



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY 2022-2027 COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Hybrid meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny 2022-2027 Committee held on
Wednesday, 24 May 2023 at 5.00 pm

This meeting was live streamed, details of which can be accessed [here](#)

County Borough Councillors – The following Overview and Scrutiny 2022-2027 Committee Councillors were present in the Council Chamber:-

Councillor J Edwards (Chair)
Councillor B Stephens (Vice Chair)
Councillor S Morgans
Councillor R Davis

The following Overview and Scrutiny 2022-2027 Committee Councillors were present online:-

Councillor J Bonetto
Councillor S Evans
Councillor S Evans
Councillor R Bevan

Officers in attendance:-

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mrs S Daniel, Principal Democratic Services Officer

Apologies for absence

Councillor M Ashford Councillor C Middle
Councillor K Morgan Councillor W Owen
Councillor G L Warren Councillor K Webb

74 Declarations of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

75 Minutes

RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting held on the 27th March 2023 were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting

76 Consultation Links

The Principal Scrutiny Officer reminded members of the consultations open to members to respond to should they wish to feed into these

77 Public Participation Strategy

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications presented the

report to Members which provided them with the opportunity to formally respond to the Consultation on the draft Public Participation Strategy (Appendix A) as required by the Local Government & Elections Act 2021 before it is approved at Council in July 2023

He advised Members that the Act places a number of duties on local authorities regarding participation which are highlighted below:

- Promote awareness of the functions the council carries out to local residents, businesses and visitors.
- Share information about how to go about becoming an elected member and what the role of councillor involves.
- Provide greater access to information about decisions that have been made, or that will be made by the council.
- Provide and promote opportunities for residents to provide feedback to the council, including comments, complaints and other types of representations.
- Promote awareness of the benefits of using social media to communicate with residents to councillors.

A Member referred to Section 3 of the report and asked how success be measured and what are the benchmarks to ensure targets are being met. The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications responded that there is evidence available of public participation through our consultations, where views are sought on key decisions or services changes. However, benchmarking can be a difficult task as when a difficult subject matter is being considered, it is easier to gain public participation. One of the improvements we are being explored is for the public to influence Committee work programming. He added that there is also data available on the viewing for the live broadcasting of meetings, but recognised there is much more we can do moving forward.

A Member commented on the accessibility of the Strategy and recommended an easy-read version be made available for the public which would be more engaging and easier to understand.

A Member asked if there was more we could do to engage the public in the Scrutiny process to ensure as many people as possible are aware that the Scrutiny meetings are taking place.

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications commented that there are many areas we could improve on and we will continue to build on, such as the promotion of recently published Scrutiny Chairs Blogs, he added that whilst the mechanism has always been in place for the public to participate in a Scrutiny/ Council meeting the document may not have been as visible as it could have been, once this Strategy is approved, improvements will be made to better signpost and share on our Council webpages, such as a banner on the home page and signposting to Scrutiny pages and public participation documents. He further added that the promotion of Committees through social media will also be reviewed and once we have secured the public engagement we will be able to demonstrate the impact of the engagement.

A Member asked what work has been undertaken to understand the challenge of the general understanding from the public of the democratic process of the Council and are we doing enough work with young people.

The Service Director responded that there are a number of initiatives we can take forward to engage young people in Democracy, one example is that we can share our Work Programmes with the Youth Council so they are able to identify items of interest to them whereby they can then request to attend the meeting and speak on the item. He added that the providing polls on Social Media for the public to respond to is also being explored.

The Chairperson asked what engagement opportunities the Council provides to the public to allow them to engage with the Council to ensure engagement and transparency is available to all our residents. The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications advised that there is a requirement for the Council to review the Petitions Strategy which is a commonly used method for the public to let the Council know their views on a particular matter, this will look at simplifying the method for the public. He added that an easy read constitution will also be made available to the public and engagement through the use of polls on social media is also being explored. He concluded that the Council will also use the webcasting system to generate links to our social media accounts when a live broadcasting of a meeting is scheduled to take place.

Members commented on the use of Councillors using their social media pages to engage with the public and commented that some members aren't as confident to use the platform as others due to the potential negative impacts this platform can have.

The Service Director advised that the Communications team will provide training to any members who wish to use social media to engage with their residents and advised that there are best practice guides in place. He encouraged Members to take up these opportunities as no one is better connected to their Communities than Elected Members.

A Member recommended including the customer services contact details in the "contact us" section in the Strategy and for this to also be reflected in the easy read document when developed.

RESOLVED: The Overview and Scrutiny Committee authorised the Service Director Democratic Services and Communications to take forward Members comments and reflect in the Draft Public Participation Strategy prior to its approval at Council.

78 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme Planning

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications presented the report to Members to provide an opportunity for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review the Cabinet Work Programme to determine if there are items that they wish to include in their Scrutiny Work Programme and the opportunity to consider items for referral to the thematic Scrutiny Committees, for purposes of Pre-Scrutiny and to support them in determining a Work Programme.

Members were reminded that the Scrutiny Work Programmes will remain a flexible "working" document, which will allow for a more flexible approach to be adopted and to recognise the needs of emerging priorities and provides opportunity for Scrutiny Working Groups to be taken forward and training provision where requested

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee are advised that where items have been identified as part of the ongoing updates section in the cabinet work programme, specific timelines will be identified and opportunity will be provided to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to determine whether such matters should be added to their Work Programme for consideration.

A Member asked if the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) would go to the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee as it has done annually previously. The Member also asked if a broader report could come to Overview and Scrutiny Committee with specific targets and KPIs, the Member felt this was necessary to highlight the importance of the work on the Welsh Language Scheme

The Service Director responded that Education will consider the WESP in Education context, but we could also bring a report forward to Overview and Scrutiny Committee at an appropriate time so Members can be updated and scrutinise the partnership working that is behind Welsh Language in Education Services.

Members requested that the following items are also brought forward to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration at an appropriate time on the Work Programme.

- Coal Tips
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Partnership Working
- Pressures facing Social Services Directorate

RESOLVED to:

Agree the matters arising from the Cabinet Work Programme for inclusion in the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme for the 2023/24 Municipal Year and the matters raised by Members, as above.

Agree to the inclusion of topics, listed in 6.1 of the report in the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme or where necessary, refer such matters to the thematic Scrutiny Committees.

79 Urgent Business

None received

80 CHAIRS REVIEW AND CLOSE

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg / This document is also available in Welsh

This meeting closed at 5.37 pm

**Councillor J Edwards
Chair.**