



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

27th SEPTEMBER 2021

**SUFFICIENCY OF RESOURCES REPORT – STATUTORY ‘OPINION’ OF THE
HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To confirm the provision of staff, resources, and accommodation available to support Members in their role as set out within the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 (the “Measure”).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Democratic Services Committee:

- (i) Notes the overall support available to elected Members, as set out within the report and the approaches be taken forward;
- (ii) Notes the view of the Head of Democratic Services, as set out within the report; and
- (iii) Agree that the proposed restructure advised upon within the report, the future levels of staff, accommodation and other resources are adequate at the present time and that a further report be presented to this Committee by the Head of Democratic Services on the sufficiency of resources for Members’ support following the Council’s Annual General Meeting in May 2022.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Measure established the statutory requirement for Local Authorities to appoint a Democratic Services Committee to oversee the democratic services functions of the Council, ensuring that those functions are adequately resourced.
- 3.2 The Council’s Democratic Services Committee was established at the Council’s Annual General Meeting in May 2012.
- 3.3 The Council, through its Democratic Services Committee must appoint an officer as the statutory Head of Democratic Services. This Officer, who is

afforded statutory protection, is responsible for determining the appropriate level of support and facilities to enable members to effectively discharge their role as part of the democratic processes of the local authority.

- 3.4 The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales state in their 2019-2020 Annual Report that it is the responsibility of the Council, through its Democratic Services Committee, to provide support based on an assessment of the needs of its Members.
- 3.5 In accordance with the Measure and the Committee's agreed terms of reference the Committee has a responsibility to keep under review the provision of staff, accommodation and other resources made available to the Head of Democratic Services, in order to ensure that it is adequate for the responsibilities of the post and the discharge of democratic functions. The Head of Democratic Services in turn is responsible for making recommendations or confirming a statutory opinion to the Committee, to enable such determinations to be made, This function was introduced to ensure that sufficient resources are available to non-executive members and for members to effectively perform their democratic role.
- 3.6 At the Council's twenty third annual general meeting, Members considered the review undertaken in respect of Overview and Scrutiny 'Fit for the Future' and agreed that the Terms of Reference for each of the scrutiny Committees be reviewed and refined to assist in the WAO recommendations for the Council to 'strengthen the support for scrutiny, including scrutiny capacity and Member training'.
- 3.7 Positive changes continue to be progressed in respect of the Council's scrutiny arrangements. Despite the challenges presented during the previous Municipal Year through the Covid pandemic, and the initial suspension of meetings during April 2020, the Council's updated approaches to scrutiny continue to enhance committee's ownership of their work programmes and strengthen governance arrangements within the Council.
- 3.8 The current available resources are provided within the report below. Members are reminded that the Council Business Unit supports Democratic, Scrutiny, Executive & Regulatory functions and Members' Support Services. In addition, the service leads to two Joint Scrutiny Committees. The service also supports the Council's Mayoralty.
- 3.9 A Survey of Members views on the support provided by the Unit was undertaken in April 2021, with the results reported at the Democratic Services Committee on the 6th September. The feedback provided a positive endorsement of the current support provided to members and demonstrated recognition of the improvements delivered over the course of the last year.

4. RESOURCE IMPROVEMENTS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED

- 4.1 The changes introduced in 2018, significantly enhanced the support available to all members, through the amalgamation of two previously separate teams.

The improvements in capacity made at this time have not only enhanced the support available to non-executive members, but additionally they have supported improvements in the governance arrangements of the local authority and have progressed the recommendations of the [‘fit for the future’](#) review undertaken by the Wales Audit Office.

- 4.2 In addition to these changes, the need to provide research support for non-executive members was identified as a weakness in the provision of services provided by the Head of Democratic Service as part of this report in 2018. As a result, resources were secured to fund a graduate position to provide this function to non-executive members. The Graduate placement and the supporting funding concluded in August 2020. In recognition of the value this important role provided to non-executive members, permanent funding support was secured for this additional post and the graduate placement was established as a permanent position within the service last autumn. This position will continue to provide a scrutiny research resource for Non-Executive Members to support their scrutiny responsibilities and their wider elected member roles.
- 4.3 In recognition of the increasing demands placed upon the unit through the ‘Fit for future’ recommendations, funding was also provided corporately for an additional position of a ‘Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officer’. Members will be aware that this position was advertised at the end of 2019, with the successful candidate taking up this role in early 2020. The role has strengthened support and expertise available within the Unit, taking forward the Council’s joint scrutiny approach, outcome focused approaches to scrutiny, and leads delivery of the Community Charter, agreed at the Community Liaison Committee in April 2020. This role also takes responsibility for the Joint Overview & Scrutiny Arrangements for the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal (CCRD), which the Council receives funding from the CCRD programme office to perform.
- 4.4 At the end of 2019 the Head of Democratic Services approved for the Unit to utilise a further resource going forward through a second Graduate Officer from within the wider Directorate, to respond to increasing business demands. The post was re-focused from the Corporate Policy & Engagement Team, to concentrate upon a number of service improvements areas, including the Members Portal and the project management of the webcasting provision recently introduced. This second additional role has provided valuable support to the Unit and has offered further beneficial learning opportunities to the Graduate Officer concerned. As a result of the important work this role has undertaken, and in addition to the responsibilities generated by the creation of the Members Portal and the broadcasting of meetings, corporate funding was also secured to make this position a permanent role in 2020. Further responsibilities have been aligned to this role going forward, which will support the Council Business Unit to plan and prepare for the 2022 local government elections, including preparation of the member induction arrangements. This role is also responsible for supporting greater participation and diversity in these elections. The Council received funding from Welsh Government to support the focus of this role upon encouraging participation of 16 and 17 year olds in the

2022 local government elections. This funding has offset the initial salary costs for this post.

- 4.5 During the last Municipal year, due to the covid pandemic, the Members Support Officer was seconded to the 'Track, Trace, Protect' team, to assist in supporting the Council's approach to the pandemic. This was a temporary 3-month secondment, and the officer is now back in position continuing to support Members. Temporary cover arrangements through the Legal admin unit were sought to assist the Council Business Unit to deliver the support provision needed during this period, and as Head of Democratic Services I would like to place on record my thanks to the Director of Legal Services for assisting the Unit at this time.
- 4.6 To assist the Council Business Unit in delivering support to all Members through both the medium of Welsh and English, in 2019 two dedicated translation officer posts were secured, in order to provide dedicated support to the unit on behalf of Members. This arrangement provides the Unit with prompt and timely translations which importantly frees up capacity for the Council Business Unit to focus upon supporting members and the democratic functions of the authority. During this period however the work 'generated' by the Council Business Unit has significantly increased. In recent months a further translation officer has been recruited to this team to assist in the demands placed upon the unit through the democratic processes.
- 4.7 The support to the Mayor is also provided through the Council Business Unit, and the Officer's time is split with Legal Services. It is anticipated that with the lightening of covid restrictions, the role of the Mayor and deputy Mayor may increase and we will need to be mindful of the support implications this may have on the Officer providing this support moving forward. Furthermore the Mayoral support Officer is currently deployed to other duties within the Council, supporting the Council's response to the pandemic.
- 4.8 Members will be aware of the Statutory direction now in place for the Head of Democratic Services to be a Chief Officer. The Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication is already a member of the Council's Senior Leadership Team. As a result the profile of scrutiny and the needs of members, to support the democratic functions of the council, has been significantly enhanced in recent years. It is important to place on record the support which has been provided corporately over the last three years, which has enabled the creation of this additional capacity for members and the appropriate level of resource to progress major enhancements in how services are delivered.

As Head of Democratic Services I would like to place on record my thanks to the Senior Leadership Team of the Council for their support and recognition of the important role the service plays and for providing the appropriate resources to elected members and the democratic functions of the Council over the last three years.

- 4.9 The Council Business Unit has always worked to a high standard and has always supported Members to undertake their roles, whether through

supporting members constituency role or through their role within Committees. This support is also offered to our co-opted Members and joint committee members across up-to ten local authorities. The work and practices of the Council Business Unit has been recognised by Wales Audit Office as 'good working practice' although we recognise there are always opportunities to adapt ways of working to achieve better outcomes.

5. LOCAL GOVERNMENT & ELECTIONS ACT (WALES) 2021 – NEW WAYS OF WORKING

- 5.1 As Members will be aware, the ability to undertake hybrid meetings has been made available to the Council through the Local Government & Elections Act 2021. In addition to the hybrid approach the Council have implemented webcasting infrastructure within the Council chamber which will assist with both the hybrid approach to meetings and future live streaming and webcasting of meetings.
- 5.2 The use of this equipment to run a successful hybrid meeting involves additional support from the Council Business Unit to effectively facilitate the meeting and support members during proceedings. Currently, through the standalone virtual approach taken forward by zoom, it can take up to 3 officers to support a full Council meeting.
- 5.3 The use of the webcasting equipment and running of hybrid meeting requires the following:
- *Advance set up of the Chamber prior to the Committee – Logging Members and Officers into the microphone system. Running a test of the system which includes checking microphones are working / camera angles are appropriate / virtual audio sound and vision is working / translation is working.*
 - *Advance set up of the agenda on the webcasting system – this allows for agenda stamping to be conducted during the meeting so that the webcasting recording provides further engagement to the public and its viewers by allowing them to skip to specific agenda points in the meeting.*
 - *At the meeting at least one Council Business Officer needs to be in attendance on zoom for those attending virtually. This officer will admit people into the meeting, Rename Members as required, set translation, share any presentation needed, lower hands and advise the Chair and Officers within the Chamber of those indicating virtually if they would like to speak on an item.*
 - *At least one Council Business Officer will need to run the webcasting and microphone system. This involves commencing recording, pausing recording for confidential items, comfort breaks, agenda stamping the items as the meeting progresses and importantly managing the speaker queuing system whilst also liaising with colleagues on zoom to advise the chair of the virtual queue. Some of these aspects need to be run simultaneously and therefore is a crucial role in the production of hybrid and webcasted meetings.*

- *A Democratic Services officer is required to be within the Chamber to take minutes and actions arising out of the meeting. This is in addition to the attendance of a senior scrutiny officer and/or a legal officer to advise the Chair and to respond to the course of proceedings.*
- 5.4 Members of the Democratic Services Committee have already recognised the additional demand and resources needed to facilitate hybrid meetings and have championed this point at meetings of the Committee, and at Council and Cabinet, when considering the developments made with webcasting. The view that additional resources were to be required was also formally recorded at the June Committee meeting.
- 5.5 The service has once again been fortunate to receive funding to secure an apprentice webcasting role within the Council Business Unit to assist the team with the successful running of the webcasting facility moving forward (this funding was forthcoming following the 2020/21 sufficiency of resources report considered by members in November 2020.) This is a 2-year apprenticeship programme with a qualification at the end of the process for the apprentice. It is envisaged that the apprentice will also be involved in the developments with the Modern Gov system as well as developments with the Members Portal. Interviews for the apprentice were taken forward during June and the successful post holder commenced the role in September.
- 5.6 The Local Government & Elections Act (Wales) 2021 places additional responsibilities upon the service, many of these being a statutory requirement to fore fill. These include:
- *Providing the opportunity for scrutiny to consider all key decisions being considered. (This will significantly increase the reporting requirements to committees)*
 - *Formalised support arrangements to our colleagues in Town and Community Councils. Strengthened support arrangements have been provided to Community and Town Councils of the Borough, especially as they took forward their virtual arrangements and we continue to provide this support as these Councils embark upon their own hybrid meeting journey.*
 - *A requirement to enhance public participation requirements, including the production of a public participation strategy annually.*
 - *Duty to make petition scheme and record and report responses to such matters*
 - *Electronic broadcasting of meetings*
 - *The ability for members to attend a meeting virtually*
 - *A requirement to promote diversity*
 - *Direction in respect of the information and reporting requirements to the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committees*
- 5.7 The Council Business Unit continues to support two Joint Scrutiny Committees – Cwm Taf PSB Joint overview and Scrutiny Committee plus the City Deal Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Local Government and Elections Wales Act will place similar requirements upon these two committees. The department also provides administration support to the Cwm Taf PSB itself.

5.8 In light of the additional demands to be placed upon the service (as referenced above), the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee have formally recognised the need for additional resources for the Council Business Unit. The Democratic Services Committee supported the request that the statutory sufficiency of resources report be brought forward to a September meeting for consideration to address these resource implications.

6. **STAFFING RESOURCE PROVIDED TO NON-EXECUTIVE MEMBERS**

6.1 The resource available within the Council Business Unit currently consists of 8 Officers and the utilisation of 3 dedicated Welsh Translation Officers from within the Translation team and is led by the Service Director - Democratic Services and Communication (Statutory Head of Democratic Services)

6.2 In addition to the business demands described above, Members will be aware that one member of the team is currently on maternity leave. By the end of this calendar year an additional two members of the team will be on maternity leave, removing a total 3 post holders from the team for up-to 12 months, as we enter an extremely busy period in the run-up to and following the local elections in May 2022.

6.3 Members will be disappointed to learn that a long-standing Member of staff within the Council Business Unit has left the team for a new role outside the Council in August. Our thanks go forward to this hard-working officer and we wish them well with their new employment. .

6.4 The introduction of the apprentice role within the Unit will strengthen the position of the team and reduce the pressures facing support officers, to allow them to effectively continue their dedicated support roles with each of their committees and to Elected Members. However, I am mindful that the apprentice will need to be released for University placement for one day a week and will need continued support from team members.

6.5 To strengthen capacity and resources moving forward a new Grade 10 role has been created within the team, to support the scrutiny functions of the Council. This post has recently been advertised with the recruitment process due to be completed early next month. The recruitment of an additional GR10 role will support the delivery of our service responsibilities over this immediate period and would enhance our ability to maintain the momentum of improvement achieved over the last three years.

6.6 Recruitment to the vacant scrutiny post currently within the team has provided the opportunity to refocus resources further to respond to the challenges identified. An internal recruitment process has already been undertaken to provide the opportunity for three of the departments existing GR8 roles to be considered for this senior GR9 role, allowing the successful officer to develop their skills going forward

- 6.7 Appropriate cover-arrangements will provide the opportunity for existing members of the team to temporarily 'act-up' during the maternity leave of key officers, gaining experience performing at a more senior level.
- 6.8 However, to respond to the immediate resource challenge presented by the maternity leave of three team members over the next twelve months, two temporary GR8 roles will be created potentially utilising the talent pool of the Council through a secondment opportunity or once again utilising the skills available through the Council's graduate scheme over a 12 month period.
- 6.9 Through the good practices performed by the Council, the Head of Democratic Services has been approached by the Programme Director of Cardiff Capital Region City Deal to provide support and guidance to their Committee functions. Funding will be made available by City Deal to provide such administration. This responsibility provides an excellent opportunity for staff to develop their skills base, which will in turn enhance the support they are able to provide to this local authority. This involvement would be a positive one in anticipation of the introduction of Corporate Joint Committees in January 2022. This responsibility, will of course require additional capacity, which would be funded by the CCRD programme office, but would equally require the expertise and guidance of senior members of the team to effectively perform this responsibility. To accommodate this additional responsibility, it is proposed to create an additional role within the Unit to take this work forward and provide further additional capacity. Subject to confirmation on this proposed arrangement, a recruitment process will be taken forward in the coming weeks to appoint this additional role.
- 6.10 The enhancement in resources reported above will enable the directorate to effectively discharge current and future statutory requirements. The recruitment of an additional GR10 will seek an individual with previous local authority experience performing a scrutiny or governance role to compliment the skills set of the existing team. The recruitment of two temporary GR8 roles will enable the department to support any shortfall in resources available to members during the maternity period of three team members. In preparing this report I have discussed the potential future resource requirements of the service with the Council's Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer.
- 6.11 The dedicated translation support provided to the Council Business Unit has proven to be very successful and invaluable to the service provided to Members.
- 6.12 **As Head of Democratic Services, I am of the view that the additional capacity created within the team has been sufficient to support the improvements undertaken over the last three years. Moving forward, the additional statutory requirements placed upon Democratic Services and the capacity requirements created by hybrid working and live broadcasting of meetings, will create the requirement for further capacity within the team moving forward. The creation of an additional GR10 role, in addition to the role of the Webcasting Apprentice, will provide sufficient**

capacity to meet these challenges and will enhance further the expertise available to support members within the service. The temporary secondment opportunities will also provide the necessary support arrangements as outlined within the report.

7. ACCOMMODATION

- 7.1 Accommodation to support the work of Members is based at the Council Headquarters, Clydach Vale and has been in place since Local Government Reorganisation in 1996. Private offices are available for political groups represented on the Council, within the Council Headquarter base, which allows Members easy access to the team within the Council Business Unit and at the same time allows Members to undertake work in privacy with the availability of telephone and IT facilities.
- 7.2 **As Head of Democratic Services I am of the view that there is sufficient private office capacity for all political groups within the Council Headquarters. However, I have identified the need to reflect on the best arrangements for members and Officers of the Council Business Unit - post Covid-19 - to build upon agile working and the progress made with virtual meeting arrangements over the last eighteen months.**
- 7.3 This is identified as action for the next twelve months. It is acknowledged that the balance members adopt between normal face-to-face interaction and the new agile way will need to be appreciated and factored into future arrangement planning. Members will note an improvement on this position following a reduction in the number of political groups, where the Head of Democratic Services had previously determined that availability of this provision was insufficient.
- 7.4 The Member's library situated at the Council Headquarters within Pavilion F, continues to be underutilised, and this provision may therefore need to be reviewed in the coming year, alongside the Council's own review of accommodation requirements, and the introduction of the members portal. Equally our wider longer-term aspiration for a paperless-approach questions the future purpose of this provision (The Portal will provide the ability for members to access key information, documentation and publications on-line, in a digital format.)
- 7.5 **As Head of Democratic Services I will continue to review this provision over the coming twelve months to determine the appropriate accommodation provision to effectively support members, in-line with the wider context of agile/home-working arrangements currently being supported by the Council. Our accommodation requirements remain appropriate to maintain our WLGA advance level Charter.**
- 7.6 Democratic Services Committee have played a positive role in the developments of the Council Chamber, and as reported at the last meeting the enhancements to the Council Chamber are now complete. This has included a

remodel of the chamber layout making better use of the space available and providing new furniture that provides USB charging points and increased desk space. A dedicated translation booth has also been installed which will allow Translation officers better viewing of the whole chamber and a soundproof booth to enhance the audio received by Members. With the support of Welsh Government funding, further enhancements are to be undertaken to the committee room within Pavilion A, including the introduction of broadcasting technology and similar associated improvements.

- 7.7 The service has identified the importance of continuing the positive difference virtual arrangements have provided in terms of member attendance and engagement, and also to allow us to positively respond to the ambitions of the Welsh Government in terms of public participation and diversity within local government in Wales.

8. **MEMBERS TRAINING**

- 8.1 A report highlighting the training opportunities to Members was presented to Democratic Services Committee in March, where Members were complimentary of the training provided, especially in respect of the digital advancements needed to access zoom meetings.
- 8.2 At the Democratic Services Committee meeting in March, Members agreed a training programme going forward in respect of 'Pre Council Training'. To accommodate all Members the training agreed within this programme will, where possible be run as a 5pm standalone session, with the recording of the training provided on the Members Portal for future reference. Positive feedback has been received from members on the introduction of these sessions.
- 8.3 Training has also been provided by the Council Business Unit at the start of the new municipal year, during June, for scrutiny Members and Co-opted Members, with a training session run for each of the Committees, to remind new and old members to the committee (following changes to membership at the AGM) of the Committees Terms of Reference, general good practice with scrutiny and providing an opportunity for related Senior officers to discuss emerging priorities for the service area to assist Members with their future discussions surrounding work programmes. Refresher training was also provided to Planning and Development Committee which was tailored to consider aspects of planning as requested by the Chair and training in respect of Licensing. Training has also been taken forward with the three newly elected Members. Refresher Code of Conduct training is always available to Members on a one to one basis as and when requested, with advice on hand from the Council's Monitoring Officer and Head of Democratic Services.
- 8.4 The opportunity for Members to undertake a confidential Personal Development Review (PDR) was extended via the Group Leaders earlier in the year. The outcomes of the PDR's will inform the Member Development Programme (and future E-Learning modules) and can, where required, provide an understanding in matters such as corporate governance, statutory requirements and service

related areas. Some of this training will be taken forward on a one to one basis, or where appropriate on an all member invite basis.

8.5 The Council Business unit will shortly commence work on the draft Member Induction Programme to be taken forward following the Local Government Elections. This programme will be shared with Group Leaders and the Democratic Services Committee for comment. This work will again require a significant amount of resource from the Council Business Unit as we work to ensure we deliver an induction programme that is fit for purpose for all Members.

8.6 **As a result of the breadth of learning and development support provided to members over the last twelve months, the identified actions arising from the Members PDR process, and comments received through the Members Statutory Annual Survey, as the Head of Democratic Services I am content that the training support available to members is sufficient**

9. DIGITAL SUPPORT

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

9.2 All Members have been equipped with a digital device to allow them to undertake their Elected Member role and to attend Committee meetings via the zoom platform, with appropriate training provided to each Member through the Council Business Unit and ICT colleagues.

9.3 In line with the recommendations of the Independent Review Panel and the decision taken forward by the Democratic Services Committee in 2018 and supported by Council, Members are provided with two options in respect of telephony provision. Members can take forward the option of receiving a contribution from the Council for any own telephony arrangements they make or alternatively a handset is provided by the Council. In addition, provision is also made available for payment to a Members broadband provision to ensure Members can undertake their roles.

9.4 **In light of the above provisions made available to Members I am content that the digital support provided to Members is sufficient.**

10 HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES – OPINION

10.1 Being mindful of the requirements of the Measure and the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act, with particular reference to the increased responsibilities to support hybrid meetings and live broadcasting of meeting, as Head of Democratic Services it is evident that further resources are required to effectively discharge the relevant functions required and to provide the appropriate support for Elected members of the Council.

- 10.2 With the additional support indicated, through the additional GR10 role and the commencement of the webcasting apprentice role in September **I am of the view that there will then be sufficient resilience within the Council Business Unit to continue supporting non-executive Members, without compromising the level of service provided.** These enhancements will also provide the opportunity for more focused staff resource to support our individual functions (Council/Regulatory/Scrutiny/Member Support and Research.)
- 10.3 The purpose of this additional role is to further strengthen our scrutiny and democratic support capacity by creating additional officer expertise to enhance reporting arrangements and strengthen support available to Chairs, by creating additional resources dedicated to scrutiny alone. This additional resource will increase capacity to support the Council democratic functions over the immediate period and moving forward would create additional resilience in the service.
- 10.4 As we develop our scrutiny functions, in-line with the new Local Government & Elections Act, it will be necessary to continually review the level of support available. It will also be important to build upon the positive steps being taken to support member communication over the last eighteen months.
- 10.5 We await statutory guidance in respect of scrutiny arrangements for the new Corporate Joint Committees, and how constituent local authorities will play a role. We also await similar guidance in respect of scrutiny, as outlined in the new Act and the strengthened role of this specific committee. I am confident that the additional resources created with these additions will mean we are well placed to respond any further legislative requirements.
- 10.6 The significant investment in Members' facilities as part of chamber improvements and broadcasting of meeting during this year should be positively noted.
- 10.7 The improvements achieved to-date, most recently demonstrated by the introduction of tailored training sessions for respective committees at the start of the new municipal year, demonstrate that our training and development support for members continues to improve.
- 10.8 As I am also a member of the Senior Leadership Team, I will continue to champion the role of scrutiny and the needs of members, to support the democratic functions of the councils.
- 10.9 **On the basis of this detail, I am of the opinion, as the Council's statutory Head of Democratic Services, that the resources to be made available for members will remain sufficient, thanks to the additional resources secured. This enhanced support will continue to improve the provision, staffing capacity and the availability of support to all non-executive members.**

11. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 This report supports the need for all Members to have equal access to support regardless of political allegiance. The report encourages the authority to examine the way that business is conducted to ensure the equality of access and involvement of all people as councillors.

12. CONSULTATION

- 12.1 The Head of Democratic Services has consulted with the Council's Chief Executive and the Cabinet Member for Council Business.

13. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 13.1 The proposed way forward recommended by the Head of Democratic Services will require an additional budget of £42K per year; the part-year effect in 2021/22 can be met from existing resources within the Democratic Services & Communications revenue budget and the on-going annual budget requirement will be included within the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan for 2022/23 onwards.

14. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 The legal implications are set out in the report in respect of the requirements of the 2011 Local Government Measure and subsequently the Local Government & Elections Wales Act 2021.

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

- 15.1 The work of all Councillors is fundamental to the work of the Council and subsequently the delivery of the Corporate Plan, hence ensuring Members are fully supported in undertaking their roles is important to the work of the Council overall.
- 15.2 Ensuring all Members are supported and have equal access to support and development links to the future generations wellbeing goals of a more equal Wales and a Wales of cohesive communities.

16. CONCLUSION

- 16.1 Through the additional resources outlined in this report I am confident that we can positively respond to future developments contained within the Local Government & Elections Act 2021 and plan and prepare effectively for the 2022 Local Government elections.
- 16.2 Over the course of the next twelve months the support and shape of the service will need to be considered in light of the implementation of the hybrid approach

to meetings, the Members Portal, training to Members and support to Members in Committee settings.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

SEPTEMBER 2021

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS - Democratic Services – Support for Members

Freestanding Matter

