



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

COMMITTEE SUMMONS

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

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

YOU ARE SUMMONED to a **VIRTUAL** meeting of **DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE** to be held on **MONDAY, 27TH NOVEMBER, 2023** at **5.00 PM.**

AGENDA

**Page
No's**

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

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

Note:

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

2. MINUTES

To receive the minutes of the previous meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held on 11th September 2023,

3 - 6

3. VOTING ARRANGEMENTS WITHIN COMMITTEE SETTINGS

To consider details of future voting arrangements at future Committee meetings.

7 - 12

4. OFFICE ACCOMMODATION UPDATE

To receive an update from the Head of Democratic Services in respect of the work taken forward with the Office Accommodation move to Llys Cadwyn.

13 - 20

5. INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT - FEBRUARY 2024

To provide comment on the draft Annual Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales 2024.

21 - 58

6. DIVERSITY IN DEMOCRACY

To review the work undertaken to date in respect of diversity within democracy within RCT.

59 - 86

7. URGENT BUSINESS

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

Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication

Circulation:-

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

County Borough Councillors:

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

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



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Services Committee held Virtually on Monday, 11 September 2023 at 5.00 pm.

County Borough Councillors

Councillor W Jones (Chair)

Councillor M Webber	Councillor J Bonetto
Councillor J Brencher	Councillor A J Ellis
Councillor P Evans	Councillor S Morgans
Councillor B Stephens	Councillor J Turner

Officers in attendance

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mrs E Wilkins, Council Business Manager

9 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors L Addiscott, Councillor S Hickman, Councillor S Powderhill, Councillor S Trask And Councillor K Webb.

10 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

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

11 MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 5th July 2023 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

12 MATTERS ARISING

The Head of Democratic Services and Council Business Manager provided Members with updates in respect of the matters arising from the minutes of the July Committee meeting:

Minute 5(2) – Notification of the Member Development Programme had been circulated to all Members and going forward monthly breakdowns of forthcoming training was also being provided.

Minute 6(1) – Before the Head of Democratic Services provided an update in respect of the Office accommodation move, the Chair took the opportunity to thank Members for their attendance at the site visit carried out to Llys Cadwyn, and for the feedback provided.

- I. **Sufficient Toilet Provision** – The Head of Democratic Services advised that due to large structural changes needed, additional toilets on the Members floor would not be possible, however, Members would be able to have access to toilet provision on other floors within the building if necessary.
- II. **Sufficient Political Rooms** – The Head of Democratic Services advised that Members comments in respect political rooms had been taken forward by Corporate Estates.
- III. **Sufficient Parkin Provision** – Members were advised that the Head of Democratic Services had met with colleagues within Highways who had advised that in addition to the parking provision within Llys Cadwyn itself, and the public parking arrangements available in the town car parks, Officers were confident that Members attending the standard 5pm Committee meetings would find sufficient parking provision available.

In addition to the above, the Head of Democratic Services advised of the work going forward with the Office Accommodation move which would be further reported on at the next meeting of the Committee and advised of the timeline in place, with the decommissioning of the Council Chamber, where the hybrid meeting equipment would be moved from The Pavilions and taken to Llys Cadwyn towards the end of November. Members were advised that this work would therefore mean that Committee meetings would return to virtual meetings only, until the works had been completed in the New Year.

13 COUNCILLOR SUPPORT SELF EVALUATION FRAMEWORK - REVIEW OF THE MEMBERS CHARTER

The Head of Democratic Services referred Members to the report, which provided Members with the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft self-evaluation framework of the WLGA in respect to Councillor Support and development.

Members were reminded of the purpose of the Charter and its original creation, which was aimed to provide a broad framework for local planning, self-assessment, action and review together with networking and comparison amongst Councils and the sharing of good and innovative practice. The Head of Democratic Services advised of the previous good practice of the Council and its receipt of the Charter and that the Council was the first Council to receive the Advanced Charter due to its support to Members.

It was advised that the Charter criteria was being reviewed to take into account the different ways of working following the covid pandemic and to take in to account the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and the associated Welsh Government guidance as it becomes available.

The Committee were referred to the proposed framework that was currently out to consultation, which provided a voluntary self-assessment framework that focusses on the support provided for Councillors to deliver the outcomes needed by their communities. The framework aims to cover all aspects of good practice in Councillor support. However, as priorities and resources differ between councils, it would be for councils to decide locally how much of the framework to use and which sections should be prioritised.

Members commented on the framework before them and agreed with the voluntary self assessment framework and that the Framework should incorporate all aspects of good practice in work of member development, committee support and policy support for members.

It was positively acknowledged that the framework allows Councils to decide locally upon those areas in line with the principles listed and that the revised approach enables the Council to develop an approach which would reflect the priorities of members.

The Committee **RESOLVED:**

- (i) To acknowledge the high standard of support provided to Members through its previous receipt of the Charter and Advanced Charter;
- (ii) To agree that the original Charter requirements required a review to align with new working practices and emerging legislation.
- (iii) To provide comment and feedback in respect of the draft Councillor Support Self Evaluation framework outlined in section 5 (iii) of the report.

14 PROPOSED UPDATES TO THE ELECTED MEMBER ICT, INTERNET & EMAIL ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY

The Council Business Manager referred Members to the Joint Report, which provided proposed revisions to the Elected Members ICT, Internet and email policy, and sought the Committees agreements to the proposed revisions.

Members were advised that the original policy was endorsed by the Democratic Services Committee in 2018 and the policy defines what the Council considers as acceptable use of its ICT equipment, internet and email facilities and sets out rules and guidelines for its access and use.

The increased usage of ICT by Members due to the new ways of working following the covid pandemic and general evolution in digital advancements was acknowledged and the Officer advised that due to these changes it was felt appropriate that a review of the policy was undertaken to ensure that it was still fit for purpose. It was added that reviewing the policy also allows the Council to strengthen the cyber security arrangements in place for the protection of the Council and its Elected Members and to bring the policy in line with current working practices.

Members queried the process that would be undertaken in respect of Members signing the revised Policy and it was confirmed that Members would be able to take forward either a manual signing or through electronic means, to the preference of the Members. The Head of Democratic Services advised that work would also be undertaken in respect of the potential of providing Members with electronic signatures.

The Committee **RESOLVED:**

- i. To review the proposed Elected Member ICT, Internet & Email Policy (Version 3) as contained in Appendix A of the report.
- ii. To Approve the revised Elected Member ICT, Internet & Email Acceptable Use Policy (Version 3).
- iii. To agree the process for Elected Members to consent to the policy, as per the 'Policy Acceptance Form' contained within Appendix IV of the policy.

15 MEMBER'S SUPPORT

The Chair referenced Members to the information report before them and advised that a Member Briefing session in respect of Member Support Arrangements was being held on the 13th September, which was open to all Members and that this session would provide Members with further insight into the support available to them.

Members **RESOLVED** to note the information report.

This meeting closed at 5.27 pm

**Councillor W Jones
Chair.**



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

27TH NOVEMBER 2023

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

VOTING ARRANGEMENTS WITHIN COMMITTEE SETTINGS

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members with details of the future voting arrangements to be taken forward following the relocation of the Council Chamber to Llys Cadwyn and the intended roll out of the arrangements.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Democratic Services Committee:
- (i) Acknowledge the proposed arrangements in respect of Committee Voting arrangements following the Council Chamber relocation;
 - (ii) Consider the phased roll out approach to the voting arrangements as detailed within section 4 of the report.
 - (iii) Instruct the Head of Democratic Services to continue reviewing the voting platforms available.

3. BACKGROUND

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

4. BOSCH MICROPHONE VOTING SYSTEM

- 4.1 Previously, Members in their multi location meetings have been voting by raising their hands, a function which has been recognised in the chamber and through the Zoom platform as Members' clear indication of choice. This method has worked well for the purposes of formally recording the votes and outcomes of motions and recommendations.
- 4.2 The intention has always been to explore the in-meeting voting arrangements to ensure a more sophisticated method of recording votes to accompany the progress made with the hybrid meetings. However, priority has always been given to ensuring the hybrid meeting process was fully embedded into the council multi location meetings in the first instance.
- 4.3 In seeking a formal voting arrangement within a hybrid meeting environment, Officers have reviewed numerous options to ensure a system that is easy for Members to utilise, easy to access and to ensure a system that does not cause any unnecessary disruption or delay to the proceedings of a meeting.
- 4.4 Offices and Members have piloted various voting arrangements through the virtual setting, such as the Modern.Gov app and polls arrangements through zoom, however, it was felt that neither option lent itself to the hybrid working arrangements of the Council.
- 4.5 It is clear that online solutions are still being developed and advancements have been made in the digital market with other hybrid voting arrangements being developed which the Head of Democratic Services has been scoping to ensure that the Council take forward the most appropriate voting arrangement.
- 4.6 Whilst we wait for such online solutions to fully mature and 'catch up' with the current way of working, it is proposed that going forward the Council takes forward utilisation of the voting system that is already available within the Council Chamber, through the public I bosch microphone system.
- 4.7 The system provides the opportunity for the Democratic Services team to Pre-submit votes and ad-hoc voting on agenda items at meetings to the microphone system, which can be accessed by those Members in attendance at the Council Chamber.
- 4.8 This process will ensure accountability and transparency where voting has taken place and a clear record of Members' decisions within the Council Chamber. In respect of Members attending through the virtual setting then a continued process of the raising of hands will be conducted.

- 4.9 Much in the same way as the webcasting and hybrid meetings were positively rolled out incrementally, which enabled Members to experience the system within their own committee setting, the same is intended for the roll out of the voting arrangements, before utilising the system at a meeting of Full Council.
- 4.10 Below is a timetable of the proposed roll out of the voting system following relocation of the Council Chamber to Llys Cadwyn

Next Steps	Outcome	Scheduled	Progress:
Briefing report on the proposed voting arrangements to members of the Democratic Services Committee (DSC)	To provide Members with details of the proposed arrangements in respect of voting arrangements at hybrid committee meetings	27 th November 2023	On course.
Briefing to Cabinet Members/SLT Officers on the voting arrangements	To familiarise Cabinet Members and SLT on the Chamber voting system	December 2023	To be completed
Demo to Cabinet Members on the voting system	Demo of the system	January 2024	To be Completed
Demo to Democratic Services Committee on the voting system	Demo of the system	January 2024	To be Completed
Usage of the Voting Arrangements at next available Cabinet Meeting	Voting arrangements to be taken forward for Members within Council Chamber	January 2024	To be completed
Demo to Planning Committee Members on the voting system	Demo of the system	January 2024	To be Completed
Usage of the Voting Arrangements at next available Planning Committee Meeting	Voting arrangements to be taken forward for Members within Council Chamber	January / February 2024	To be completed
Demo to Licensing Committee Members on the voting system	Demo of the system	February 2024	To be Completed
Usage of the Voting Arrangements at next available Licensing Committee Meeting	Voting arrangements to be taken forward for Members within Council Chamber	February 2024	To be completed
Continuation of the Demo and roll out of the voting system to all other Committees / Members throughout February.	Demo and utilisation of the voting system by further Committees	February 2024	To be completed

Review Progress end of February 2024			
Implementation of the new voting system to Full Council (Following an open session prior to the meeting)	To utilise voting system within the Council Chamber	March 2024 - To be confirmed as part of the review process	To be completed

5 FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS

- 5.1 The above timetable will enable all Members of the Council to receive a demonstration on the voting system with a view to implementing the system at a future meeting of Full Council later in the New Year.
- 5.2 Members of the Democratic Services Committee and Cabinet will be the first Committees to undertake a demo of the system within the new Council Chamber.
- 5.3 Guidance documents and one to one training can be provided to Members, as well as full Committee demonstrations if deemed necessary, to ensure that Members are comfortable with the system before any 'live votes' are taken forward.
- 5.4 If considered successful the Multi Location Meeting Policy will be reviewed to reflect the new voting arrangements in place.
- 5.5 It is the intention that the Head of Democratic Services will continue to seek a full hybrid voting solution that all Members attending a hybrid meeting can access, and it is emphasised that the above proposal is not intended to be the long term solution for voting arrangements at Committee meetings.

6 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

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

7 WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

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

8 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Previous reports in respect of Committee voting arrangements have been provided to Democratic Services Committee.

9 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

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

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

- 10.1 The provision of webcasting and any associated improvements link to the Corporate Plan priorities with particular reference to 'living within our means' and an 'efficient and effective Council', ensuring transparency with our decision-making process for the benefits of our residents.
- 10.2 Ensuring that there are greater opportunities for public engagement through webcasting links to the Wellbeing of Future Generations goals of a more equal Wales and a Wales of cohesive communities. This proposal would further support the ability of this council to involve communities in key decisions.

11 CONCLUSION

- 11.1 Through the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 Councils were legally required to webcast meetings to strengthen local democracy and encourage public participation.
- 11.2 The Council has successfully adopted its hybrid meetings and Members have embraced the multi-location meetings and the new technology. It is proposed that this progress is advanced and developed with use of the current voting system within the Council Chamber until a full hybrid solution is made available, which would adhere itself within the Council's committee arrangements.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972
AS AMENDED BY
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985
RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
27TH NOVEMBER 2023
REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS – none.



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

27TH NOVEMBER 2023

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

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to receive an update from the Head of Democratic Services in respect of members facilities and accommodation, following the decision of Cabinet to relocate the Council's HQ, and Council Chamber, to 2 Llys Cadwyn Pontypridd as part of the Council's Office Accommodation Strategy.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members

- 2.1 Note the update in respect of the work undertaken to date in respect of the relocation of the Council Chamber.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

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

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 At the [July](#) meeting of the Democratic Services Committee, Members considered the report before them in respect of the Council Headquarters relocation to 2 Llys Cadwyn, Pontypridd.

- 4.2 During the Meeting the Head of Democratic Services provided Members with details in respect of the new chamber and member facilities. It was acknowledged that the move to 2 Llys Cadwyn, would provide significant improvements in respect of the accommodation offered to Members and the Head of Democratic Services confirmed that in his statutory opinion **the accommodation provided to Elected Members was 'sufficient' and would be remarkably enhanced following the relocation to Pontypridd.**
- 4.3 Details within the above-mentioned report included Member Accommodation, Council Chamber, Public and Press Access and Parking arrangements.
- 4.4 Members welcomed the relocation and spoke positively of the new arrangements being provided. Queries were raised in respect of the facilities to be provided and the Head of Democratic Services was tasked to take forward these queries with colleagues in Highways and Corporate Estates, which will be addressed later within the report.
- 4.5 Members of the Committee welcomed the proposal of a site visit to the building in advance of any building work.
- 4.6 An oral update in respect of the work was provided by the Head of Democratic Services at the Committees September meeting, where Members were provided with responses in relation to their queries surrounding Toilet provision, Car Parking and Political Rooms.
- 5. WORK UNDERTAKEN TO DATE**
- 5.1 Following the relevant procurement procedures the Council have appointed Knox & Wells on the first stage of a 2-stage design and build contract.
- 5.2 Meetings have also been taken forward with officers within Public I, the Council Business Unit, Corporate Estates and welsh translation in respect of the work needed to be undertaken in respect of the Council Chamber and Committee room, to ensure that the new Chamber is equipped for Hybrid meetings and webcasting arrangements.
- 5.3 On the 8th August 2023 a site visit was undertaken by members of the Democratic Services Committee, which was also extended to Group Leaders, where Members were walked through the floor plans whilst on site. Members in attendance commented that the visit provided them with a clearer picture of the new offices and in particular the Council Chamber.
- 5.4 During September a survey of Members was undertaken to capture Members views on how the 'Member's Area' within Llys Cadwyn should look, feel and operate with questions in relation to 'Member Hotdesking' arrangements and equipment and facilities. Can we thank Members for their responses, as we look to incorporate the suggestions in with the designs for the area.

6. GOING FORWARD

- 6.1 The Council are working to a timescale of relocation during the beginning of the New Year (2024).
- 6.2 As previously advised, to enable the relocation of broadcasting and hybrid meeting 'kit' to the new location, from the 21st November 2023 and into the start of the New year, committee meetings will need to operate on a virtual basis only.
- 6.3 It is anticipated that meetings will reconvene on a hybrid basis early in the New Year once sufficient testing of the equipment has been undertaken.
- 6.4 The building will host a reception area, staffed by an appropriate officer to assist Members of the Public and visitors to the new Council Headquarters. Once the building works are complete arrangements will be made to provide Members with appropriate access arrangements (i.e key fob) so that they may frequent the Members Area to undertake hotdesking, access to Committee meetings or general attendance to meet officers / public within the designated meeting rooms.
- 6.5 For security purposes it will be important that Members wear their Lanyards when onsite within the building and will need to sign in and out of the building for fire safety reasons, through logging of their fob at the reception area.

7 EQUIPMENT AND FURNITURE.

- 7.1 Working with colleagues in Corporate Estates the Head of Democratic Services has been keen to ensure that existing furniture and equipment is reused within the new office accommodation.
- 7.2 Due to the need to remove furniture from Clydach Vale during the latter end of the calendar year there may also be a period where the Council Business Unit / Members Services will again revert to Home Working during this period rather than the hybrid arrangement currently in place. Members can be assured that all Officers within the unit will still be fully contactable.
- 7.3 In respect of the webcasting equipment, as previously mentioned this will be in general a 'lift and shift' of the Council's current equipment. However, due to the variances with the layout of the new Council Chamber, to that in Clydach Vale, improvements with screen placements have been identified, with the addition of small desk monitors being made available to improve the hybrid experience for all Members within the Council Chamber.
- 7.4 Landline telephone provision will be made available for Members to utilise when 'hot desking' in the designated Members Area.
- 7.5 The Members Lounge area will have facilities available for basic refreshments.
- 7.6 The logistics of potential booking arrangements for hotdesking are being considered.

8 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

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

9. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

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

10. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 10.1 Members of Democratic Services Committee have visited the new accommodation and have been consulted upon in respect of the work undertaken to date.
- 10.2 Group Leaders have also been consulted as part of the scheduled meetings undertaken with the Head of Democratic Services and as part of the visit undertaken in August 2023.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 As outlined within the Cabinet report, the Office Accommodation strategy would deliver annual and recurring revenue savings of £435k. This level of saving is supported by rental income generated at Llys Cadwyn now being in excess of that assumed in the original business case enabling the Council to benefit from this.
- 11.2 Fit out costs will be funded from a combination of existing office accommodation budgets, any capital receipts generated from the delivery of the strategy and the annual revenue savings in the short term.

12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

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

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

13.1 The Office Accommodation Strategy contribute towards the priorities in the Corporate Plan:

- Ensuring **People: are independent, healthy and successful;**
- Creating **Places: where people are proud to live, work and play;**
- Enabling **Prosperity: creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper**

13.2 The Well-being goals which are particularly relevant to the Office Accommodation Strategy include:

- **A Healthier Wales:** a society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood
- **A Globally Responsible Wales:** a nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being
- **A More Equal Wales:** a society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio-economic circumstances)

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

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

- Involvement – communities and Council services will be involved with the delivery of objectives and have their say

14. CONCLUSION

- 14.1 The Council's Office Accommodation Strategy and Operating Model & Working Arrangements Policy sets out a clear direction of travel and framework for our longer-term ambitions for the Council's office accommodation portfolio for the period 2023/2030.
- 14.2 It is important that Members are equipped with appropriate meeting requirements to ensure that Members can conduct their role.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

27TH NOVEMBER 2023

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES: DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2024 TO 2025

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Members with the opportunity to submit representations to the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRP) in respect of their draft Annual Report 2024 to 2025 by 8th December 2023. This is in accordance with the requirements of Section 147 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 to publish the annual report by 28th February 2024.

2. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Acknowledge and comment on the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales's Draft Annual Report 2024 to 2025 attached at Appendix 1; and
- 2.2 Request the Head of Democratic Services to submit the representations of the Democratic Services Committee by 8th December 2023 to be considered by the IRP prior to the production of a final report for publication in February 2024.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To ensure that members are aware of the contents of the draft annual report 2024 to 2025 and proposed changes to the remuneration framework including a modest increase in the basic salary for Elected Members of Principal Councils.
- 3.2 That all members of the Democratic Services Committee are afforded the opportunity to comment on the proposals set out in the draft annual report and their representations are taken into account by the IRP under the requirements of the Local Government Measure 2011.

4 **DRAFT REPORT AND CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS**

- 4.1 The Panel have worked with key stakeholders to help inform the draft report and to explore areas for future consideration, giving the Panel opportunity to hear the direct experiences of a range of elected members, prospective candidates and organisations working to broaden representation in local government.
- 4.2 During October 2023, the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales published its draft report for the period 2024 – 2025. The report can be accessed by using the following link:

[Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Draft Annual Report – February 2024](#)

- 4.3 This has been circulated to the Minister for Finance and Local Government and other interested parties.
- 4.4 The IRP welcome general feedback in respect of their draft Report and have identified some additional questions where they would appreciate Members views.
- 4.5 The questions identified are outlined below:

1. **Question 1 - Uplift of remuneration using the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE)**

The Panel is fully aware of the current constraints on public funding and the impact its decisions will have on the budgets of Principal Authorities. The Panel is also mindful of our Aims and Objectives to provide a fair and reasonable remuneration package to support elected members and to encourage diversity of representation. We therefore propose to uplift their remuneration based on the average earnings of their constituents.

Do you think that the Panel has struck the right balance between affordability and adequate remuneration for representatives? If not, do you have other suggestions?

Yes
No
No Opinion

2. **Question 2 - Local flexibility for payments to co-opted individuals**

The Panel has received evidence that it would be more cost effective and fairer to provide for flexibility in paying those who are co-opted to serve on

committees of Principal Councils, National Park Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities.

The Panel has therefore proposed there should be local flexibility for the relevant officer to decide when it will be appropriate to apply a day or half day rate or to use an hourly rate where it is sensible to aggregate a few short meetings.

Do you agree with this proposal? If not, do you have any suggested alternatives?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>
No Opinion	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Question 3 - Encouraging sustainable travel

The Panel would like to ensure that we support environmental sustainability in our decisions about remuneration. We are aware that there are schemes in many bodies in Wales which encourage sustainable travel and we have advised that, if possible, elected members should be encouraged to participate in these schemes.

Do you have any examples of good practice or other ideas of ways in which we might use our powers to encourage more sustainable travel among members?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>
No Opinion	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Question 4 - Awareness of the entitlements of representatives

The Panel has seen evidence of a lack of awareness amongst local elected members of the payments to which they are entitled. We would like to find out if this is a significant issue, and if so, we will aim to raise awareness further, targeted at areas where this may be a problem.

Did you know that you may be entitled to some of or all the following?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remuneration for your role <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pension (Principal Councils only) <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
---	--

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reimbursement of expenses <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reimbursement for caring responsibilities <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family absence payments (Principal Councils only) <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p>	

What steps does your council or authority take to make its elected members and co-opted members aware of their entitlements?

5. Question 5 - Publication of consolidated sums for Community and Town Councils

Community and Town Councils are required to submit an annual statement of payments to the Panel by 30 September each year, and also publish this on their website. The Panel have provided a template return for clerks to use. The Panel have discussed and considered changing the requirements for Community and Town Councils when submitting their statement of payment returns. The Panel's aim is to simplify administration and encourage Councils to ensure all mandatory payments are made to individual members.

The Panel proposes that from September 2024, the returns need only show the total amounts paid in respect of the mandatory payments mentioned above. That is the £156 contribution to the costs of working from home, the £52 set rate consumables allowance and the travel and subsistence expenses paid.

This brings these in line with the reporting of the costs of care and personal assistance allowances.

Do you agree that these figures may be published as a global total rather than individually?

Yes

No

No Opinion

6. Question 6 - Publication of consolidated sums for other bodies

In future reports, we are thinking of allowing consolidation of the travel and subsistence expenses of members of principal councils, National Park

Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities and would be interested in your views.

Do you agree that these figures may be published as a global total rather than individually?

Yes
No
No View

4.6 Members feedback in respect of the consultation questions are to be submitted by the 8th December 2023.

4.7 In accordance with the requirements of Section 147 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 the Panel must publish its final annual report by 28th February 2024.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Independent Remuneration Panel report looks to promote equality and diversity across Principle Councils. The Panel is also mindful of its aims and objectives to provide a fair and reasonable remuneration package to support elected members and to encourage diversity of representation.

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

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

7. CONSULTATION.

7.1 The draft report has been shared with all Members through the Members daily update and through links on the Consultation links page.

7.2 Members are able to contribute to the consultation via the Democratic Services Committee and individually as Elected Members.

7.3 The consultation closes on the 8th December 2023.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

27TH NOVEMBER 2023

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS - Democratic Services – Support for Members



Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales

Annual Report

DRAFT

October 2023

Contents

Foreword

Introduction

Role and responsibilities of the Panel

Methodology

Deliberations and determinations for 2024 to 2025

Summary of Determinations 2024 to 2025

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Foreword

Welcome to the draft report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales, setting out our proposals on pay, expenses and benefits for elected members of Principal Councils, Town and Community Councils, National Park Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities for implementation from April 2024.

This has been a year of change for the Panel, with 1 longstanding member leaving us and the appointment of 2 new members. I would like to thank Helen Wilkinson for her contribution over the years to the Panel and wish her well for the future.

Last year we were down to only 3, which is the minimum for a Panel meeting to be quorate. Earlier this year we were able to appoint 2 new members to bring our current complement up to 5. I welcome Dianne Bevan and Kate Watkins to the Panel and thank Saz Willey, Vice Chair, and Bev Smith for their continued contribution throughout the year. You can find out more about our Panel members on our website.

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, Part 8 (The Measure), which gives the statutory authority for the Panel's work, allows the appointment of a minimum of 3 and up to 7 members.

This draft annual report is now issued for consultation. We have again put forward a set of specific questions where we would welcome your feedback. We welcome any additional comments either on the detail of the proposed Determinations or on other relevant areas you think the Panel should consider.

The Consultation period ends on 8 December and after deliberating on your feedback, and taking cognisance of any change in circumstances, the Panel will issue its final Determinations and annual report by the 28 February 2024.

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Frances Duffy

Chair

Panel Membership

- Saz Willey, Vice Chair
- Bev Smith
- Dianne Bevan
- Kate Watkins

Detailed information about the members, our strategic plan, our deliberations and supporting research and evidence can be found on the [Panel website](#).

Introduction

This year we published our first strategic plan. This covers the period from 2023 until 2025 and sets the framework for our deliberations and wider context for our decisions. The key elements are set out below under Roles and Responsibilities of the Panel.

With a strengthened Panel, we were able to focus on building our research and evidence plan to support our discussions on our remuneration framework. Our evidence plan will be published on our website inline with our aim to be open and transparent in all our decision making.

Our goal continues to be to ensure that levels of remuneration are fair and reasonable. We agreed to continue to align levels of remuneration for elected members of Principal Councils, National Park and Fire and Rescue Authorities within the context of average Welsh earnings. This has meant using the Annual

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Survey of Hours and Earnings within Wales (ASHE) published by Office for National Statistics (ONS) as the main benchmark for setting remuneration.

The Measure states that “the Panel must take into account what it considers will be the likely financial impact on relevant authorities” of its decisions. The Panel considered evidence on public sector finances and the impact on Principal Authorities’ budgets. Whilst the total cost of remuneration for elected members is relatively low in terms of overall budgets, the Panel were mindful of the heightened economic and fiscal strain on Principal Councils.

In reaching our decision to continue the link between elected members remuneration and the average earnings of their constituents, the Panel remain of the view that a fair and reasonable remuneration package will continue to support elected members and not act as a barrier to participation. This is an important principle, underpinning our considerations on appropriate remuneration.

In line with our commitment to simplifying reporting and compliance, the Panel this year looked at the reporting requirements for Community and Town Council. We continue to receive queries regarding the PAYE treatment of the mandatory allowance for working from home (£156 per annum) and the option of a flat rate of £52 a year for consumables. We will update our guidance on this issue which should ensure clarity for local clerks.

We are also mindful of a continuing, albeit reducing, number of Community and Town councillors who decide to forego all or part of their entitlement. We strongly believe that councillors should be reimbursed for some of the expenses they necessarily incur whilst carrying out their duties.

Currently each council must annually report to the Panel, and publish on its website, the details and names of each councillor in receipt of any expenses. In previous years we agreed that in respect of costs of care and personal assistance allowances, it would be inappropriate to name individual councillors,

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and that it would be sufficient to simply list the total amounts paid and the total number of recipients.

The Panel feels that it would be appropriate to extend this to the mandatory payment for working from home, the flat rate consumables allowance and travel and subsistence claims. This will give the right balance between public accountability and individual privacy, and we hope will encourage all to accept the payments they are entitled to.

We will therefore provide a new template report for use from September 2024 and will continue to monitor the level of payments made.

The final area that the Panel considered this year, was the method of calculating payments made to co-opted members of Principal Councils, National Park and Fire and Rescue Authorities.

Following feedback on last year's annual report and queries raised through the year by some co-opted members and by several Heads of Democratic Services, the Panel took evidence from the correspondents on the impact of both the increase in numbers of co-opted members and the changing nature of working patterns. This showed that the current arrangement of either a half day rate for anything up to 4 hours and a full day rate for anything over, was insufficiently flexible to reflect the patterns of working now more normally in place, mainly due to more online or hybrid working.

The Panel therefore proposes that the local relevant officer should have the flexibility to decide when it will be appropriate to apply a day or a half day rate and when to use an hourly rate where it is sensible to aggregate a number of short meetings.

The Panel is aware of feedback that our website can be difficult to navigate and that finding the right Determination to deal with a specific issue is not always straightforward, especially for new elected members or officials. We will

therefore update the links on the website and created a new link to a page setting out all the current Determinations that should be applied. It will be updated every year when the final annual report is issued, and we hope this will be easier to navigate than having to refer to every year's report.

We are also reviewing our guidance (previously called the Regulations) and frequently asked questions pages.

Role and responsibilities of the Panel

Our Role

The Panel is responsible for setting the levels and arrangements for the remuneration of elected and co-opted members of the following organisations:

- Principal Councils: County and County Borough Councils
- Community and Town Councils
- National Park Authorities
- Fire and Rescue Authorities
- Joint Overview Scrutiny Committees
- Corporate Joint Committees

The Panel is an independent organisation and the organisations listed above are required, by law, to implement the decisions it makes.

We make determinations on:

- the salary structure within which members are remunerated
- the type and nature of allowances to be paid to members
- whether payments are mandatory or allow a level of local flexibility
- arrangements in respect of family absence

- arrangements for monitoring compliance with the Panel's decisions

Our aim

- supporting local democracy and giving communities their voice, through setting up an appropriate and fair remuneration framework, which encourages inclusion and participation

Our goals

- our determinations should ensure that levels of remuneration are fair, reasonable, represent value for money for the taxpayer, and are set within the context of Welsh earnings and the wider financial circumstances of Wales
- our Determinations should support elected members from a diverse range of backgrounds, and levels of remuneration should not act as a barrier to participation

Our strategic objectives

- to make evidence, based Determinations
- to use clear and accessible communications
- to proactively engage and consult
- to simplify compliance and reporting
- to work collaboratively

The Panel

- Frances Duffy (Chair)

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- Saz Willey (Vice Chair)
- Dianne Bevan (Member)
- Bev Smith (Member)
- Kate Watkins (Member)

Further information on Panel members can be found on the [Panel's website](#).

Methodology

As set out in our strategic objectives the Panel has committed to making evidence-based decisions. This year we prepared an evidence and research paper to pull together the various sources of information that the Panel considered in making its draft Determinations. This provided a wide range of data, evidence and contextual factors to inform the Panel's decision-making process in relation to its Determinations for the 2024 to 2025 financial year. This included:

- data on average UK and Wales weekly earnings, including ASHE the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings
- annual CPIH and CPI inflation rates
- benchmarks, including councillor remuneration in Scotland
- research on councillor workload, views and attitudes to remuneration and diversity (Welsh Government)
- findings of Senedd Cymru Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee (2019)
- data collected on the take up of remuneration and benefits packages by councillors
- data on local authority finances

The full set of evidence and research considered, will be published on our [website](#).

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The Panel engaged directly with key stakeholder representative groups including the Welsh Local Government Association and its Heads of Democratic Services committee, One Voice Wales, the Society for Local Council Clerks and North and Mid Wales Association of Local Councils. These discussions provide an opportunity for the Panel to explore views about existing arrangements, the impact decisions are having on individuals, how the arrangements are operating in practice and any issues or concerns individuals wish to raise. It also provides an opportunity for discussion about emerging situations which the Panel may need to consider in respect of its decision making.

The Panel helped facilitate sessions at the Welsh Government’s “Diversity in Democracy” events earlier this year. This gave us the opportunity to hear the direct experiences of a range of elected members, prospective candidates and organisations working to broaden representation in local government. We have drawn on that information to inform this report and to explore areas for future consideration.

This year this focused on 3 main issue, affordability, payments made to co-opted members and reporting requirements for Community and Town Councils. The Panel would like to thank all those that contributed to our deliberations either directly or through feedback and questions on our last report.

The Panels’ proposals will now be consulted on and following consideration of views received in response to this consultation the Panel will make its final determinations and issue the 2024 to 2025 final report, in February 2024.

Deliberations and determinations for 2024 to 2025

Basic salary for elected members of principal councils: Determination 1

The basic salary, paid to all elected members, is remuneration for the responsibility of community representation and participation in the scrutiny, regulatory and related functions of local governance. It is based on a full time equivalent of t3 days a week. The Panel regularly reviews this time commitment, and no changes are proposed for 2024 to 2025.

The Panel is fully aware of the current constraints on public funding and the impact its decisions will have on the budgets of Principal Authorities. The Panel is also mindful of our aims and objectives to provide a fair and reasonable remuneration package to support elected members and to encourage diversity of representation.

The Panel also noted that in previous electoral cycles, the remuneration of councillors fell far behind the key benchmark of Average Hourly Earnings in Wales (ASHE) and a significant uplift was therefore required in 2022.

The Panel has therefore determined that for the financial year 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 it is right to retain the link between the basic salary of councillors and the average salaries of their constituents. The basic salary will be aligned with three fifths of all Wales 2022 ASHE, the latest figure available at drafting. This will be £18,666.

Salaries paid to Senior, Civic and Presiding members of principal councils: Determination 2

The limit on the number of senior salaries payable (“the cap”) will remain in place.

All senior salaries include the basic salary payment. The different levels of additional responsibility of and between each role is recognised in a banded framework. No changes to banding are proposed this year.

The basic pay element will be uplifted in line with ASHE and this uplift will also apply to the role element of Bands 1, 2, 3 and 4. Where a Band 5 is paid, there is no increase to the role element as this remains temporarily frozen. The increase in the basic salary will apply.

The salary of a leader of the largest (Group A) council will therefore be £69,998. All other payments have been decided in reference to this and are set out in Table 1.

Group A

- Cardiff
- Rhondda Cynon Taf
- Swansea

Table 1: salaries payable to basic, senior, civic and presiding members of principal councils (Group A)

Description	Amount
Basic salary	£18,666
Band 1 Leader	£69,998
Band 1 Deputy Leader	£48,999
Band 2 Executive Members	£41,999
Band 3 Committee Chairs (if paid)	£27,999
Band 4 Leader of the largest opposition group	£27,999
Band 5 Leader of other political groups (if paid)	£22,406
Civic Head (if paid)	£27,999
Deputy Civic Head (if paid)	£22,406
Presiding Member (if paid)	£27,999
Deputy Presiding Member (basic only)	£18,666

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Group B

- Bridgend
- Caerphilly
- Carmarthenshire
- Conwy
- Flintshire
- Gwynedd
- Newport
- Neath Port Talbot
- Pembrokeshire
- Powys
- Vale of Glamorgan
- Wrexham

Table 1: salaries payable to basic, senior, civic and presiding members of principal councils Group B

Description	Amount
Basic salary	£18,666
Band 1 Leader	£62,998
Band 1 Deputy Leader	£44,099
Band 2 Executive Members	£37,799
Band 3 Committee Chairs (if remunerated)	£27,999

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Description	Amount
Band 4 Leader of the largest opposition group	£27,999
Band 5 Leader of other political groups (if paid)	£22,406
Civic Head (if paid)	£27,999
Deputy Civic Head (if paid)	£22,406
Presiding Member (if paid)	£27,999
Deputy Presiding Member (basic only)	£18,666

Group C

- Blaenau Gwent
- Ceredigion
- Denbighshire
- Merthyr Tydfil
- Monmouthshire
- Torfaen
- Isle of Anglesey

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Table 1: salaries payable to basic, senior, civic and presiding members of principal councils Group C

Description	Amount
Basic salary	£18,666
Band 1 Leader	£59,498
Band 1 Deputy Leader	£41,649
Band 2 Executive Members	£35,699
Band 3 Committee Chairs (if remunerated)	£27,999
Band 4 Leader of the largest opposition group	£27,999
Band 5 Leader of other political groups	£22,406
Civic Head (if paid)	£27,999
Deputy Civic Head (if paid)	£22,406
Presiding Member (if paid)	£27,999
Deputy Presiding Member (basic only)	£18,666

There are no further changes to the payments and benefits paid to elected members. All current Determinations will be published on our [website](#).

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There have been no changes made to allowances for:

- travel and subsistence
- care and personal assistance
- sickness absence
- corporate joint committees
- assistants to the executive
- additional salaries and job-sharing arrangements

Salaries for Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Determination 3

The salary of a chair of a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee will continue to be aligned to Band 3 and will be set at £9,333.

The salary of a vice-chair is set at 50% of the Chair and will be £4,667.

There are no other changes.

Payments to national parks authorities and fire and rescue authorities: Determination 4

The 3 national parks in Wales, Eryri (Snowdonia), Pembrokeshire Coast and Bannau Brycheiniog (Brecon Beacons), were formed to protect spectacular landscapes and provide recreation opportunities for the public. **The Environment Act 1995** led to the creation of a National Park Authority (NPA) for each park. National Park authorities comprise members who are either elected members nominated by the principal councils within the national park area or are members appointed by the Welsh Government through the Public Appointments process. Welsh Government appointed and council nominated members are treated equally in relation to remuneration.

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The 3 fire and rescue services (FRAs) in Wales: Mid and West Wales, North Wales and South Wales were formed as part of Local Government re-organisation in 1996. FRAs comprise elected members who are nominated by the Principal Councils within each fire and rescue service area.

In line with the Panel's decision to increase the basic salary of elected members of principal councils, the remuneration level for ordinary members of both NPAs and FRAs is also increased in line with ASHE.

The remuneration for Chairs will remain linked to a principal council Band 3 senior salary. Their role element will therefore increase accordingly. Deputy chairs, Committee chairs and other paid senior posts will remain linked to a Band 5. This means the role element of their pay will continue to be temporarily frozen. Full details of the levels of remuneration for members of NPAs and FRAs is set out in Table 2.

Table 2: payments to national parks authorities

National parks authorities	Amount
Basic salary for ordinary member	£5,265
Chair	£14,598
Deputy chair (where appointed)	£9,005
Committee chair or other senior post	£9,005

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Table 2: payments to fire and rescue authorities

Fire and rescue authorities	Amount
Basic salary for ordinary member	£2,632
Chair	£11,965
Deputy chair (where appointed)	£6,372
Committee chair or other senior post	£6,372

All current Determinations, including restrictions on receiving double allowances, will be published on our website. Other than the above increases, there are no changes proposed this year.

Payments made to co-opted members of Principal Councils, National Park Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities: Determination 5

The current Determination (made in the 2022 to 2023 Annual Report) states that co-opted members of the relevant bodies should be remunerated on a day or half day basis. In addition, the relevant officer may decide on the total number of days remunerated in a year and set a reasonable time for meeting preparation.

The Panel has noted the changes to working practices, put in place during Covid and now becoming more routine, that has meant a move towards more frequent use of online meetings and or training courses, often short, as well as more regular committee meetings. The panel also received feedback from Heads of Democratic Services raising this issue.

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The Panel considered moving to an hourly rate instead. This would better reflect new ways of working and hours actually worked. However, the Panel recognised that this may not always be appropriate, especially to cover in person meetings scheduled to last several hours.

The Panel therefore proposes there should be local flexibility for the relevant officer to decide when it will be appropriate to apply a day or a half day rate or to use an hourly rate where it is sensible to aggregate a number of short meetings, as outlined in Table 3.

Table 3: payments made to co-opted members of Principal Councils, National Park Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities

Role	Hourly rate payment	Up to 4 hours payment rate	4 hours and over payment rate
Chairs of standards, and audit committees	£33.50	£134	£268
Ordinary Members of Standards Committees who also chair Standards Committees for Community and Town Councils	£29.75	£119	£238
Ordinary Members of Standards Committees; Education Scrutiny Committee; Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee and Audit Committee	£26.25	£105	£210
Community and Town Councillors sitting on Principal Council Standards Committees	£26.25	£105	£210

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Community and Town Councils

The Panel continues to mandate payments for the extra costs of working from home and payments for office consumables. There is no change to the Determination made last year.

Mandatory payments: Determination 6

Payment for extra costs of working from home

All councils must pay their members £156 a year (equivalent to £3 a week) towards the extra household expenses (including heating, lighting, power and broadband) of working from home.

Set payment for consumables

Councils must either pay their members £52 a year for the cost of office consumables required to carry out their role, or alternatively councils must enable members to claim full reimbursement for the cost of their office consumables.

It is a matter for each council to make and record a policy decision in respect of when and how the payments are made and whether they are paid monthly, yearly or otherwise. The policy should also state whether and how to recover any payments made to a member who leaves or changes their role during the financial year.

Compensation for financial loss: Determination 7

Compensation for financial loss is an optional payment. The amount for financial loss was not increased last year.

Previously, the Panel determined that an appropriate level of payment should be set at the daily rate of ASHE.

To maintain this link, the figures for 2024 are now proposed as £119.62 for a full day and £59.81 for a half day.

Reporting requirements: Determination 8

Community and Town Councils are required to submit an annual statement of payments to the Panel by the 30 September each year, and also publish this on their website. The Panel have provided a template return for clerks to use.

The Panel have discussed and considered changing the requirements for Community and Town Councils when submitting their statement of payment returns. The Panel's aim is to simplify administration and encourage Councils to ensure all mandatory payments are made to individual members.

The Panel proposes that from September 2024, the returns need only show the total amounts paid in respect of the mandatory payments mentioned above. That is the £156 contribution to the costs of working from home and the £52 set rate consumables allowance and the travel and subsistence expenses paid.

This brings these in line with the reporting of the costs of care and personal assistance allowances.

Payments to community and town councils

Type of payment	Group	Requirement
Reimbursement for time spent on CTC matters (previously known as Basic Payment)	1 (Electorate over 14,000)	£156 mandatory for all members. All councils must pay their members £156 a year (equivalent to £3 a week) towards the extra household expenses (including heating, lighting, power and broadband) of working from home
Reimbursement for office consumables whilst working from home	1 (Electorate over 14,000)	£52 mandatory for all members. All councils must pay their members £52 a year (equivalent to £1 a week) towards the cost of office consumables whilst working home
Senior role payment	1 (Electorate over 14,000)	Mandatory for 1 member; optional for up to 7
Mayor or Chair of Council	1 (Electorate over 14,000)	Optional: up to a maximum of £1,500
Deputy Mayor or Deputy Chair of Council	1 (Electorate over 14,000)	Optional: up to a maximum of £500
Attendance Allowance	1 (Electorate over	Optional

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	14,000)	
Financial loss	1 (Electorate over 14,000)	Optional
Travel and subsistence	1 (Electorate over 14,000)	Optional
Costs of care	1 (Electorate over 14,000)	Mandatory
Reimbursement for time spent on CTC matters (previously known as Basic Payment)	2 (Electorate over 10,000 to 13,999)	£156 mandatory for all members. All councils must pay their members £156 a year (equivalent to £3 a week) towards the extra household expenses (including heating, lighting, power and broadband) of working from home
Reimbursement for office consumables whilst working from home	2 (Electorate over 10,000 to 13,999)	£52 mandatory for all members. All councils must pay their members £52 a year (equivalent to £1 a week) towards the cost of office consumables whilst working from home
Senior role payment	2 (Electorate over 10,000 to 13,999)	Mandatory for 1 member: optional up to 5

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Mayor or chair of Council	2	Optional: up to a maximum of £1,500
	(Electorate over 10,000 to 13,999)	

Deputy Mayor or Deputy Chair of Council	2	Optional: up to a maximum of £500
	(Electorate over 10,000 to 13,999)	

Attendance allowance	2	Optional
	(Electorate over 10,000 to 13,999)	

Financial loss	2	Optional
	(Electorate over 10,000 to 13,999)	

Travel and subsistence	2	Optional
	(Electorate over 10,000 to 13,999)	

Costs of care	2	Mandatory
	(Electorate over 10,000 to	

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13,999)

Reimbursement for time spent on CTC matters (previously known as Basic Payment) 3 £156 mandatory for all members. All councils must pay their members £156 a year (equivalent to £3 a week) towards the extra household expenses (including heating, lighting, power and broadband) of working from home (Electorate over 5,000 to 9,999)

Reimbursement for office consumables whilst working from home 3 £52 mandatory for all members. All councils must pay their members £52 a year (equivalent to £1 a week) towards the cost of office consumables whilst working home (Electorate over 5,000 to 9,999)

Senior role payment 3 Optional up to 3 members (Electorate over 5,000 to 9,999)

Mayor or Chair of Council 3 Optional: up to a maximum of £1,500 (Electorate over 5,000 to 9,999)

Deputy Mayor or Deputy Chair of Council 3 Optional: up to a maximum of £500 (Electorate over 5,000 to 9,999)

Attendance allowance 3 Optional (Electorate over 5,000 to 9,999)

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Financial loss 3 Optional
(Electorate
over 5,000
to 9,999)

Travel and subsistence 3 Optional
(Electorate
over 5,000
to 9,999)

Costs of care 3 Mandatory
(Electorate
over 5,000
to 9,999)

Reimbursement for time spent on CTC matters (previously known as Basic Payment) 4 £156 mandatory for all members. All councils must pay their members £156 a year (equivalent to £3 a week) towards the extra household expenses (including heating, lighting, power and broadband) of working from home
(Electorate over 1,000 to 4,999)

Reimbursement for office consumables whilst working from home 4 £52 mandatory for all members. All councils must pay their members £52 a year (equivalent to £1 a week) towards the cost of office consumables whilst working home
(Electorate over 1,000 to 4,999)

Senior role payment 4 Optional up to 3 members
(Electorate
over 1,000
to 4,999)

Mayor or Chair of Council 4 Optional: up to a maximum of £1,500
(Electorate
over 1,000)

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to 4,999)

Deputy Mayor or
Deputy Chair of
Council

4 Optional: up to a maximum of £500
(Electorate
over 1,000
to 4,999)

Attendance
allowance

4 Optional
(Electorate
over 1,000
to 4,999)

Financial loss

4 Optional
(Electorate
over 1,000
to 4,999)

Travel and
subsistence

4 Optional
(Electorate
over 1,000
to 4,999)

Cost of care

4 Mandatory
(Electorate
over 1,000
to 4,999)

Reimbursement for
time spent on CTC
matters (previously
known as Basic
Payment)

5 £156 mandatory for all members. All councils must
(Electorate pay their members £156 a year (equivalent to £3 a
less than week) towards the extra household expenses
1,000) (including heating, lighting, power and broadband) of
working from home

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Reimbursement for office consumables whilst working from home	5 (Electorate less than 1,000)	£52 mandatory for all members. All councils must pay their members £52 a year (equivalent to £1 a week) towards the cost of office consumables whilst working home
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Senior role payment	5 (Electorate less than 1,000)	Optional: up to 3 members
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Mayor or Chair of Council	5 (Electorate less than 1,000)	Optional: up to a maximum of £1,500
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Deputy Mayor or Deputy Chair of Council	5 (Electorate less than 1,000)	Optional: up to a maximum of £500
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Attendance allowance	5 (Electorate less than 1,000)	Optional
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Financial loss	5 (Electorate less than 1,000)	Optional
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Travel and subsistence	5 (Electorate less than 1,000)	Optional
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Cost of care	5 Mandatory (Electorate less than 1,000)
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There have been no changes made to payments for undertaking senior roles; allowances for travel and subsistence; care and personal assistance or attendance allowance.

All current Determinations will be published on our website.

Summary of Determinations 2024 to 2025

Determination 1

The basic level of salary for elected members of principal councils will set at £18,666.

Determination 2

The salary of a leader of the largest (Group A) council will be £69,998. All other payments have been decided in reference to this. All payments are set out in Table 1.

Determination 3

The salary of a chair of a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be £9,333.

The salary of vice-chair will be £4,667.

Determination 4

The basic pay of members of National Park Authorities and Fire and Rescue authorities has been increased. All payments are set out in Table 2.

All current Determinations, including restrictions on receiving double allowances, will be published on our website. Other than the above increases, there are no changes proposed this year.

Determination 5

For co-opted member payments, the Panel proposes there should be local flexibility for the relevant officer to decide when it will be appropriate to apply a day or a half day rate or to use an hourly rate where it is sensible to aggregate a number of short meetings.

The full and half day rates remain unchanged from 2023 to 2024. The only change is the stipulation of hourly rates, as set out in Table 3.

Determination 6

Members of Community and Town Councils will be paid £156 a year (equivalent to £3 a week) towards the extra household expenses (including heating, lighting, power and broadband) of working from home. And Councils must either pay their members £52 a year for the cost of office consumables required to carry out their role, or alternatively councils must enable members to claim full reimbursement for the cost of their office consumables.

Determination 7

Compensation for financial loss is an optional payment. The amount for financial loss was not increased last year.

Previously, the Panel determined that an appropriate level of payment should be set at the daily rate of ASHE.

To maintain this link, the figures for 2024 are now proposed as £119.62 for a full day and £59.81 for a half day.

Determination 8

The Panel proposes that from September 2024, the returns need only show the total amounts paid in respect of the mandatory payments mentioned above. That is the £156 contribution to the costs of working from home and the £52 set rate consumables allowance and the travel and subsistence expenses paid.

This brings these in line with the reporting of the costs of care and personal assistance allowances.

All other Determinations set out in the 2023 to 2024 [Annual Report](#) of the Panel remain valid and should be applied.

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

27TH NOVEMBER 2023

DIVERSITY IN DEMOCRACY.

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to remind Members of the previous work of the Committee in respect of Diversity in Democracy and the resulting actions undertaken to increase Diversity within Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council through the Council's Diversity Pledge.
- 1.2 The report also illustrates the need for a continued focus by the Council with the diversity agenda.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members

- 2.1 Note the content of the report and the work undertaken to date in respect of Diversity within Democracy
- 2.2 Acknowledge the suggested improvements highlighted within the report, to further improve the diversity in democracy agenda within the Council.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The need to ensure that Diversity in Democracy is continually promoted by the Council to achieve a Council that is reflective of the County Borough and Members are reflective of the people that they serve.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 It is important for democratic institutions and public services to reflect the diversity of the population they represent and serve. The diversity agenda has been growing across all aspects of public life and it is important that we as a Council are committed to increasing diversity, which includes tackling the barriers which prevent an individual's active participation in local democracy.

- 4.2 At the Democratic Services Committee meeting on the 1st October 2020, Members considered the written statement from the then Minister for Housing and Local Government on [phase 2 of the diversity in democracy programme](#). Following consideration of the statement, Members resolved to take forward a working group to consider aspects of the plan in respect of diversity.
- 4.3 The work of the Diversity working group looked to improve the equality and diversity across the County Borough, within the local democracy setting. It was acknowledged that the more representative of society and diverse our Elected Members are, the better understanding they will have of the needs of the local community and therefore are better equipped at carrying out their duties and responsibilities.
- 4.4 The Working Group produced an interim report in May 2021, which identified areas of ‘awareness raising’ ahead of the 2022 Local Government Elections. The Group also recognised the good practice of establishing a Memorandum of Understanding and assisted in the drafting of the Council’s Diversity Pledge, with both documents subsequently endorsed by Council.
- 4.5 Due to the forthcoming 2022 Local Governments Elections and the need to progress some of the recommendations already identified by the Working Group an [interim report](#) was produced which resulted in 16 recommendations. The implementation plan associated with those recommendations are attached as Appendix 1.
- 4.6 Following the interim report, the Working Group continued to meet and received input from numerous organisations, who provided detail and context of the barriers faced, although no further recommendations were taken forward.
- 4.7 It is important to note that the Working Group recognised that in respect of diversity in democracy, there were and still are many things outside of the Council’s control and work needed, and continues to be needed, to be taken forward in conjunction with political parties and other stakeholders to promote the diversity agenda .
- 4.8 Since this work, the Senedd’s Local Government and Housing Committee published its [report](#) on Diversity in Local Government on the 17th October 2023. The report’s aim was to assess progress on diversity in local government since the 2022 Elections. The Chair of the Committee noted that “Despite recent developments, continued momentum towards increasing diversity in local government remains a concern.”
- 4.9 The Minister for Finance and Local Government, within the above inquiry commented that there was “an awful lot of progress in recent years”, noting the diversity in democracy programme and the “significant changes” through the 2021 Act, although acknowledged that further progress is needed.

5. HOW DOES DIVERSITY IN DEMOCRACY LOOK – 2022 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS?

5.1 The Welsh Government, with the support of Data Cymru, carried out of a survey of local government election candidates for the May 2022 elections.

5.2 A total of 1,077 responses were received. Of these, 309 were elected as County Councillors and 444 were elected as Community Councillors, 352 were not elected in either capacity and 116 had an unknown outcome. It should be noted that the numbers do not add up to 1,077 as candidates can stand for, and be elected as, County and Community Councillors at the same time.

5.3 There were 3,291 County candidates and 6,639 Community candidates in the 2022 local government elections. Overall, 38% of County candidates were elected as County Councillors and 82% of Community candidates were elected as Community Councillors.

Sex

5.4 Of the 1,077 candidates who responded to the survey, 40% were female and 60% were male.

5.5 Around three-fifths (60%) of the 309 candidates elected as County Councillors in 2022 were male and around two thirds (69%) of the 261 candidates who stood for election as County Councillors in 2022 but were not elected were also male. Among the 444 Community Councillors elected in 2022, around three-fifths were male (57%) and a similar proportion of the 138 Community candidates who were not elected, (58%) were male.

Age

5.6 Half of the 1,077 candidates who responded to the survey (50%) were aged 60 years or over, around two-fifths (38%) were aged between 40 and 59 years, a tenth (10%) were aged between 25 and 39 years and the remaining 2% were aged between 18 and 24 years.

5.7 Around half (46%) of elected County Councillors and 56% of elected Community Councillors who responded to the survey were aged 60 years or older. Only a very small proportion of those elected County Councillors (2%) and Community Councillors (1%) were aged between 18 to 29 years. Among the 399 County and Community candidates who were not elected in 2022, 5% were aged between 18 to 29 years.

Ethnicity

5.8 Overall, 96% of the 1,077 candidates reported they were from a White ethnic group.

5.9 Only 1% of candidates reported they were from an Asian, Asian Welsh or Asian British ethnic group, 1% reported they were from mixed or multiple ethnic

groups and around 1% reported they were from Black, Black Welsh, Black British, Caribbean or African ethnic groups. Around 2% of respondents chose not to answer this question.

Religion

- 5.10 Around half (54%) of the 1,077 candidates who responded to the survey noted their religion as Christian (including all denominations), a further 40% said they had no religion and 3% answered 'other' and provided a range of responses, including Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh. The remaining 4% chose not to answer this question.
- 5.11 There was little variation across the answers provided by elected County and Community Councillors and candidates who were not elected.

Sexual orientation

- 5.12 The survey found that 88% of the 1,077 candidates who responded to the survey identified as 'heterosexual or straight', 6% identified as 'lesbian, gay or bisexual' and the remaining 1% identified as 'any other sexual orientation'.
- 5.13 Among the 309 elected County Councillors who responded, 6% stated they were lesbian, gay or bisexual, while 8% of the 261 County candidates who were not elected in 2022 identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual. The proportion of elected Community Councillors and Community candidates who were not elected in 2022 and who identified as being lesbian, gay or bisexual were 5% and 6% respectively.

Disability

- 5.14 The majority of the 1,077 candidates who responded (82%) reported that they did not consider themselves to be a disabled person, while 14% of candidates did consider themselves to be a disabled person. A small proportion (3%) of respondents indicated that they preferred not to say.
- 5.15 Of the 309 County Councillors who responded, around a tenth (13%) considered themselves to be a disabled person, while 15% of the Community Councillors who responded considered themselves to be a disabled person.
- 5.16 Around a third (35%) of the 1,077 candidates who responded to the survey indicated that they had at least one health condition or impairment. Of these 379 candidates, around a quarter (26% or 97 respondents) listed conditions or impairments in more than one category. Around a fifth (17%) of all candidates also noted that they had a long-term health condition.

Education

- 5.17 Around two thirds of the 1,077 candidates who responded to the survey (63%) held a highest qualification equivalent to Level 4 or above (e.g. a degree, post

graduate or professional qualification), a further 29% held a qualification equivalent to Level 1-3 and the remaining 5% held no qualifications.

- 5.18 The results were very similar across both elected County and Community Councillors and candidates who were not elected in 2022.

Employment

- 5.19 Around two-fifths (43%) of the 1,077 candidates noted they were employed, either full-time (30%) or part-time (13%), 38% of candidates were retired, a further 14% were self-employed and 2% were unemployed. The remaining 10% provided a range of other responses, including that they were either full-time or part-time students, on maternity leave, long-term sick or disabled, unpaid carers or unpaid workers in a family business.
- 5.20 Of the 309 County Councillors who responded, around a half (47%) were employees, 14% were self-employed, and around a third (32%) were retired. Two-fifths (40%) of the 444 Community Councillors who responded were employees, 13% were self-employed, and 43% were retired.
- 5.21 Around half of all candidates who responded (46%) stated that their current, or most, recent employment was in the public sector (including local government, central government, NHS, education and other public sector), 43% worked in the private sector, 8% worked in the voluntary sector and 1% in 'other' sectors (including agriculture).

Welsh language

- 5.23 A large proportion (91%) of the 1,077 candidates who responded indicated that their preferred language was English, while around a tenth (9%) said their preferred language was Welsh.
- 5.24 The survey indicated that 28% of the candidates that responded could understand spoken Welsh, around a fifth (22%) could speak Welsh, 23% could read Welsh, and 18% could write in Welsh.

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

- 5.25 Rhondda Cynon Taf is the 3rd largest Council area in Wales made up of communities with different needs and aspirations. Covering a wide geographical area it has a population of just over 237,000 people. Like much of Wales we have a population that is growing older with an increase of people aged over 65, with 1 in 5 people in this age group. The majority of the county's population identify as White Welsh and British, though the ethnic minority population has slightly grown in recent years. Over half of the population have no religion, of the rest of the population Christianity is the predominant religion.

- 5.26 Following the 2022 Local Government Elections, the Council introduced 35 new Members to the Council. Of the 75 Members of the Council, 35 Members are Female (47%) with 40 Members being Male (53%).
- 5.27 In respect of Positions within the Council:
- 1 Male Leader of the Council and 1 Female Deputy Leader
 - Other Political Groups – 1 female political leader with 3 Male political Leaders. 2 Female deputy leaders of Political Groups with 3 Male deputy political Leaders.
 - 3 Members of the Cabinet are Female with 5 Members of the Cabinet being Male
 - 10 Female Members are Chairs of Committee with 17 Male Members are Chairs of Committee
 - 15 Female Members are Vice Chairs of Committee with 10 Male Members are Vice Chairs of Committee ¹
 - 1 Madam Mayor
 - 1 Male Presiding Officer with 2 deputy Presiding Members (1 Female / 1 Male).
- 5.28 Through the Diversity & Democracy Report 2023 the WLGA advised that greater progress had been made in improving gender diversity following the 2022 elections, but noted that it was more difficult to assess diversity across other protected characteristics.
- 5.29 Traditionally, the average age of councillors in Wales was around 60 and has remained stubbornly within that range for many years. Within RCT following the Local Government 2022 Election, there has been a clear shift in the age range of Members, with the majority of Members being below the age of 60.
- 5.30 In light of the above information RCT Council favours well in comparison to many other Local Authorities with its gender balance ratio. However, there is still lots the Council must do to attract other diverse candidates in coming forward and engaging within the democratic process.
- 5.31 In respect of ethnicity, the Council has improved in this area, although is still non reflective of the County Borough as a whole.
- 5.32 The number of Elected Member with Welsh as their first language has decreased since the 2022 Election, although the Council promotes the use of the Welsh Language across all aspects of its work and the wider County Borough.

6. WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS TO DEMOCRACY?

- 6.1 The role of a councillor is stimulating, rewarding and regarded as a privilege by many. The role however is a challenging and demanding one and is not one that should be considered lightly; it is a complex and demanding role, which requires a significant time commitment and can therefore have implications on people's family lives and work-life balance. It can impact on a professional career and on an individual's income and future financial security. It is also a role that can expose individuals (and their families) to regular personal criticism, insults and even threats, particularly through social media.

¹ 1 Vice Chair position to be appointed and 1 vice chair on a rotational basis with other Local Authority.

6.2 A number of studies have been compiled to look at the barriers to democracy with such studies highlighting:

- Child care and other caring responsibilities
- Time-commitment and meeting times
- Public criticism and online abuse
- Public's understanding of local government and the role and responsibilities of councillors and the Council itself is limited therefore portraying a political and organisational culture
- Remuneration and Employment
- Role models and incumbency

6.3 Members of the previous Democratic Services Working Group also considered the following as potential barriers:

- Disability access
- Technical / Digital Barriers
- Language Barriers
- Support and guidance for independent candidates

7 WHAT ARE WE DOING TO CONTINUE THE DIVERSITY AGENDA, AS LINKED TO THE COUNCIL'S DIVERSITY PLEDGE AND PREVIOUS WORK OF THE DIVERSITY WORKING GROUP.

7.1 The Council recognises that Diversity within Local Government creates an inclusive environment, accepting of every individual's differences, enabling all Councillors to achieve their full potential and as a result, allowing Council services to reach their fullest potential for the benefit of its residents. At the Council meeting of the 26th May 2021 the Council formally committed to being a Diverse Council, using the work of the Democratic Services working group as its foundation. A link to the Council's pledge can be found [here](#).

7.2 The following provides details of the actions listed within the pledge and the work carried out to date in respect of this work.

7.3 Diversity Champions

Current Position: Each Political Group Leader agreed to undertake the role of a Diversity Champion ahead of the 2022 Local Government Elections and as a Council, Members agreed to take forward the Fair & Respectful Election Campaign Pledge. The Council's Deputy Leader has continued to take forward the 'Member Equalities Champion' role, as highlighted within the Diversity Pledge, due to her role as Cabinet Member for Council Business and strong work with equalities across the Council.

Suggested improvements - It is suggested that the role of Diversity Champions is discussed at the next Political Group Leaders Meeting to continue this positive role within each political group and that the Council's Equalities Manager attends a Group Meeting in respect of Diversity.

7.4 Engaging with 3rd Sector Organisations and underrepresented groups / Learning Events.

Current Position: Through the work of the Diversity Working Group, Members met with various organisations to listen and learn of the barriers to diversity in democracy, felt by different groups. Such organisations included Race Alliance Wales and the Diverse 50:50 Campaign.

Prior to the Election, the Head of Democratic Services took forward engagement events at the Council Chamber and virtual events for prospective Candidates, providing a platform for learning opportunities into how the Council works and further information into the role of a Councillor.

During the recent Democracy Week (October 2023) the Council invited individuals from Innovate Trust to the Council Chamber to support them with their understanding of the work of the Councillor, the role of a Councillor and the importance of registering to vote. This event has helped us build and learn how we can better engage and promote democracy to everyone to ensure we build a diverse democracy for the future.

It is the intention that further workshop settings with various groups to help educate and engage people across the County Borough in the democratic process will be scheduled. The Council's Public Participation Strategy has recently been endorsed by Council which will assist in taking forward aspects of this work.

Suggested improvements: To have any beneficial impact, such engagement needs to commence early before any Local Government Election, to allow any interested individual sufficient time to get involved in a political party prior to selection processes or to stand independently.

Since the 2022 Local Election, the number of engagement opportunities has been minimal due to the Council Business Unit heavily supporting newly Elected Members in their new roles. However, the Head of Democratic Services is committed to taking forward such events from the next Municipal Year, working with the Council's Community Development Officer and wider team, providing virtual platforms and engagement sessions in local settings to create comfortable environments for such engagement. A calendar of such events will look to be created and promoted on the Council's Public participation section of the website which is being developed, linked with the Council's Public Participation Strategy.

7.5 Council Website

Current Position: Through the work of the DSC Working Group, a review of the Council's democracy pages was undertaken. Opportunities were taken forward to promote the role of a Councillor, through written advice on the relevant webpages and video recordings of past and present Members, sharing their

experiences of being a Members and providing information on the support arrangements in place, including details in respect of remuneration and how to stand for Election. Links to such pages can be found [here](#).

Suggested improvements: Further improvements to the Council democracy pages on the Council's website has been identified, with the addition of further videos and infographics to be added to the pages to display some of the information in a more engaging and accessible manner. One of the most recent videos in respect of democracy can be found [here](#).

7.6 Promotion of the role of a Councillor at Council Job and Career Fairs

"We agree that promoting awareness of the role of a councillor and how people can stand for election is key to increasing interest in local politics. "

Current Position: Members of the Council Business Unit, along with colleagues in elections, attended the RCT Jobs Fair within Llys Cadwyn to promote the role of a Councillor and to raise the importance of voting. There was positive engagement at the session, through educating people across the County Borough about the role and future possibilities of standing as a candidate at future elections and the importance of establishing a diverse Council.

The Council sought funding from the democracy engagement fund to help support such events through a promotional banner and ipads to promote the opportunity for online voter registration. The Grant looked to encourage and support people to participate in democracy, helping funded organisations ensure as many people as possible are engaged, motivated, and empowered to take part in democracy, giving them the tools to make their voice heard and impact positively on the Wales around them. However, the Council were unsuccessful with their bid submission.

Suggested improvements: Visual displays to be reviewed to seek further engagement at future events. It is also suggested that where possible Member engagement is also provided, so the public can hear first hand about the role of a Councillor.

7.7 Welsh Government candidates' and Councillors' survey.

As part of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, local authorities are required to conduct a standardised survey of Councillors and candidates for election to the office of Councillor in their areas. The survey is to include both County and Town and Community Councillors and candidates and asks a prescribed set of questions that included (but was not limited to) questions about sex and gender identity; sexual orientation; language; ethnicity; age; disability; religion or belief; health; education and qualifications; employment; and work as a Councillor. Data Cymru conducted the 2022 survey on behalf of the local authorities. The main aim of the survey was to provide timely information on the demographic profile of local authority Councillors and candidates. The intention

is that the survey will be repeated during each ordinary election to track changes in Councillors' and candidates' characteristics over time.

Through the Diversity pledge the Council gave a commitment to ensuring that all members and candidates complete the Welsh Government candidates' and councillors' survey distributed at election time.

As required, the Council provided Welsh Government with the details of all candidates standing for election, to allow them to receive the survey.

Suggested Improvements – Further promotion of the survey and the need for completion will be promoted to all candidates and newly elected Members whenever possible following publication of the survey, including promotion during the Member Induction Programme.

Within the Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Bill, Section 26 relates to the Survey of councillors and unsuccessful candidates in local elections. It is suggested that in addition to the core questions in the survey, which apply to each local authority in Wales, it allows local authorities to include questions aimed at identifying the impact of any local initiatives established to improve the diversity of candidate standing in the election for which the survey is being undertaken.

7.8 To take forward improved equality monitoring of Members

Through the Diversity Working group, Members considered the proposal to take forward an independent Members diversity survey which would serve as a benchmark for the Authority going forward. During the work of the group the Diversity and Inclusion Manager brought forward research conducted in respect of socio-economic questions to be included within a potential survey for Members consideration, prior to a complete survey being considered.

Following the research, the following areas were recommended for Socio-economic background monitoring to which Members of the working group agreed:

- a. Parents/Guardian Occupation
- b. Type of secondary school attended
- c. Parents qualification/university attended
- d. Eligibility for Free School Meals

Suggested Improvements – The proposed survey presented to the Working Group in 2021 be reviewed by the Diversity and Inclusion Manager to ensure that it is still fit for purpose. Once finalised this survey to be conducted within the current term of office for Members.

7.9 Working with Diversity Champions to encourage each political group to set ambitious targets for candidates from under-represented groups at the 2022 local elections.

Work in this area has not been taken forward to date, due to the need to appoint diversity champions within the Council's political groups.

Suggested Improvements - Through the regular Political Group Leaders meeting, agenda Items in respect of diversity target setting will be incorporated for future meetings.

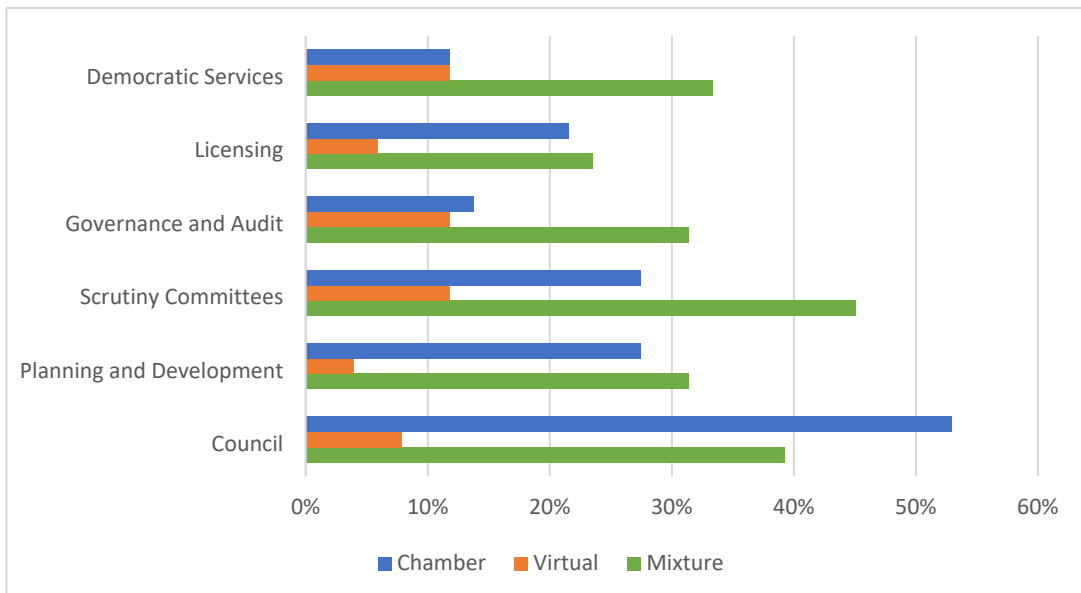
7.10 The development and promotion of new ways of working for members, including the provision of hybrid meeting opportunities and eLearning platforms which will assist and encourage all candidates and those from underrepresented groups to stand for office.

The 2021 Act enabled local authorities to hold multilocation meetings, which the Welsh Government described as a potentially important reform, particularly in the encouragement of diversity.

“Hybrid working was broadly welcomed by all witnesses, enabling those with conflicting priorities, such as work or caring responsibilities, or councillors with disabilities to attend meetings where they might otherwise not been able to. WEN Wales noted that the “permanent enshrinement” of remote working in the 2021 Act “is another positive step that provides better access for women with caring responsibilities and disabled people”

The Council has positively embraced hybrid meeting arrangements, which is reflected in the Council’s Multi Location Meeting Policy and Public Participation Strategy. The Council recognises the benefits this provision has for both Elected Members and the public in attending Committee meetings.

During the recent Member Survey, when Members were asked about their preference for attending in person or online or a mixture of both, Members responded as follows:



Meeting	Chamber	Virtual	Mixture
Council	53%	8%	39%
Planning & Development	44%	6%	50%

Scrutiny Committees	33%	14%	53%
Governance & Audit	24%	21%	55%
Licensing	42%	12%	46%
Democratic Services	21%	21%	58%

There is a clear view that the flexibility to attend either physically or remotely is a great benefit for Elected and Co-Opted (Lay) Members.

The professional approach by the Council to hybrid meetings has been recognised by other Authorities with the Council hosting a range of hybrid meetings for other organisations, including the WLGA Annual General Meeting.

The webcasting of meetings is a further area which promotes engagement in the democratic process, allowing the public the option to watch meetings live, without having to attend the Council Chamber, which can often be seen as a barrier, which may ignite an interest in members of the public to become a future candidate.

Through the Democratic Services Committee, the Council have produced an ambitious Development Programme for Members, providing Member briefing sessions on a virtual or hybrid basis to allow for the convenience of Members. These sessions are recorded to allow Members to access the recording if they were unable to attend the session or to act as a refresher. Members have been provided with useful electronic handbooks by the WLGA and access to the RCT source which provides numerous eLearning opportunities.

Suggested improvements – The move of the Council Headquarters, including the Council Chamber to Pontypridd Town Centre is also viewed as a positive addition, allowing better access to Elected Members and democracy with better transport links available.

It is the intention for the Members Portal to host an area for the undertaking of E-learning modules in the future.

7.11 Continue working towards the standards for member support and development set out in the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development.

The WLGA has been working with Heads of Democratic Services to develop a voluntary self-evaluation framework for Councils to use to assess the effectiveness of the support they provide for Councillors. This framework is a modernisation of the former Wales Charter for Councillor Support and Development which it replaces.

It is proposed that the existing Charter be replaced by a voluntary self-assessment framework that focusses on the support provided for Councillors to deliver the outcomes needed by their communities. The framework aims to cover all aspects of good practice in Councillor support. However, as priorities and resources differ between councils, it would be for councils to decide locally how much of the framework to use and which sections should be prioritised.

At the September meeting of the Democratic Services Committee, Members provided feedback in respect of the proposed framework which was out to consultation.

Suggested improvements - The Council have always strived to provide the best support and development opportunities to its Members and this is reflected in the Council's positive track record of achieving both the Charter, Advanced Charter and the Good Practice and Innovation Award. The Council will continue to listen to its Members to guide us with the support needed and will always strive to learn and adapt to meet the needs of our Members.

7.12 Continue to demonstrate a commitment to a duty of care for Councillors by:

- a) **providing access to counselling services for all councillors through the Councils Occupational Health Service and Cari Wellbeing Service.**
- b) **Promoting the general open-door policy for Members to contact the Head of Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer for any concerns**

Through the Member Personal Development Process all Members were reminded of the access available to the Council's Occupational Health Service and the open door policy of Senior Officers for any Member concerns. Reminders of these important messages and access and referrals to the then Cari System (now Vivup system) have been proactively promoted in the Members weekly update.

The Council Business Unit has reintroduced the Member Coffee sessions in advance of Council meetings and other committee meetings, to allow Members the important opportunity to come together and network, which was an important aspect highlighted as important to Members wellbeing, which can sometimes be missed through the virtual settings that we often work in.

During October a session in respect of Members Wellbeing was provided to all Members, where details of Vivup amongst other important messages were promoted to Members. Arrangements were also made for Members to receive the flu jab, for those under the age of 60.

A further wellbeing session is scheduled for December. Members have been surveyed on the potential topic for the next session to ensure that we are providing advice and guidance that is helpful to Members.

Suggested Improvements – An area in respect of Members Well being is being developed on the Members Portal to act as a timely reminder to Members about

the importance of their own health and well being, when also taking forward the work of the Council and their constituents.

The working arrangements being made available within the new Council Headquarters provides areas for Members to hot desk and take forward meetings within the Members area, to allow for improved networking arrangements.

c) having regard for the safety and wellbeing of councillors whenever they are performing their role as councillors and ensuring that all Members are aware of the safety provisions in place for Members through the Council Business Unit in partnership with the Community Safety Partnership and South Wales Police

A report in respect of [Members safety](#) was provided to the Democratic Services Committee in April detailing important advice and guidance to Members in respect of their safety. Details of the lone working policy were also provided to Members during the Member Induction Programme as well as a Member briefing session during the induction programme.

Recently, a members briefing session with South Wales Police was arranged during September, with again first hand advice and guidance to members when undertaking their role.

Cyber security training was also provided inhouse by the digital skills team and a further session by South Wales Police was also provided during both September and October.

Arrangements have been made to trial the 'StaySafe' App, which acts as a personal alarm when Members are feeling intimidated or at risk. Demonstrations to Members that have indicated their interest in this trial are scheduled for November.

Security arrangements are in place within the Council Chamber, when Members are involved with public meetings, as there can be occasions when contentious decisions are made. Arrangements have been made for security devices to be installed at Member addresses if deemed necessary.

Suggested Improvements – Following the trial of the stay safe App, all Members will be contacted to discuss whether each Member would like to utilise this important safety feature.

The new working arrangements within the new Council Headquarters should make it easier for Members to meet with residents within designated meeting rooms within the building, with the building controlled with appropriate security arrangements, including the Council Chamber.

d) zero-tolerance approach to bullying and harassment by members including such harassment through social networks

Members have been provided with social media training opportunities to help with the managing of their Council social media accounts. Members are strongly

advised to take forward a separate Councillor account and refrain from sharing any personal information on this account with their own personal social media platforms. A social Media policy has also been developed and was shared with Members during induction.

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



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

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

Suggested Improvements – Members are encouraged to contact the Police and the Head of Democratic Services when dealing with any online abuse and harassment.

e) Providing training and learning opportunities to support Members in undertaking their role.

Through the work of the Democratic Services Committee the Council are working to support the development of all of its Elected Members and to ensure that they are able meet the demands of their roles. As a Council we look to ensure that:

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

In July 2023, the Democratic Services Committee approved the [Member Development Programme](#) for the Municipal Year, which was formed following the Member Personal Development Review and Committee requests. The programme also reflects upon the Welsh Government Competency Framework and modules identified through this framework as general good practice.

Training has also been taken forward in respect of Equality training and training is also scheduled for Gender Fluidity, to assist Members in their role.

Suggested Improvement - The Head of Democratic Services, working with the Council's Corporate Training Team (People Development), has identified opportunities to undertake Members training analysis meetings, to assist Members with identifying any training needs.

Through the Members Portal, Members will have access to the recently developed data library which will provide access to accurate and timely data, which will include details of equalities within the County Borough.

f) Surveying Members annually on the support arrangements available.

As part of the statutory responsibilities of the Head of Democratic Services, the Council is required to survey the views of its Members in relation to the calendar of meetings and the provision of support and resources to non-executive members during an elected term.

In view of this requirement the Head of Democratic Services, in consultation with the Democratic Services Committee, has made arrangements for a bilingual survey to be conducted on an annual basis. In March 2019 Members of the

Committee agreed to the drafting of the survey, which has been adapted over the last few years to recognise changes in working practices, such as hybrid meetings. The previous Democratic Services Committee, agreed to this broader survey, to support service improvement going forward. Such elements are not part of any statutory requirements.

The result of the survey are reported to the Democratic Services Committee to consider the feedback contained within and to consider any action necessary resulting from the feedback contained.

The report in respect of the most recent survey is available [here](#).

During September 2023, the Head of Democratic Services provided a Members Briefing Session to all Members reminding Members of the support arrangements available for Members to access through Democratic Services and Member Services.

Suggested Improvements – That the Council Business Unit continue to conduct the Annual Survey and take forward any areas raised by Members.

g) providing recess periods during school holidays to support councillors with caring or work commitments.

As agreed at the Council AGM on the 23rd May 2018 (Minute No.15(3) Refers) Committee meetings were to be convened outside of the School holiday periods, save for exceptional circumstances (urgent business requirements). This scheduling has proved successful for Members and it is proposed that this continues.

h) Promoting the welsh language provision available to all Members at Council meetings

Welsh Language provision is available for the Council Committee meetings for any Member or Member of the public to utilise when addressing Committee. The Council meets its Welsh Language Standards in respect of Committee meeting papers and publication.

The Council also promotes welsh language learning opportunities to all Members.

i) Sufficient provision of ICT equipment and support to allow a Member to undertake their role effectively.

Through the new ways of working imposed on the Council through the pandemic, and the new statutory required hybrid approaches to meetings, the provision of ICT equipment to Members is now more important than ever.

Post-election, all Members were equipped with a digital device to allow them to undertake their Elected Member role, and to attend Committee meetings via the

virtual Zoom platform, with appropriate training provided to each Member through the Council Business Unit and ICT colleagues.

In line with the recommendations of the Independent Review Panel and the decision taken forward by the Democratic Services Committee, Members were provided with a mobile telephony provision. Members can take forward the option of receiving a contribution from the Council for any personal telephony arrangements if they do not wish to utilise the handset provided by the Council.

- j) Encourage all members take up the allowances and salaries to which they are entitled, particularly any reimbursement for costs of care, so that all members receive fair remuneration for their work and that the role of member is not limited to those who can afford it.**

The salary and Member allowances is promoted to all Members during the Member Induction Programme and reminder of such allowances are provided during the Member Personal Development Review.

Details of remuneration are also promoted on the Council website to promote these benefits for any perspective candidate.

Developments within the Member Portal have included the claiming of Member expenses, which will make such a process easier for Members to undertake, rather than the current paper exercise. Detail of allowances and salaries will also be promoted within this area of the Portal.

- k) Encourage Members to participate in the Local Government Pension Scheme to assist in protecting them in their retirement.**

Details of the Local Government Pension Scheme are made available to Members during the Member Induction Programme. If Members require any additional details in respect of the scheme they are able to contact relevant officers within the Council to assist with their queries.

- l) Encourage Members to discuss reasonable adjustments to assist them in undertaking their role.**

Again, following the Member Induction Programme, Members are asked if there are any reasonable adjustments they would like to assist them in undertaking their role. Reminders of such adjustments are also highlighted within the Personal Development Review. However, Members can speak to the Head of Democratic Services or any officer within the Council Business Unit to discuss any adjustment which may assist in their role.

- M) Encourage the take up of provisions available to Members in respect of broadband allowances and mobile phone provision to assist Members in undertaking their role.**

The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales expects Members to be provided with adequate support to carry out their duties and that the support provided should take account of the specific needs of individual Members. The

Democratic Services Committee is required to review the level of support provided to Members and should take proposals for reasonable support to the full council. All Elected Members & Co-opted Members should be provided with adequate telephone, email and internet facilities to give electronic access to appropriate information.

Members are provided with telephone provision and devices.

8 OTHER AREAS OF CONSIDERATION IN RESPECT OF DIVERSITY OUTSIDE OF THE RCT PLEDGE.

Access to Elected Office Fund and The Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Bill

- 8.1 In 2021, the Welsh Government launched a pilot scheme to fund reasonable adjustments and support for disabled candidates seeking election to Senedd Cymru 2021 election and 2022 Local Government elections.
- 8.2 The fund was administered by Disability Wales and covered costs such as assistive aids, training, travel, personal assistance and communication support.
- 8.3 An independent Review of the Access to Elected Office Fund Wales Pilot has been concluded and published. The report concluded that the arrangements put in place were welcomed and valued by candidates and that there was clear support for the fund to be continued. As with any pilot there were lessons to learn. In this case key points included the limited amount of time the fund was available to candidates, the need for greater clarity about what support is available, and the need for greater awareness and promotion of the fund.
- 8.4 The Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Bill provides consideration of Accessibility and Diversity within Welsh Elections, which looks to legislate to ensure the fund continues to be available for future elections. The Bill includes reference to:
 - **Services to promote diversity in persons seeking elected office** - duty on Welsh Ministers to put in place arrangements aimed at improving diversity within Senedd and Local Government democratic structures by providing assistance to remove barriers to participation including initiatives and schemes for underrepresented individuals seeking election to Senedd and local government election.
 - **Financial assistance schemes to promote diversity in persons seeking elected office** - Section 29 provides for individual schemes to be created and tailored to provide support for either a single protected characteristic and / or common barriers across a range of protected characteristics and socio-economic circumstances.
- 8.5 Welsh Government carried out an evidence review of councillor remuneration in Wales and how it compares with other countries (Williams, 2021), and a survey

of public attitudes (Owens, 2021). The final element of this research involved carrying out an online survey of councillors in Wales at principal and community and town council levels. Taken together, the research findings from all three stages will broaden understanding of the role and remuneration of councillors in Wales from multiple perspectives. [Councillor remuneration and citizen engagement with councillors: survey of councillors | GOV.WALES](#)

9 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

9.1 The work of the Democratic Services Committee Diversity working group looked to improve the equality and diversity across the County Borough and within the local democracy setting. The more representative of society and diverse our Councillors are the better understanding they will have of the needs of the local community and therefore are better equipped at carrying out their duties and responsibilities

10. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Encouraging diversity within democracy includes promotion of all languages. The Council has positively promoted and supported bilingual engagement at Council meetings and provision of Committee materials.

11. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

11.1 No formal consultation is necessary.

12. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

12.1 None.

13. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

13.1 The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 outlines a number of duties placed on Local Authorities in respect of the diversity agenda

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

14.1 The work of a Councillor is fundamental to the Council's Corporate plan, as Councillors are the mouthpiece for the communities that they serve.

14.2 Ensuring that there are greater opportunities for a more diverse democracy across RCT links to the Wellbeing of Future Generations goals of a more equal Wales and a Wales of cohesive communities

15. CONCLUSION

- 15.1 Trying to achieve a diverse culture is challenging and the Democratic Services Committee has proactively taken forward work in this area to promote diversity within the Council, through its former Working Group who identified potential barriers that may dissuade members of the public to stand as a candidate for election.
- 15.2 As a Council we need to ensure that any perceived barriers are eradicated and instead celebrate and promote the rewarding experiences of becoming a Councillor.
- 15.3 Ensuring Members have a clear understanding of their roles and behaviour in and outside of the Council Chamber is paramount to ensuring a safe and inclusive working environment for all.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DIVERSITY WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS - IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION TAKEN TO DATE (2021)	CURRENT POSITION (2023)
<p>Recommendation 1. To work collaboratively with the YEPS Service, Schools and Colleges in the run up to the 2022 Local Government Election to further promote and educate the importance of the youth vote and the democratic process. Utilising the opportunities for engagement and awareness raising and the educating of a 'role of a Councillor' through Key Stage 3, the Welsh baccalaureate and citizenship lessons within schools</p>	<p>Meeting taken forward with Director of Education & Inclusion Services and YEPS regarding the best engagement opportunities to take forward with schools and young people.</p> <p>Infographic materials produced and circulated to young people to help raise awareness of the voting process</p>	<p>Through Welsh Government Funding , the Council secured an engagement officer within the Elections team, who has taken forward positive engagement promoting the importance of registering to vote and voting through schools, YEPS, Higher Education, University of South Wales, along with other organisations.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2 To review the effectiveness of the voting awareness raising campaigns following the Senedd Elections and to build upon these campaigns ahead of the Local Government Elections 2022, ensuring wider partnerships arrangements are taken forward to allow engagement with wider audiences.</p>	<p>Report presented to Working Group on the 9th September with proposed way forward for the voting awareness campaign and review of the Senedd Election.</p>	<p>Early engagement with the Council's communications team to ensure an appropriate awareness campaign is taken forward for any future election, taking forward the lessons learned from previous campaigns</p>
<p>Recommendation 3 To review the Council Websites 'Democracy pages' to promote the role of a Councillor with details and videos of local Members, promote how the work of a Councillor links in with everyday services taken forward by the Council and provide details and links of the different tiers of government to assist in increasing the understanding of democracy within</p>	<p>Demonstration of the work undertaken on the Council website to be provided to the working group on the 9th September for comment.</p> <p>Filming for the video promoting the role of a councillor has been undertaken. This will be shared with the working group for comment</p>	<p>Continual review and updating of the webpages to ensure they are fit for future.</p> <p>Recent updates to include democracy video of Members; Democracy infographic and links to the Democracy Portal, recently</p>

<p>RCT and Wales. To ensure that the page demonstrates the features available to Members – such as translation facilities, audio equipment within the Chamber, Hybrid meeting opportunities and promoting reasonable adjustments to prevent any perceived barriers for any future candidate</p>	<p>before final editing and promoting on the website – Date to be confirmed.</p>	<p>launched during Democracy Week 2023.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4 To take forward the positive relations and opportunities to work with Town and Community Council's to ensure links with 'Democracy pages' are promoted on own website / social media platforms and for similar local 'role of a councillor' to be developed and promoted.</p>	<p>Once webpages are finalised, promotion of the pages and links with community and town councils will be taken forward through the Councils Community Liaison Committee</p>	<p>Complete</p>
<p>Recommendation 5 To promote the remunerations and allowances that are available to Members on the Council's website and to candidates standing for Election by linking with the Council's Democracy page</p>	<p>Demonstration of the work undertaken on the Council website provided to the working group on the 9th September for comment. Discussions to be taken forward with Election's office regarding promotion of information to candidates and to Group Leaders.</p>	<p>Details of remuneration are available on the Council website and promotional materials.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6 To promote the Councils democracy pages and the role of a Councillor to established groups, such as School Governors who are often already active within their local communities and could potentially look to become candidates at a future election</p>	<p>Once the webpages are finalised work will be undertaken to promote the work to Governor support, community groups and other organisations</p>	<p>Need to review engagement opportunities.</p>

<p>Recommendation 7 To liaise with the Council's Employment, Education & Training team to establish the opportunity for a 'Democracy stall' at a future Council Career Fair to further promote the role of a Councillor and how democracy works within RCT and Wales.</p>	<p>Communication has been sent to the Manager of the team and meeting will take place over the next month to discuss how best to engage in the Career Fairs.</p>	<p>Recent attendance at the RCT Jobs Fair, promoting both the role of a Councillor and voter registration.</p>
<p>Recommendation 8 Members welcome the introduction of a Public Participation Strategy and welcome the opportunity to drive forward further public engagement in democracy by seeking the public's view on items for consideration at scrutiny meetings, ensuring work programmes are dealing with issues that matter to residents of the County Borough. As part of the duty of the Act and to engage the public in local democracy the Council will need to provide a constitution guide to be developed and promoted on the Council website which the working group also welcomes.</p>	<p>Work needs to be taken forward by the Council Business Unit and the Consultation & Engagement Manager to consider the Councils future participation strategy.</p> <p>Work to be taken forward with Director of Legal Services in respect of the easy read guide to the constitution</p>	<p>The Councils Public Participation Strategy was endorsed by Council at its October meeting.</p> <p>Work is being taken forward to develop participation pages on the Council democracy pages, including improved engagement with registration to speak at Committee meetings.</p>
<p>Recommendation 9 To continue to address the works needed at the Council Chamber to ensure that the Chamber is Fully accessible</p>	<p>All works in the Chamber are now complete.</p>	<p>Through the Office Accommodation Strategy, the relocation of the Council Headquarters including Council Chamber to Pontypridd Town.</p>
<p>Recommendation 10 Following the easing of lock down restrictions and when safe to do so take forward the opportunity for the promotion of 'open invites' to the Chamber for</p>	<p>Although restrictions are easing the Council still want to continue a cautious approach to</p>	<p>Following the office relocation, opportunities for such 'open invites' will be taken forward to</p>

<p>potential candidates so they can learn more about the role of a Councillor and work within a Council Chamber.</p>	<p>attendance in the Council Chamber, currently only inviting Elected Members and Officers to attend. This will constantly be reviewed.</p>	<p>encourage and engage with potential future candidates</p>
<p>Recommendation 11 That the Member induction programme provides all Members with the skills and knowledge base to undertake their role. Ensure that a rolling programme of training is developed for each Member throughout their term of office and to provide the opportunity for mentoring for Newly Elected Members when requested.</p>	<p>The Council Business Unit are currently pulling together a draft Member Induction Programme which will be shared with the Democratic Services Committee and Group Leaders to ensure it is fit for purpose.</p> <p>A current training programme is also being developed for the Municipal year, taking forward 1:1 requests for training following Members PDR and general training opportunities through an open forum.</p>	<p>A detailed Member Development Programme has been developed for the 2023 – 2024 Municipal Year.</p>
<p>Recommendation 12 To undertake a diversity survey with Members which will provide a benchmark for future elections and allow the Council Business unit to review the support / barriers that may have been experienced by a Member during their term of office. The undertaking of such a review will help to deliver a positive and diverse environment for future Members to undertake their roles.</p>	<p>A draft diversity survey will be considered by the working group following the meeting on the 9th September, after discussions in respect of the socio economic questions to be included.</p>	<p>The need to review the survey considered by the working group to ensure it is still fit for purpose.</p> <p>To undertake such a survey during the current term of office.</p>
<p>Recommendation 13 To ensure Members are advised of the support available to them through the Council Business unit</p>	<p>Included in all induction pack material are the contact details of the Head of Democratic Services</p>	<p>Following the Member Induction Programme, the Head of</p>

<p>and the Head of Democratic Services – providing contact details at the earliest opportunity during the Member Induction. Ensuring Members are aware of the ‘Open Door’ policy of the Head of Democratic Services.</p>	<p>and Council Business Unit team details, including details of the Members Hotline.</p> <p>The Head of Democratic Services will provide detail of the support arrangements available during a Members induction which is always followed up by Members of the team in respect of training, digital or general support.</p>	<p>Democratic Services has recently undertaken a Members Briefing Session to remind Members of the support arrangements available.</p> <p>Reference to support available is promoted regularly through the Members Weekly update.</p>
<p>Recommendation 14</p> <p>To consider introducing a ‘statement of understanding’ for Members outlining their duties as a Councillor including the need to have mutual respect within the Council Chamber.</p>	<p>A statement of understanding is currently being drafted and will be presented to the next meeting of the working group for comment.</p>	<p>Through the work of the Democratic Services Committee, the Council endorsed the Memorandum of Understanding.</p> <p>We are looking to seek Members consent to the MOU, which will be added to each Members profile on the Council webpage.</p>
<p>Recommendation 15</p> <p>That the Members Portal is utilised to provide Members with bitesize’ information in respect of ‘diversity within RCT’ to assist Members in their understanding and promotion of diversity within their wards and across the County Borough.</p>	<p>Discussions have taken place with the Diversity and Inclusion Manager about providing this information to Members and the best approach to undertake.</p>	<p>Development have been made to integrate the Council’s Data Library within the Members Portal which will provide Members with data in respect of diversity within RCT.</p>
<p>Recommendation 16</p> <p>To seek the participation of Group Leaders to champion the diversity expectations within the selection processes of their political parties and to encourage Group Leaders to promote the advice</p>	<p>The interim report of the working group was considered at an extra ordinary meeting of the Council where the Council also agreed to become a</p>	<p>Further work with Group Leaders to be taken forward.</p>

<p>available to future candidates or individuals considering standing for office at the earliest opportunity</p>	<p>diverse Council by signing up to the diversity declaration.</p> <p>Meetings will be taken forward with Group Leaders surrounding the work of the working group and the role of Group Leaders in pushing the diversity agenda.</p>	
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