



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MUNICIPAL YEAR 2022/23**

**DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**13<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2023**

**MEMBERS' PORTAL**

**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Democratic Services Committee on the development of the Members' Portal since the Committee's revised membership following the Local Government Elections in May 2022

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members of the Democratic Services Committee:

- 2.1 Review and comment on the development of the Members' Portal to date; and,
- 2.2 Nominate Members from the Democratic Services Committee to champion the Members Portal and undertake demonstrations/provide feedback on the functionality of the Portal as and when new developments are completed.

**3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The need for newly elected Members to be aware of the Members' Portal planned development since its inception in 2019.

**4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 At the Democratic Services Committee on the 19<sup>th</sup> March 2019, Members agreed to the development of a dedicated Members Portal which would enable them to access and submit information through their Council device, for example submitting democratic requests such as tabling of questions or motions, raising scrutiny research requests and submitting Declarations of Interest.

- 4.2 Following the initial agreement of the Committee, the Head of Democratic Services met with officers from Customer Service and the Council's website development team to discuss the requirements and development of the portal. A project plan was agreed with a view to rolling out the portal early the following year.
- 4.3 With the onset of Covid-19, the Council focussed its priorities on the impact of the pandemic, response and recovery. During this time the development of the Members' Portal was put on hold, as with many other similar projects where resource constraints were acknowledged.
- 4.4 In 2021, the Democratic Services Committee considered the continuation of past activities through its future Work Programme where work may be incomplete, the Members' Portal was one such area which was reviewed and subsequently reinstated. Officers from the Council Business Unit and the Customer Care team jointly progressed this project at that time.
- 4.5 Three key areas were identified which would allow greater flexibility to enable Members to undertake their Elected Member role, allowing Members to submit questions to Council, submit a 'Call In' form in respect of a key decision and the opportunity to complete a Declaration of Interest form relating to any conflicts of personal interest during a committee meeting. Members were provided with a demonstration of the portal and a small working group was formed to test the system and provide feedback on its functionality.
- 4.6 Following the Local Government Elections, both returning, and newly elected Members received one to one training on how to access and use the portal on their Council device with the support of the Council's Digital Skills team and training continues to be available on request and through other opportunities such as the pre-Council surgeries.
- 4.7 The training materials for new and returning Members, which were used to complement the Council Members' induction programme following the Local Government Elections, are available for Members to view through the portal. The materials outline the core roles and responsibilities of Elected Members, introductory guides to topics and subject areas that they may have responsibility for. This also includes recordings of the training sessions, so that Elected Members are able to review their content at a convenient time.
- 4.8 In the future, all in-house and external provider training modules (and where appropriate, all recordings) will be uploaded to the portal providing a one-stop shop for Members' training modules.
- 4.9 Currently the 'Useful Information/Links' page is under development. Here, Members can locate useful information relating to Democratic Services matters as well as providing information about other Council Services in one location. In

addition, there will be a provision to signpost Members to many other external organisations providing a central location for information gathering. The content within this section of the Members Portal will be reviewed, updated and added to as appropriate. Access to data, specific to Members Wards is also something that Members will be able to access in the near future.

4.10 Members will soon have the opportunity to submit their travel expenses to the Council's Payroll section, electronically via the Portal. This will simplify the process with pre-populated information to reduce the time currently spent completing a paper expenses form.

4.11 The Council Business Unit was recently assigned a dedicated Business Analyst resource from the Digital Transformation Team who will assist with the development of the portal and identify areas of improvement. The additional resource will assist with demonstrations to Elected Members and provide the required technical and design support.

## **5. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS**

5.1 The Portal, is a developing system and it is proposed that it will, in time, provide statistical information, compiled from the Council's customer reporting system ('The CRM'). Information on reported matters, such as dog fouling or pot-holes, will be compiled on a ward by ward basis, alongside information on the resolution of these complaints. The portal will also provide information on the latest business of the council being considered and matters such as planning applications which relate to the respective Members electoral division.

5.2 It is appropriate that the Democratic Services Committee is involved in the development of the Portal and receives updates and demonstrations to its meetings. Member involvement will ensure that the system is developed and tailored to Members' needs.

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

6.1 Equality considerations feature throughout the development of the Members; Portal.

## **7. CONSULTATION**

7.1 Consultation and demonstration with the Democratic Services Committee in respect of the developments with the Portal will enable effective engagement and direct liaison with Elected Members to better develop the Members' portal.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

9.1 The report has been prepared in accordance with The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

**10. CONCLUSION**

10.1 It is recognised that the Members Portal will support Elected Members to undertake their role in a more effective way by gathering information and resources in one location through their Council device. The potential to build on what has already been developed will serve to improve the user experience.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 1972**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE  
13<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2023**

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