



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL

9 FEBRUARY 2022

MEMBER'S MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

JOINT REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL SERVICES & THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATION.

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Council with a draft Member's Memorandum of Understanding, developed by the Democratic Services Committee, for endorsement and adoption. The Memorandum seeks to support the ambitions of the Council to promote diversity in democracy, promote high standards of behaviour and mutual respect between Members.
- 1.2 In addition to being asked to consider endorsing and adopting the Memorandum, Members are also asked to consider adopting a Fair and Respectful Election Campaign Pledge.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Members:
- (i) Agree to adopt the draft 'Memorandum of Understanding' ('MOU'), developed by the Democratic Services Committee and attached at Appendix A, following commendation by the Council's Standards Committee in order to encourage further mutual respect and a show of working together by Members for the benefit of their communities; and
 - (ii) As part of adopting this MOU, Council is asked to commit to supporting a Fair & Respectful Election Campaign Pledge, and to delegate responsibility to the Democratic Services Committee to agree its content.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Democratic Services Committee have proactively been undertaking work to promote and encourage diversity in democracy through the Diversity in Democracy Working Group.

- 3.2 At the meeting of the Democratic Services Committee on the [10th May](#) Members received and supported the interim report of the Diversity in Democracy working group and its resulting recommendations.
- 3.3 Due to the importance of the work of the group and its links with the work of the WLGA in respect of the 'Council's Diversity Pledges', the interim report was presented to Council for further endorsement following the Council's AGM, to raise the profile of the work undertaken to-date and the future plans of the Democratic Services Committee to progress this important agenda.
- 3.4 Council endorsed the 16 recommendations outlined by the working group and also committed to becoming a Diverse Council.

4 MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

- 4.1 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."
- 4.2 The intended outcome of the statement would be a demonstration of mutual respect to other people with varying political opinions and a commitment for all Members to continue working together for the benefit of its communities.
- 4.3 A draft MOU was presented to the Democratic Services Committee on the 27th September 2021, to which Members agreed for its presentation to the Council's Standards Committee for further comment and feedback.
- 4.4 The Council's Standards Committee considered and supported the draft MOU at its November meeting and were supportive of the principles included and its intended benefits.
- 4.5 The Draft MOU is attached at Appendix A. The MOU would provide an opportunity for Members to publicly commit to using their term of office to work for the Council, the County Borough and its citizens, and to commit to the standards of conduct expected by the Council. It's considered its adoption would strengthen standards and ethical arrangements within the Council and would support and sit alongside the Council's Code of Conduct for Members, the Standards of Conduct Expected By Members Local Resolution Policy and Member-Officer Protocol.
- 4.6 It was originally proposed that this MOU would receive further consideration in early 2022 by the Democratic Services Committee. With the agreement of the Chair of that Committee, this item is being presented to Council at its February meeting, to facilitate, subject to support from full Council, its content playing an integral part of the Council's 'Become a Councillor' activities.

- 4.7 Consideration by Full Council at this point will also enable Members to consider supporting a pledge to conduct a Fair and Respectful Election Campaign in the 2022 local elections.

5. FAIR & RESPECTFUL ELECTION CAMPAIGN PLEDGE

- 5.1 At a meeting of the WLGA Executive Board, held on Friday 28th January, the 22 Welsh Council Leaders agreed to make a joint statement calling on all Councillors and candidates at May's local elections to commit to a fair and respectful election campaign. A copy of this statement is attached at Appendix B.
- 5.2 This statement of principle, supported by all political groups, seeks to build upon the positive work being undertaken under the umbrella of the 'diversity and democracy work' and would complement the principles outlined in the proposed MOU.
- 5.3 Members of this Council are asked to consider supporting such a statement, alongside the broader aspirations outlined within the MOU, which would seek to ensure, as far as is possible, all candidates participate in a fair election campaign, which is based upon a positive approach to campaigning, rather than personal attacks upon individuals.
- 5.4 Members are asked to delegate responsibility for confirming the contents of such a commitment, which best suit the circumstances and personal commitments of this Council's members, to the Democratic Services Committee. It is proposed, that should this recommendation be supported by Council, that an invitation would be extended to Group Leaders, or their nominated representatives, to attend and contribute to the next meeting of the Democratic Services Committee.
- 5.5 The pledge would then form part of material provided to successfully nominated candidates by the Council's Electoral Services department. The pledge would also be promoted by the Council, to demonstrate to residents the conduct they can expect during the 2022 election period.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 6.1 The work of the Democratic Services Committee Diversity working group 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

7. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 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.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Diversity in Democracy Working Group.
- 8.2 Democratic Services Committee – 27th September 2021
- 8.3 Standards Committee – 19th November 2021
- 8.4 Group Leader's Meetings with the Head of Democratic Services

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 9.1 None

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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

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

- 11.1 The work of a Councillor is fundamental to the Council's Corporate plan, as Councillors are the mouthpiece for the communities that they serve.
- 11.2 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

12. CONCLUSION

- 12.1 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.
- 12.2 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.
- 12.3 Ensuring Members have a clear understanding of their roles and behaviour in and outside of the Council Chamber is paramount to ensuring a safe and inclusive working environment for all.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Democratic Services Working Group – 27th September 2021

**Standards Committee – 19th November 2021 – Report of the Service Director,
Democratic Services and Communication**