



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **SCRUTINY CHAIRS & VICE CHAIRS MEETING**

**5<sup>th</sup> JULY 2021**

#### **UPDATE REPORT**

#### **REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATIONS**

#### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs with an update in respect of the recent scrutiny refresher training, Cabinet/Scrutiny engagements sessions and draft work programmes ahead of the July 2021 scrutiny committee cycle (draft scrutiny work programmes appended to the report at Appendix 1)
- 1.2 Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs will also receive a verbal update from the Service Director Democratic Services in respect of the forthcoming hybrid meetings arrangements.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Scrutiny Chairs & Vice Chairs:

- 2.1 Consider and comment on the information contained within the report and endorse the draft scrutiny work programmes (where applicable) in advance of consideration by the individual scrutiny committees); and
- 2.2 Acknowledge the arrangements in taking forward the hybrid approach to meetings.

#### **3. SCRUTINY REFRESHER TRAINING**

- 3.1 The Council Business Unit recently arranged and facilitated Scrutiny refresher training sessions for the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and each of the four themed scrutiny committees.

- 3.2 Each training session included a Power Point presentation from the Service Director Democratic Services and Communications who provided an overview of the current scrutiny arrangements in Rhondda Cynon Taf in addition to a refresher on the key scrutiny tools available to Members. Each session was tailored to each individual scrutiny committee's themes/topics and provision of support.
- 3.3 Further information was provided by the Lead Officer(s) of each scrutiny committee on the key topics for consideration for the forthcoming 2021/22 Municipal Year. Feedback will be evaluated by the Council Business Unit to assist with future training sessions.
- 3.4 As a follow-up, it is the intention to provide all scrutiny members with a comprehensive scrutiny toolkit which will act as a handy guide to the scrutiny procedures and practices in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

#### **4. CABINET/SCRUTINY ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS & SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMMES**

- 4.1 Most Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs will have undertaken / or will soon be undertaking their quarterly meetings with the respective Cabinet Member and Senior Officers to populate forward work programmes and discuss any other items deemed necessary to assist both Cabinet and Scrutiny.
- 4.2 As previously reported, it is proposed that such meetings are diarised for the 2021-22 municipal year to assist Members and Officers with their diary commitments.
- 4.3 As Members are aware the number of scrutiny committees has reduced for the 2021/22 Municipal Year to prevent overburdening Members and Officers with a heavy workload and consideration of topics which produce fewer outcomes. It is proposed that prioritising scrutiny resources for key pieces of work will maximise effectiveness, rather than spreading efforts too thin.
- 4.4 It is proposed that due to the reduction in the number of scrutiny committees it is prudent to devise a work programme for the full financial year (up until March 2022 to allow for Purdah) so that less time is taken up with the review process. This does not detract from the ability of the individual scrutiny committees to use their best judgement in agreeing which items to take forward and to remain flexible when referrals are needed.

#### **5 WEBCASTING**

- 5.1 At the previous meeting of the Chairs and Vice Chairs, Members were advised that the Council was developing plans to enable the web-casting of chamber meetings and the ability to adopt a hybrid approach in preparation for the requirements of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act.
- 5.2 As set out in the reports to Cabinet ([24<sup>th</sup> June 2021](#)) and Council ([30<sup>th</sup> June 2021](#)) Officers are currently working through webcasting to ensure that training can be

rolled out incrementally to Members through a hybrid approach of meetings to allow them the flexibility to attend meetings in person or on a virtual basis. A timetable has been developed to enable the roll out to prioritise Cabinet, Democratic Services, Planning and Development and the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

- 5.3 It is anticipated that the briefing to Overview & Scrutiny Members will be undertaken towards the end of July so that they can familiarise themselves with the equipment and operational arrangements for webcast and hybrid meetings. It is proposed that the formal broadcast of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee will take place in September in conjunction with the wider roll out to the remaining committees.
- 5.4 Arrangements will account for the number of Members permitted to attend the Chamber in person to 26 (socially distanced). This figure will include officers from the Council Business Unit who will operate the hybrid infrastructure and will be in proportion to the political balance and following discussions with Group Leaders
- 5.5 The role of the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs will be paramount in managing the hybrid meetings therefore appropriate training will be provided to them in a timely manner which will include the voting app that will be available for Members to utilise through the Modern.Gov app, undertaking working group meetings adapting questioning techniques and strengthening their knowledge base already held by Members, whilst also considering promotion of public participation.

## **6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no Equality and Diversity implications arising from this report and no Equality Impact Assessment is deemed necessary for the purposes of this report.

## **7. CONSUTLATION**

- 7.1 Not applicable.

## **8. FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no financial implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

## **9. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN AND FUTURE GENERATIONS – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

- 9.1 The updates contained within the report will strengthen the Council's consideration and scrutiny of its work, through 'the lens of the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act'. These arrangements will be embedded into the business of the Council as set out in the Policy Statement agreed by Cabinet on [2 November 2016](#).

9.2 The proposals outlined within the report will work to ensure a sustainable and robust scrutiny structure is in place which will effectively challenge policy decisions taken forward.

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