales, to promote diversity in representations, particularly when determining senior roles.

6. CONSULTATION/INVOLVEMENT

6.1 There are no consultation implications aligned to this report.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 As in accordance with the Council's Scrutiny Committee membership requirements – Council Constitution.

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

9.1 The work of scrutiny encompasses all of the Council's Corporate Plan objectives, therefore it is important to ensure the Committees membership is complete and accurate to undertake such scrutiny.

10. CONCLUSION

10.1 There are a number of positions which subsequently require Council's direction and this report seeks to regularise the Scrutiny committee

arrangements following the resignation of a member from their Vice Chair role.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee – Not applicable

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL

25th OCTOBER 2023

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

CHANGE OF MEMBERSHIP

Background Papers

Freestanding Matter



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023-2024

COUNCIL

25th OCTOBER 2023

RE-APPOINTMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT MEMBER OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To consider re-appointing one of the Independent Members of the Standards Committee for a further term.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 Members are recommended to re-appoint Mr. John Thomas as an Independent Member of the Standards Committee for a period of four years from 1st December 2023.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council resolved at its meeting on 14 November 2001, that the total number of Members on the Standards Committee would be six. Regulations prescribe that if the membership of a Standards Committee is even, then half of the Members must be Independent Members. One of the Independent Members must be Chair of the Standards Committee. The term of office of the Independent Members is six years with provision for re-appointment for one further term of four years.
- 3.2 The term of office of one of the Independent Members on the Standards Committee, namely, Mr. John Thomas, expires on 30th November 2023. During his term in office, Mr. Thomas has built up considerable experience and in order to maintain continuity on the Standards Committee, Mr. Thomas has agreed, subject to Council approval, to his term of office being extended for a further period of four years.

4. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 4.1 There are no specific equality and diversity implications emanating from this report.

5. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no Welsh language implications arising as a result of the recommendations in this report.

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The relevant Independent Member has been consulted and has agreed to continue for a further term.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Remuneration of Independent Members is determined by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales in their annual reports. Costs attributable to the Member Remuneration and Allowances Scheme are considered as part of the annual budget setting process.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 8.1 The Standards Committee (Wales) Regulations 2001 set out the provisions as to the appointment of Independent Members and Community Council Members to the Standards Committee. The proposed process set out in the report is in accordance with those regulations.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The term of office of one of the Independent Members on the Standards Committee, namely, Mr. John Thomas, is due to expire and Council is asked to consider extending his term of office for a further period of four years.

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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BACKGROUND PAPERS

**RE-APPOINTMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT MEMBER OF THE
STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

Freestanding Matter

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL

25th OCTOBER 2023

STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATION.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Council with the Standards Committee Annual Report for the Municipal Year 2022/23.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Council:

- 2.1 Note the Annual Report for the Standards Committee, (which is attached as Appendix 1 to the report).

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The need to provide Council with an update in respect of the work of the Standards Committees during the Municipal Year 2022/23.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The purpose of the annual report is to provide a summary of the role and work undertaken by the Standards Committee throughout the Municipal Year and for this to be reported to Council.
- 4.2 The achievements listed in the Annual Report reflect the number of matters considered by the Committee over the last year. Notable examples are provided as to how the Standards Committee has worked to continue to promote high standards of conduct within the Council.
- 4.3 The Standards Committee Annual Report for the Municipal Year 2022/23 is attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

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 There is no consultation required for this report. Consultation on the report has been undertaken with the Chair, Vice Chair and Committee members of the Standards 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 Committees of the Council encompasses all of the Council's 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 each of the Committees' Terms of Reference.

10. CONCLUSION

10.1 The Standards Annual report presents an opportunity to provide an overview of its work during 2022-23 municipal year.

Standards Committee

Annual Report 2022-2023



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

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Items Considered During The 2022-2023 Municipal Year



Mr Dave Bowen

FOREWORD

Chair of the Standards Committee

As the newly elected Chair of the Standards Committee, I am pleased to present the Standards Committee Annual Report to provide an overview of its work during 2022-23 municipal year in continuing to promote high standards of conduct within the Council.

Firstly, I must thank the outgoing Chair Mr Mel Jehu who was a longstanding independent member of the Standards Committee and acknowledge his hard work and commitment during his time as Committee Member and Chair.

The Committee has seen several changes this year in its membership, and I would like to welcome Independent Member Ms Helen John, Community Councillor Member Ms Lynwen Law and reserve Community Council Member, Mr Carl Thomas. All bring with them a wealth of personal experience and knowledge and I look forward to them providing their expertise and adding another perspective as we undertake the Committee's work going forward. Following the Local Government Elections, we have also welcomed County Borough Councillors Amanda Ellis and Gareth Hughes, and we appreciate the valuable contributions that they will bring to the Committee. Furthermore, I would like to extend my thanks to officers for their continuous support provided to the Committee throughout this period of change.

Following the response of the Council to the Covid-19 pandemic and the use of online platforms to conduct meetings it was a welcome return to be able to have the opportunity to meet in person this year. However, in recognition of the benefits of an agile working approach, it was pleasing to be able to conduct meetings on a hybrid basis which has enabled the committee to work strongly together and progress a paperless approach to working using this flexible model to suit Members preferences.

Through our work programme this year we have closely monitored the reports of the Monitoring Officer, and those published by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and where necessary, we have taken action to ensure that County Borough Councillors, Community/Town Councillors and Officers are reminded of their requirements in relation to the different policies. I was pleased to attend the inaugural meeting of the National Forum for Standards Committee Chairs across Wales in January 23. This forum will provide an opportunity to share best practice and discuss any emerging issues with the ethical and standards framework in Wales.

The Committee was pleased to note the low number of complaints made to the Public Services Ombudsman during the reporting period – particularly in respect of County Borough Members, many of whom were newly elected in May 2022, and the Committee commended all Members for this. None of the complaints resulted in an investigation being initiated by the Ombudsman. The Committee also noted the 100% completion of Code of Conduct Training by County Borough Members following the elections in May.

Looking forward to 2023/24, the Standards Committee will continue to proactively focus on promoting high ethical standards within the Local Authority for the benefit of the public and the duty on leaders of political groups to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members of their group.

Mr. Dave Bowen
Chair (and Independent Member)

Members of The Standards Committee



Mr. Dave Bowen
Chair and
Independent Member



Ms. H. John
Independent Member



Mr. J. Thomas
Independent Member



A. Ellis
County Borough
Councillor



G. Hughes
County Borough
Councillor



Ms. L. Law
Community Councillor
Member



Mr. C. A Thomas
Reserve Community
Councillor Member

Standards Committee Terms of Reference

The Standards Committee has the following roles and functions:

- (a) promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Councillors, co-opted Members and Church and Parent Governor representatives;
- (b) assisting the Councillors, co-opted Members and Church and Parent Governor representatives to observe the Members' Code of Conduct;
- (c) advising the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members' Code of Conduct;
- (d) monitoring the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct;
- (e) advising, training or arranging to train Councillors, co-opted Members and Church and Parent Governor representatives on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct;
- (f) granting dispensations to Councillors, co-opted Members and Church and Parent Governor representatives from requirements relating to interests set out in the Members' Code of Conduct;
- (g) dealing with any reports from a case tribunal or interim case tribunal, and any report from the Monitoring Officer on any matter referred to that Officer by the Public Services Ombudsman For Wales;
- (h) overview of complaints handling and Ombudsman investigations relating to Councillors, co-opted Members and Church and Parent Governor representatives;
- (i) oversight of the Members' protocols adopted by the Council;
- (j) oversight of the register of personal interests maintained under Section 81 of the Local Government Act 2000;
- (k) oversight of the gifts and hospitality register;
- (l) monitor adherence to the Council's Management of Unreasonably Persistent Customers Policy by Group and Service Directors; and
- (m) the Committee will exercise the functions set out in (a) - (g) above in relation to Community Councils and Members of Community Councils.

Standards Committee Meeting Dates 2022-2023

The Standards Committee is required to meet at least once annually in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000. In practice, the Committee meets on a scheduled quarterly basis (dependant on business needs) and additional special meetings are arranged, as necessary, to deal with specific matters such as misconduct hearings.

The Committee met on the following two occasions during the 2022 – 2023 Municipal Year:

18th November 2022

<https://rctcbc.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=181&MId=50004280&Ver=4&LLL=0>

and

25th April 2023

<https://rctcbc.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=181&MId=50004281&Ver=4&LLL=0>

(n.b. The Standards Committee met on two occasions during the Municipal Year due to the Local Elections held in May 2022 and the requirement to recruit a new independent member and Community Councillor representative member to the Committee. The Committee will return to its normal schedule of meetings for 2023-2024.)

The Committee's Work Programme for the current Municipal Year can be found here

<https://rctcbc.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s42429/Appendix 2.pdf?LLL=0>

Items Considered During The 2022-2023 Municipal Year

- **Standards Committee Work Programme 2022 - 2023**
- **Attendance at Code of Conduct Training**
- **Public Services Ombudsman for Wales - Summary of Complaints 2022 for the period 1st March 2022 – 31st October 2022.**

The Monitoring Officer drew Members 'attention to the fact there were 3 complaints made against Community Councillors and 0 complaints made against County Borough Councillors during the period. None of those complaints reached the investigation stage.

- **Public Services Ombudsman for Wales - Annual Report and Letter 2021-2022**

(The Annual Report sets out the workload that has been dealt with by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) during 2021-2022. Members learned that Nick Bennett's term of office as PSOW finished in March 2022 when Michelle Morris, former Chief Executive of Blaenau Gwent CBC, took over the role. The PSOW received 294 new complaints about the Code of Conduct – 5% less than in 2021/22 but 27% more than in 2019/20. 58% (171) of those complaints concerned Town and Community Councils.

The Monitoring Officer noted that as in previous years, about half of the new Code of Conduct complaints that the PSOW received were about 'promotion of equality and respect' and many of these cases, categorised by the PSOW under 'respect', are lower-level complaints.

The Monitoring Officer reported there were 2 Code of Conduct complaints made about Members in relation to their role as RCT County Borough Councillors during the period, compared against 8 in 2020-2021. 1 complaint found no evidence of breach and another complaint was discontinued after investigation.

In addition, 9 complaints were received in relation to Town and Community Councils within RCT as against 14 in the previous reporting period. Five were discontinued after investigation, 3 found no evidence of a breach and 1 was withdrawn.

Items Considered During The 2022-2023 Municipal Year

- **Public Services Ombudsman for Wales - Recent Investigation Outcomes - 'Our Findings'**

The Monitoring Officer provided Members with the summary of investigation outcomes concerning alleged breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct as published by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) on the 'our findings' section of their website for the period 1st April 2021 – 31st October 2022.

Members learned that the PSOW considers complaints that members of local authorities in Wales have breached the Code. There are four findings the PSOW can arrive at:

- (a) that there is no evidence of breach;
- (b) that no action needs to be taken in respect of the complaint;
- (c) that the matter be referred to the authority's Monitoring Officer for consideration by the Standards Committee;
- (d) that the matter be referred to the President of the Adjudication Panel for Wales (the APW) for adjudication by a tribunal.

The Monitoring Officer reported that during the period 1st April 2021 – 31st October 2022 30 complaints were investigated by the PSOW, 6 of which were referred to the relevant Standards Committees and 5 of which was referred to the APW. In 9 cases it was considered that there was no evidence of a breach of the Code, in 5 cases no action was considered necessary and 5 cases were discontinued. 11 of the matters investigated fall under the category of Integrity, 13 under Promotion of Equality and Respect, 3 under Disclosure or Registration of Interests, 2 under Duty to Uphold the Law and 1 under Selflessness and Stewardship.

- **Adjudication Panel for Wales - Recent Tribunal Decisions**

The Monitoring Officer provided the Standards Committee with the report to consider recent decisions made by the Adjudication Panel for Wales (APW).

Members were referred to the appendices of the report, which detailed a number of APW decision notices, that had been issued following the conclusion of the cases.

- **Dispensation Applications** – the Committee considered and granted one application for a dispensation during the Municipal Year

Items Considered During The 2022-2023 Municipal Year

- **Group Leaders' Duties in Respect of Standards of Conduct**

The Monitoring Officer advised Members of the arrangements to be put in place in order to comply with the new duties of political group leaders in relation to standards of conduct and corresponding new duties placed on standards committees (introduced by Part 4 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, ('the 2021 Act') namely to take reasonable steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members of their group and to co-operate with the standards committee in the discharge of its functions. The Committee was also advised of the new duty for standards committees to monitor the compliance of political group leaders with their new duties; advising and training (or arranging training) of political group leaders in relation to those duties (referred to in paragraph (i) above and to submit an annual report to full Council.

The Committee agreed the proforma 'Group Leaders Report', which Group Leaders would be required to complete to assist the Committee in monitoring compliance with the duty going forward.

- **Oral Update - PSOW Letter To Standard Committee Chairs & Updated Ombudsman Guidance**

Members were advised that some minor changes have been made to the process of the Code of Conduct guidance, however, the Monitoring Officer has requested that the track changes be provided by the PSOW to fully understand the changes made.

Members were advised that the PSOW will continue to share their decisions with Monitoring Officers, as required by legislation. However, they will now be sharing the complaint and their decision in a standalone decision notice to facilitate the Monitoring Officers in sharing complaint information with Standards Committees (when they consider it appropriate to do so).

Members learned that since June, the PSOW have been trialling a fresh approach to how they inform members about complaints made against them. Their practice had been that they informed the accused member, the Monitoring Officer, and the Clerk (if a Town/Community Council) of a complaint as soon as it was received. They now inform the relevant parties at the point when they either decline to investigate or decide to investigate the complaint. Furthermore, during the trial, they found that this approach sped up the process. It also helped to avoid unnecessary concern for members complained about, as they waited for a decision on whether the complaint should be investigated.

The Monitoring Officer outlined that whenever possible, the PSOW would like to see any concerns about a member's conduct to be resolved locally and at an early stage, to alleviate situations and prevent the need for further escalation and formal investigation by the PSOW. Furthermore, it was noted that the PSOW and members of the public, expect all members to take advantage of training which is available to them.

Items Considered During The 2022-2023 Municipal Year

- **National Forum For Standards Committee Chairs And Vice-Chairs**

The Monitoring Officer provided with an update in respect of the National Forum for Standards Committee Chairs and the Committee considered the Forum's draft Terms of Reference.

- **Public Services Ombudsman For Wales - Summary of Complaints 2022-2023**

The Monitoring Officer provided the Standards Committee with a summary of complaints made against Members and submitted to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (the 'Ombudsman') for the period 1st November 22 – 31st March 2023.

The Monitoring Officer took Members through the detail in the report highlighting the anonymised complaints concerning one County Borough Councillor and three Community Councillors contained within the table in the report.

The Monitoring Officer drew Members 'attention to the fact that none of the complaints resulted in an investigation.

- **Public Services Ombudsman For Wales - Our Findings Summaries**

The Monitoring Officer outlined to Members the purpose of the report to consider the summary of investigation outcomes concerning alleged breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct as published by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) on the 'our findings' section of the website for the period 1st November 2022 – 31st March 2023. Members were taken through the detail of the report and appendix 1.

- **Adjudication Panel For Wales Annual Report 2021-2022**

The Monitoring Officer provided Members with an overview of the information contained in the Adjudication Panel for Wales' (APW) Annual Report 2021-2022.

Members were informed the APW Annual Report summarises the activity of the Panel during the relevant reporting period. The report provides details of the membership of the Panel, an analysis of its performance and a useful section summarising cases and decisions made by the Panel during the reporting period. The Monitoring Officer took Members through the report noting that it highlights the increase in the number of cases referred to it by the Ombudsman compared to previous years and also the President's expectation that matters would improve as a result of the new responsibility on political Group Leaders on standards in public life. The Monitoring Officer referred to the case summaries included within the report noting that these have previously been reported to Committee during the relevant period but are useful for Members who joined the committee during this municipal year.

Items Considered During The 2022-2023 Municipal Year

- **National Standards Forum - Feedback from Meeting held on 27th January 2023**

The Monitoring Officer informed Members that the purpose of the report was to provide Members with feedback from the inaugural meeting of the National Standards Forum held on 27th January 2023.

Members were reminded, as reported to the Committee at its last meeting, a National Forum for Standards Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs had been established and the terms of reference for the Forum were provided for Members at Appendix 1. The Monitoring Officer highlighted to Members that by sharing best practice it is anticipated the Forum will help to raise standards across all authorities in Wales.

Members were informed that the first meeting of the Forum took place on 27th January 2023, the agenda for the meeting was provided at Appendix 2. Feedback and actions arising from the meeting were attached at Appendix 3 for Members. The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, Michelle Morris, also gave a presentation.

The Monitoring Officer shared with Members that the Forum considered the duty on group leaders to promote ethical behaviour amongst the members of their group and listened to existing practice from amongst the members. The Committee were informed that although practice varies slightly across authorities there was no significant deviation from the practice adopted at RCT, as agreed and reported at the last Standards Committee meeting.

The Committee were informed that the next meeting of the forum will be at the end of June and the agenda for that meeting will be set at the June meeting of the Monitoring Officers' Group.

Members noted the benefits of having consistency across Wales and were hopeful to see results coming through and the ability to adopt some of the standards coming through from the Forum in the future.

Items Considered During The 2022-2023 Municipal Year

- **Recommendations of the Independent Review of the Ethical Standards Framework (Richard Penn Report)**

The Monitoring Office advised Members the purpose of the report was to advise Members of the consultation initiated by Welsh Government in respect of the recommendations of the independent review of the Ethical Standards Framework in Wales (Richard Penn report). Members were informed their feedback in respect of the consultation would form a response to be submitted to Welsh Government in advance of the consultation closing date of 23rd June 2023.

The Monitoring Officer informed Members the Framework has remained largely unchanged over the last 20 years, so an independent review was felt important to maintain confidence in the system and ensure developments in the way councillors and their public lives are reflected in its operation.

Members were provided with an overview of the independent review of the Framework undertaken by Richard Penn between April and July 2021 and of the findings which concluded that the current arrangements are fit for purpose but recommended some changes to the Framework, including the Model Code of Conduct.

Since the publication of the Review, Welsh Government had engaged with stakeholders including Monitoring Officers, the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) and their office, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and One Voice Wales and are now undertaking the consultation on the Review's recommendations.

Members were taken through each recommendation individually and invited to provide comments on them in order to provide a response to the consultation.

- **Standards Committee - Members Training Update**

The Monitoring Officer provided the Committee with an oral update in respect of a joint training session to be held with Members of the Standards Committee from Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council on 15th June. Members were informed that the meeting details had been circulated and Members would be kept up to date with any further requirements for the training.