

A SHARED COMMUNITY – MODEL CHARTER

**Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
and the
Town Council of Pontypridd
and the
Community Councils
of**

**Ynysybwl & Coed y Cwm, Rhigos, Hirwaun, Llantwit Fardre, Llantrisant,
Llanharan, Llanharry, Tonyrefail, Gilfach Goch, Pontyclun and
Taff's Well & Nantgarw have agreed to publish a Charter which sets out
how we aim to work together for the benefit of the local communities**

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Introduction

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and the Town Council of Pontypridd and the Community Councils of Ynysybwl & Coed y Cwm Community Council, Rhigos, Hirwaun, Llantwit Fardre, Llantrisant, Llanharan, Llanharry, Tonyrefail, Gilfach Goch, Pontyclun and Taffs Well & Nantgarw have agreed to publish a Charter which sets out how we aim to work together for the benefit of local communities whilst recognising our respective responsibilities as autonomous, democratically elected statutory bodies.

The Charter is designed to build on existing good practice and embrace the shared principles of openness, respect for each other's opinions, honesty and our common priority of putting citizens at the centre. This Charter is based on equality of partnership and is not a top-down arrangement.

Partners to the Charter

The following Unitary Authority, Town and Community Councils are committed to the principles and statements as outlined in this Charter, for the benefit of local people:

- Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
- Pontypridd Town Council
- Community Councils of:
 - Ynysybwl & Coed y Cwm
 - Rhigos
 - Hirwaun
 - Llantwit Fardre
 - Llantrisant
 - Llanharan
 - Llanharry
 - Tonyrefail
 - Gilfach Goch
 - Pontyclun
 - Taff's Well & Nantgarw

RECOGNITION

We accept the legitimacy and benefits of partnership working whilst at the same time recognising and respecting each other's roles. We aim to work together as a partnership of equals rather than tiers.

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	Town and Community Councils
Acknowledges and recognises that Town and Community Councils are the grass roots level of local government. In their role as democratically accountable bodies, Town and Community Councils offer a means of engaging with local people, of decentralising the provision of certain services and of revitalising local communities.	Recognise the strategic importance of the Unitary Authority and the economy of scale and equitable distribution of certain services they are able to achieve.
Recognise and respect the diversity of Town and Community Councils and that their needs vary according to size and the extent to which they participate varies.	Recognise that Town and Community Councils come within the common umbrella of the Unitary Authority.

LOCAL GOVERNANCE

We will be clear about the expectations that we have of each other in order to facilitate a smooth working relationship. In this regard, we will define the way in which we interact with each other. We will be clear about the role of Councillors at all levels in the relationship and community leadership.

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	Town and Community Councils
<p>At its Council Meeting held on the 12th January, 2011, Members agreed to the establishment of a Community Liaison Committee comprising the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Council Business and other Cabinet Members as and when appropriate and the Chairs of the Town and Community Councils.</p> <p>Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council will hold liaison meetings with representatives of all Town and Community Councils that wish to take part; and will be convened as and when felt appropriate, with due consideration to others e.g. sufficient notice will be given of such meetings.</p>	<p>Will contribute towards the agenda of liaison meetings and participate proactively to the attendance and discussion.</p>
<p>Will ensure that a member of staff within the Authority will undertake the Liaison Officer duties and will be the point of contact between the Authority and the Town and Community Councils.</p>	<p>Will contact the nominated Officer on the agreed issues and make them aware of any difficulties being encountered.</p>
<p>Will administer the holding of Town and Community Council elections.</p>	<p>Will notify the need for elections in a timely manner.</p>

CONSULTATION

<p style="text-align: center;">Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Town and Community Councils</p>
<p>All formal meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Regulatory Committees (Development Control and Licensing), Scrutiny and its Working Groups are published on the Council's website together with the agendas and reports (excluding reports that contain exempt information) and links to such reports will be emailed to the Clerks of the Town and Community Councils prior to each meeting.</p>	<p>Town and Community Councils will respond to consultation opportunities in a timely manner, addressing the key issues as appropriate.</p> <p>Will make full use of the papers available to them to inform local decision-making.</p>
<p>Officers of the Authority will attend meetings with Town and Community Councils (or groups of Councils) at a mutually agreed time to discuss matters of common interest when requested to do so and will be given sufficient notice.</p>	<p>County Borough Councillors and Officers will be given the opportunity to speak at Town and Community Council meetings on matters of mutual interest.</p>
<p>Will encourage Scrutiny Committees to liaise with Town and Community Councils on relevant local issues.</p>	<p>Will respond to requests to input views to Scrutiny Committees.</p>

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

We appreciate the need for timely, clear and relevant information and communication in fostering good relationships and better joint working for the benefit of local people.

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	Town and Community Councils
Will provide to Town and Community Councils a list of named contacts, telephone numbers and where possible email addresses. In times of uncertainty, the Clerks can go direct to the nominated Liaison Officer.	Will utilise the agreed contact points and respond in the most appropriate and timely method.
Will communicate by providing sufficient numbers of documents for members of Town and Community Councils.	Will ensure that all Town and Community Councillors have access to the appropriate documents.

JOINT WORKING AND ENGAGEMENT

The Charter defines `Partnership` as working together towards a common set of goals based on equality in terms of ownership, decision-making and recognition of each party's distinctive contribution. It is recognised that an equal and effective partnership brings benefits and responsibilities to all those involved. Local government at both tiers must work together to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of our area. If doing things differently achieves a better service, we will seriously examine these methods.

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	Town and Community Councils
Will provide opportunities for Clerks of Town and Community Councils to meet to discuss common concerns and will endeavour to resolve issues.	Will encourage participation by Clerks in opportunities to network and share common concerns.
Will be clear about how devolved services can be discussed and agreed.	Will use the agreed procedures, if there is a wish, to progress devolved services.
Will give due consideration to devolving services that would provide better value for money and/or enhanced services.	Will be clear about how any devolvement of services will provide better value for money and/or enhanced services.
Will encourage accountability for all acquired activities.	Will take responsibility for aspects of joint working that are signed up to.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

We accept the benefits of training and development for Councillors to assist them in undertaking their role.

**Rhondda Cynon Taf
County Borough Council**

Town and Community Councils

Will provide opportunities for Town and Community Councils to partake in its training and development programme.

Will encourage its Members to attend training sessions offered by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council.

LAND USE PLANNING

Town and Community Councils know and understand their local area and must be able to comment effectively on planning matters. Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council is able to take an overview of the needs of the whole local area and make decisions, taking local views into account.

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	Town and Community Councils
Will uphold its statutory duty to consult Town and Community Councils on all planning applications in their communities.	Make appropriate responses to the Unitary Authority recognising the parameters imposed by planning law and agreed planning policy.
Will advise the appropriate Town and Community Councils, by emailing the link to the respective Clerk(s) of the agenda for site visits relating to planning applications in its area.	Ensure that Councillors receive training on planning issues and have a sound understanding of how planning law works and will also encourage its Members to partake in any training in respect of planning issues that the Unitary Authority may provide.
The outcome of all planning decisions taken by the Council's Development Control Committees will be published, in minutes format, on the Council's website, 10 working days following the date of the meeting.	Maintain an objective and professional approach to planning matters at all times.
Will email links to relevant Development Control meetings to the Clerks of the appropriate Town and Community Councils in order that they can inform their respective members so that they may attend as observers.	Councillors to take up the opportunity to attend Development Control meetings of the Unitary Authority.

PRACTICAL SUPPORT

In order to be effective, elected members and officers must be well-trained and have the support they need to carry out their roles.

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	Town and Community Councils
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council will, where practical, offer Town and Community Councils access to support services, to enable them to take advantage of facilities such as printing, IT, purchasing at a mutually agreed price.	Will follow procedures set out to access the Authority's support services, but will also have the opportunity to make their own arrangements.

EXPERTISE

We will encourage continuous development of Officers and Members in both Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and the Town and Community Councils, either in their individual groupings or together. Improved expertise leads to professionalism and more effective joint working.

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	Town and Community Councils
Will offer Member induction training to Town and Community Councillors to enable them to understand the role and functions of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council.	Will provide an induction to newly elected Councillors to enable them to undertake their role effectively.

ETHICS

We will provide an ethical service to local people, following the appropriate standards and Code of Conduct. We will encourage links between Town and Community Councils Clerks and Rhondda Cynon Taf Council's Standards Committee

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	Town and Community Councils
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council will, through the appointed Monitoring Officer, support Town and Community Councils in the timely consideration and provision of advice in relation to the application of the Members' Code of Conduct.	Town and Community Councillors shall not make vexatious complaints under the Code and will provide all such information as required by the Monitoring Officer to enable him/her to carry out his/her function effectively.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Both Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and the Town and Community Councils recognise the need for clarity and transparency in financial arrangements. In developing and implementing financial arrangements, relevant national and local priorities will be taken into account.

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	Town and Community Councils
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, in setting the level of Council Tax for the area, will have regard to services being delivered by Town and Community Councils in its area, and the funding thereof.	Town and Community Councils, in setting the annual precept, shall have regard to the plans for service delivery of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council for the coming year.

DELEGATING RESPONSIBILITY FOR SERVICE PROVISION

Services should be delivered in the most appropriate manner, with regard to value for money and added value for local people.

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	Town and Community Councils
<p>Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council will give due consideration to all reasonably argued cases for the delegation of service delivery to Town and Community Councils, basing its consideration primarily on the improvement of service delivery for citizens whilst ensuring value for money is retained or enhanced.</p>	<p>Town and Community Councils will recognise that there are certain instances where it is not appropriate or desirable Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council to delegate service delivery.</p>
<p>Where it is not appropriate or desirable to delegate service delivery, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council will seek ways in which local information from communities might be used to enhance service delivery to better meet citizen needs.</p>	<p>Town and Community Councils will engage with the citizens in the Communities they serve to understand better their needs and convey these needs in a coherent and constructive manner to Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, so that it can be taken into account of in service design and delivery.</p>

SUSTAINABILITY AND WELL BEING

We will work in ways that are sustainable, reconciling the long-term needs with those of the present and protecting and improving the quality of life of current generations without compromising the quality of life of future generations. We will work to build a strong local economy, to promote independence and positive lives and to create neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work.

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	Town and Community Councils
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council will assist Town and Community Councils with information on sustainable practices.	Will proactively assess the sustainability of current practices and processes.
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council will outline how it is actively pursuing sustainable development.	Will investigate projects which contribute to sustainability where beneficial to the community.
Rhondda Cynon Taff will proactively assist Town and Community Councils in addressing and fulfilling their relative responsibilities and duties under the Well Being of Future Generations Act 2015.	Town and Community Councils will work with Rhondda Cynon Taff where appropriate in relation to meeting the Well Being Objectives and reporting to the Cwm Taf Public Services Board's published Well Being Plan.
Rhondda Cynon Taff will inform and update the Town and Community Councils regarding the work of the Cwm Taf Public Services Board and the Well Being Objective Plan and assist the Town and Community Councils where necessary in working towards the Well Being goals.	Town and Community Councils will work with Rhondda Cynon Taff where appropriate regarding consultation with their local communities in relation to the Well Being Objectives.

COMMUNITY STRATEGY

We recognise the strategic importance of the Community Strategy as the overarching strategic vision and priorities for the local area. Furthermore, we recognise that the Community Strategy will only be fully effective if it is informed by the grass roots experiences from within our communities.

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	Town and Community Councils
Will involve Town and Community Councils in the development of the local Community Strategy.	Will contribute to the development of the Community Strategy in its development stage.
Will involve Town and Community Councils in the implementation of the Community Strategy.	Will respond actively and fully to consultation of the draft Community Strategy.

LOCAL ELECTIONS

Fair and open elections are the bedrock of local democracy. We will ensure that elections are fairly contested, and encourage local people to become involved in local democracy.

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	Town and Community Councils
Will involve Town and Community Councils in the local election planning process.	Will encourage participation in the local election process by members of the local community.
Will involve Town and Community Councils in any awareness raising/publicity to encourage nominations for candidacy at local elections.	Will ensure wide publicity of vacancies on Town and Community Councils to maximise community representation.
Will help to publicise forthcoming local elections on behalf of Town and Community Councils.	Will facilitate public participation at all relevant meetings of the Council and its Committees to encourage community involvement.
Will brief Town and Community Councils on the nomination process so that they are equipped to assist any potential candidates who come forward for local elections.	
Will provide help and assistance with the local election legal and administrative processes and procedures.	

ACTION PLAN

This Charter will be supported by the development of an annual Action Plan addressing each of the individual topics contained therein. The Action Plan will be developed on a joint basis and shall attribute responsibilities to each partner. Actions will be accompanied by a timescale and will be reported on at least quarterly during the year concerned.

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	Town and Community Councils
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council will nominate a lead Officer for the development and monitoring of the Action Plan.	Town and Community Councils will collectively agree priorities for inclusion in the Action Plan.
Responsible Officers of the Authority will have due regard to the Action Plan and include relevant actions in their workplan for the year.	Town and Community Councils will have due regard to the Action Plan and include all actions relevant to them during the course of the year.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Charter will be fully reviewed every four years or more often if there is a need to do so. The Community Liaison Committee will measure progress annually in achieving the measures set out in the Charter through the setting and reviewing of actions contained in an action plan.

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	Town and Community Councils
Will arrange for the Charter to be reviewed every four years or as agreed.	Will actively contribute to the review of the Charter.
Will arrange for the development of an action plan linked to the Charter and will actively contribute to achieving the action plan.	Will actively contribute to the development and delivery of the Charter action plan.

Partners to the Charter

The undersigned Unitary Authority, Town and Community Councils are committed to the principles and statements with the Charter, for the benefit of local people.

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Leader of the Council

Dated

Chief Executive

Dated

Pontypridd Town Council

Chair

Dated

Clerk

Dated

Ynysybwl & Coed y Cwm Community Council

Chair

Dated

Clerk

Dated

Rhigos Community Council

Chair

Dated

Clerk

Dated

Hirwaun Community Council

Chair

Dated

Clerk

Dated

Llantwit Fardre Community Council

Chair

Dated

Clerk

Dated

Llantrisant Community Council

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Llanharan Community Council

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Llanharry Community Council

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Dated

Clerk

Dated

Tonyrefail Community Council

Chair

Dated

Clerk

Dated

Gilfach Goch Community Council

Chair

Dated

Clerk

Dated

Pontyclun Community Council

Chair

Dated

Clerk

Dated

Taff's Well & Nantgarw Community Council

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