



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL

15th DECEMBER 2021

DIVERSITY IN DEMOCRACY

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATION.

1. PURPOSE FOR THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members with a draft Diversity Declaration for comment and approval, following the decision taken by the Council at its [extra-ordinary meeting](#) to become a Diverse Council.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that Council:

- 2.1 Consider and comment on the draft 'Diversity Declaration' attached as appendix A and subject to Members comments agree to take forward the declaration as the formal pledge of the Council to becoming a Diverse Council.

3. DIVERSITY IN DEMOCRACY

- 3.1 As reported at the Extra Ordinary Council meeting on the 26th May, 2021 the diversity agenda has been growing across all aspects of public life and it is important that Rhondda Cynon Taf Council are committed to increasing diversity, which includes tackling the barriers which prevent an individual's active participation in local democracy.
- 3.2 A more diverse democracy means decision-makers with broader life-experiences and a greater understanding of the challenges faced by wider society. A diverse and more inclusive democracy leads to better engagement with individuals and communities, in turn leading to greater levels of confidence and trust and in turn better decision making and better governance.
- 3.3 The Welsh Government have been focusing heavily on the diversity agenda and following the evaluation of phase one of the Welsh Government's Diversity in Democracy work a number of key recommendations and actions were derived, with such actions being addressed through the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. Further work by the WLGA Council has also strengthened the impetus for diversity actions to be considered and implemented now, to allow any improvement in diversity within democracy for the Local Government Elections in 2022 and beyond.

- 3.4 In light of the work undertaken by the Welsh Government and the importance seen by not only the Democratic Services Committee but the Council as a whole of achieving diversity in democracy, the Democratic Services Committee established a working group to look in detail at the proposed actions that have come forward from the above mentioned evaluation. The Working Group also considered the opportunities and engagement which would benefit the future of diversity in advance of the 2022 local government elections to encourage participation as a principal authority and with both Community and Town Councils across the County Borough.
- 3.5 A report of the working group was considered by Council at the extra-ordinary meeting where Members endorsed the recommendations presented.
- 3.6 In addition, Council also considered the report of the WLGA Council in respect of 'Diversity in Democracy'.
- 3.7 The WLGA report recognised the diversity work already under way locally but called for concerted and ambitious local action. Through its report and resulting actions it asked Councils to prioritise action locally, promoting the take-up of members' allowances and progressing 'Diverse Council' declarations, to provide a clear, public commitment to improving diversity. The report included an 'outline' Declaration to:
- Provide a clear, public commitment to improving diversity;
 - Demonstrate an open and welcoming culture to all;
 - Consider staggering council meeting times and agreeing recess periods to support councillors with other commitments; and
 - Set out an action plan of activity ahead of the 2022 local elections.
- 3.8 It was suggested that Councils may however wish to undertake further action or commitments within their Declarations according to local priorities.
- 3.9 A draft 'Diverse Declaration' for Rhondda Cynon Taf Council is attached as Appendix A to this report for Member's consideration and subsequent approval.

4 ACTIONS GOING FORWARD.

- 4.1 The Actions outlined within the WLGA Council report have been added to the Action plan already developed by the Democratic Services Committee working group in respect of work already identified by the Council in respect of diversity.
- 4.2 Timely progress reports and updates will be provided to the Democratic Services Committee to ensure delivery of the actions.
- 4.3 Work will need to be taken forward with Group Leaders of the Council to strengthen the diversity outcomes that are anticipated and to ensure all ways possible of achieving a greater diverse RCT is achieved.

5 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS INCLUDING SOCIO ECONOMIC DUTY

- 5.1 The work of the Democratic Services Committee Diversity working group and the WLGA 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.

6 WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Council proactively supports promotion and provision of the Welsh language within the democratic process and will continue to promote the opportunities available through its diversity agenda.

7 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Democratic Services Committee – [10th May 2021](#).
- 7.2 Group Leaders meeting – 1st December 2021

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 8.1 The awareness raising opportunities and promotion of the role of a Councillor to future candidates 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 Council through the Democratic Services Committee have 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.
- 11.3 The Diversity Declaration will be a further positive step forward to illustrating the changes that the Council would like to make to ensuring diversity within the Council.