



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**27<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021**

**DIVERSITY IN DEMOCRACY WORKING GROUP UPDATE**

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

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The purpose of the report is to provide Members with an update in respect of the recent meeting of the Diversity in Democracy Working Group.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 It is recommended that Members:

- (i) Note the areas of discussion taken forward at the meeting of the Diversity Working Group on the 9<sup>th</sup> September;
- (ii) Consider and approve the resulting recommendations arising out of the meeting as outlined within the report and to allow for these recommendations to be implemented in a timely manner.
- (iii) Subject to 2.1(ii) to consider and comment on the draft 'Memorandum of Understanding' attached as appendix A and to agree for this to be presented to the Council's Standards Committee for further comment and endorsement before presentation back to the Democratic Services Committee.

**3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 At the meeting of the Democratic Services Committee on the 10<sup>th</sup> May Members received and supported the interim report of the Diversity in Democracy working group and its resulting recommendations.

3.2 Due to the importance of the work of the group and its links with the work of the WLGA in respect of 'Council's Diversity Pledges' the interim report was presented to Council for further endorsement and to raise the profile of the work undertaken.

3.3 Members of the Council endorsed the 16 recommendations outlined by the working group and also committed to becoming a Diverse Council.

## 4 **WORKING GROUP GOING FORWARD**

4.1 Due to a change in Committee membership following the AGM the membership of the working group was re-opened to all Members. It was also noted that the Community Council Clerk that was on the membership had also resigned her position during this time period. We are currently seeking a further representative to join the working group from a Community Council perspective.

4.2 The Working Group took forward its first meeting since the Council AGM on the 9<sup>th</sup> September and considered the following:

- Representation and a PowerPoint presentation from Race Alliance Wales
- Analysis of the Youth Engagement Campaign undertaken by the Council
- Members Survey
- Monitoring of the Working Groups Recommendations – Implementation Plan
- Future working

4.3 During the meeting the following recommendations were made pertaining to each agenda item:

### 4.3.1 **RACE ALLIANCE WALES**

- a) That the powerpoint delivered at the meeting be circulated to all Members of the Democratic Services Committee for information
- b) That Members utilise the support available through RAW to promote the diversity agenda within democracy

### 4.3.2 **SURVEY OF MEMBERS**

- a) That a Members survey is undertaken (as recently discussed at the Democratic Services Committee on the 6<sup>th</sup> September) concentrating on questions regarding Member's intentions of re-standing for Election and any barriers associated with this decision.
- b) That a recommendation is taken forward to the WLGA in respect of surveying Members across the 22 Local Authorities in respect of diversity which include socio-economic questions

### 4.3.3 **YOUTH AWARENESS RAISING CAMPAIGN**

- a) That a longer 'Register to Vote' campaign is undertaken by the Council
- b) That stronger links with school engagement is taken forward, covid restrictions permitting
- c) That a glossy factsheet / newsletter is produced for young people to help educate on how to vote and the benefits of voting
- d) That the Diversity and Inclusion Manager provides Members with the research document published by Race Alliance Wales in respect of youth voting.

### 4.3.4 **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

- a) That advancements with the recommendations are presented to the Democratic Services Committee to allow the recommendations to be implemented in a timely manner rather than waiting for a full report of the working group to be presented.

- 4.4 The working Group are conscious of the time implications associated with its work and the positive impact any future recommendations may have on attracting new candidates to becoming a Councillor and the wider diversity campaign.
- 4.5 Going forward, the Working Group will concentrate on educating and information sharing and positive development of policies and action plans such as the Council's Race Equality Action plan. Members will also receive representatives from the 50:50 campaign and Stonewall.

## **5 MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

- 5.1 Within its interim report, the working group took forward a recommendation in respect of the creation of a 'Memorandum of Understanding'  
*"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."*
- 5.2 The intended outcome of the statement would be a demonstration of mutual respect to other people with varying political opinions and a show of working together for the benefit of its communities.
- 5.3 A draft Memorandum is attached at appendix A for Members comments.
- 5.4 It is proposed that with Member's agreement this draft is presented to the Council's Standards committee for further comment.
- 5.5 Following comments from the Standards Committee the draft will be presented back to the Committee for final consideration before presentation to Council.

## **6 COUNCIL DEMOCRACY WEBPAGES**

- 6.1 Work has been undertaken to develop the Council democracy pages as recommended by the working group  
*"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 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"*
- 6.2 Challenges encountered with these developments has been adapting the information into manageable bitesize information within the webpage structure and maintaining the accessibility requirements for the Council website.
- 6.3 To support these developments work has also been taken forward in respect of the video footage of local Members promoting the role of a Councillor. It is the intention that this video will be promoted on the Council website to further engage

potential candidates to stand for election and to further promote the role of a Councillor to residents.

- 6.4 The working group also acknowledged the opportunities of promoting the role of a Councillor through the Council's own Careers fairs.

*"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"*

- 6.5 Discussions have taken place with the Employment, Education & Training Manager and details of the role of a Councillor will be promoted through the virtual jobs fair webinars.

## **7 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY**

- 7.1 The work of the Democratic Services Committee Diversity working looks 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

## **8 WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 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.

## **9 CONSULTATION**

- 9.1 Diversity in Democracy Working Group.

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 10.1 The awareness raising opportunities referenced within the interim report can be delivered through platforms already available to the Council

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

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

- 10.1 The work of a Councillor is fundamental to the Council's Corporate plan, as Councillors are the mouthpiece for the communities that they serve.
- 10.2 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

## **11 CONCLUSION**

- 11.1 Trying to achieve a diverse culture is challenging and the Democratic Services Committee working group have, in a short period of time, already identified potential barriers that may dissuade members of the public to stand as a candidate for election.
- 11.2 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.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

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