



Consultation Report  
June 2023

# PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STRATEGY DRAFT



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This report presents the findings of the consultation on Rhondda Cynon Taf Council's Public Participation Strategy.
- The consultation was conducted in-house. The consultation period ran from the 17<sup>th</sup> May until the 16<sup>th</sup> June 2023.
- Section 40 of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 places a duty on each Principal Council to prepare and publish a Public Participation Strategy. In developing its Public Participation Strategy a council must consult people who live, work or study in the council's area and anyone else it thinks appropriate.
- The Draft RCT Public Participation Strategy and accompanying action plan that was put out to consultation, sets out how we will talk and listen with all of those who live in Rhondda Cynon Taf. This means engaging and consulting about the way we do things, promoting awareness of how people can become a member of the Council and making sure that local people can easily give us their views about a decision before, and after, it is made.
- The majority of respondents agreed that each of the themes would encourage local people to participate in the Council's decision making.
  - 88% agree with Promoting awareness of the functions the council carries out to local residents, businesses and visitors.
  - 75% agree with Sharing information about how to go about becoming an elected member – or Councillor – and what the role of Councillor involves.
  - 88% agree with Providing greater access to information about decisions that have been made, or that will be made by the council.
  - 94% agree with Providing and promoting opportunities for residents to provide feedback to the council, including comments, complaints and other types of representations.
  - 84% agree with Arrangements made to bring the views of the public to the attention of Overview & Scrutiny Committees.
  - 72% agree with Promoting awareness of the benefits of using social media to communicate with residents to Councillors.
- Respondents were asked if there was anything else that they thought should be included in the Draft Public Strategy. The comments suggested that the Strategy could be more accessible and more clearly communicated. There were calls for feedback mechanisms to be improved and providing evidence of views being taken into account in Council decisions. There were concerns that the use of social media for engagement may exclude certain sections of the community and there must be a range of methods used, in addition to online.
- 42% of respondents said that the draft Public Participation Strategy assisted in their understanding of the local democratic process and encouraged them to get involved, with 26% unsure. A number of comments were made about the need to

make the Strategy easier to read, with suggestions to improve the presentation, including case studies and graphics.

- A number of detailed suggestions on the text and layout of the document were also suggested and these will be considered in the development of the final Strategy.
- Feedback from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee is provided in section 5.
- Overall, 70 responses were received to the consultation survey.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of the consultation on Rhondda Cynon Taf Council's Public Participation Strategy.
- 1.2 Section 2 outlines some brief background to the consultation process
- 1.3 Section 3 details the methodology.
- 1.4 Section 4 provides the results of the survey.
- 1.5 Section 5 provides some of the key questions to arise from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

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## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Section 40 of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 places a duty on each Principal Council to prepare and publish a Public Participation Strategy
- 2.2 The Public Participation Strategy needs to complement the Council's Consultation & Engagement Strategy. The Strategy is required to promote:
- A. The Principal Council's functions.
  - B. How to become a Member (Councillor) of the Principal Council, and what membership (Being a Councillor) entails.
  - C. Accessing information about decisions made, or to be made, by the Principal Council.
  - D. Making representations to the Principal Council about a decision before, and after, it is made.
  - E. Arrangements made, or to be made, for the purpose of the Council's duty in section 62 of the 2011 Measure (bringing views of the public to attention of overview and scrutiny committees).
  - F. Benefits of Councillors using social media to communicate with local people.
- 2.3 In developing its Public Participation Strategy a council must consult people who live, work or study in the council's area and anyone else it thinks appropriate.
- 2.4 Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC values the contribution that local people can make to develop and evaluate Council services that will work well for us all. The Draft RCT Public Participation Strategy and accompanying action plan that was put out to consultation, sets out how we will talk and listen with all of those who live in Rhondda Cynon Taf. This means engaging and consulting about the way we do things, promoting awareness of how people can become a member of the Council and making sure that local people can easily give us their views about a decision before, and after, it is made.
- 2.5 This Draft RCT Public Participation Strategy details how the Council aims to promote the requirements set out in section 2.2 above.
- 2.6 The Strategy seeks to make it easier for everybody in Rhondda Cynon Taf to have a voice in our decision-making process, in-line with the requirements of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021. As part of fulfilling these statutory requirements we want to build and maintain relationships with our communities, and we want to ensure that all engagement undertaken by the Council is effective, efficient and consistent.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The Public Participation Strategy consultation was conducted in-house and ran from the 17<sup>th</sup> May and ended on the 16<sup>th</sup> June 2023. This section presents the methodology which was utilised to promote and collect the data.
- 3.2 The consultation used an online survey which was built using Snap XMP. The survey aimed to gain feedback on the draft strategy.
- 3.3 To ensure wide outreach and involvement of the wider community the consultation was promoted on the Councils online consultation webpage to encourage engagement. An email was also sent to key stakeholders to promote the consultation and encourage participation in the survey, and RCT council staff were also asked to take part.
- 3.4 Respondents were encouraged to write in using a dedicated email address consultation@rctcbc.gov.uk, in order to allow them to share their views.
- 3.5 A telephone consultation option was in place, through the Council's contact centre. This option allows people to discuss their views or request consultation materials. Individual call backs were available on request and a consultation Freepost address was available for postal responses.
- 3.6 The proposals were presented and discussed at the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 24<sup>th</sup> May 2023..
- 3.7 Overall, 70 survey responses were received to the consultation.

## 4 Questionnaire Results

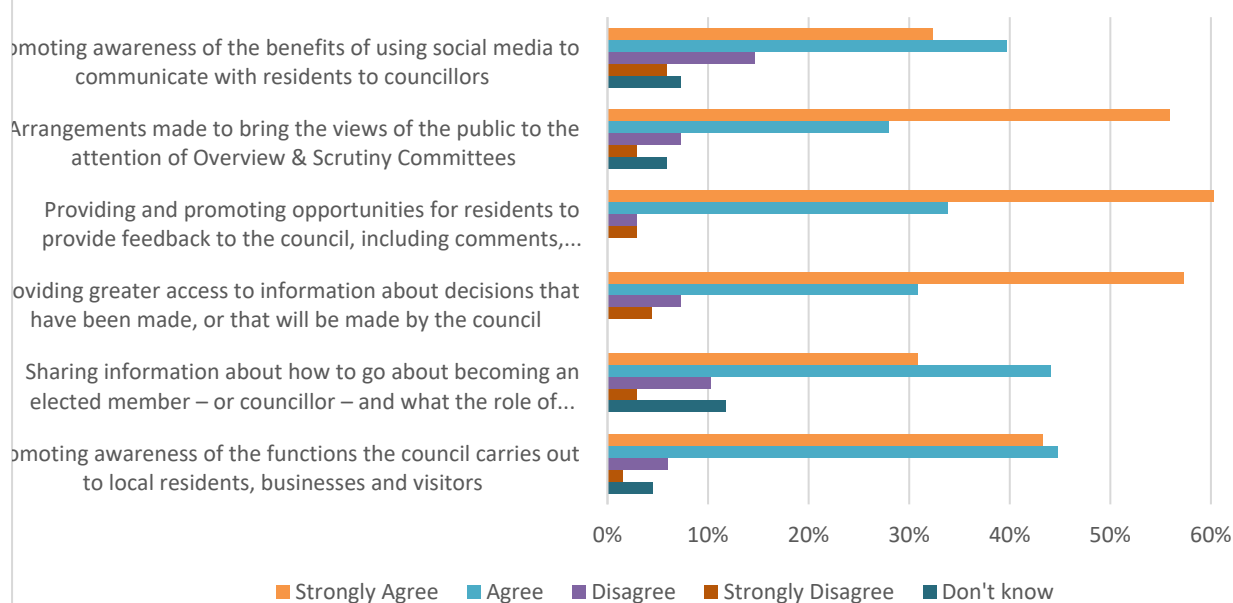
- 4.1 The following section outlines the results from the questionnaire, which received 70 responses.
- 4.2 The Draft Participation Strategy states 6 themes that Council's should follow to meet the requirements of the duty outlined in the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021.
- 4.3 The table and graph overleaf outlines the levels of agreement with each of the 6 themes. As seen the majority of respondents agreed that each of the themes would encourage local people to participate in the Council's decision making.

In terms of encouraging local people to participate in the Council's decision making we can see that;

- 88% agree with Promoting awareness of the functions the council carries out to local residents, businesses and visitors.
- 75% agree with Sharing information about how to go about becoming an Elected Member – or Councillor – and what the role of Councillor involves.
- 88% agree with Providing greater access to information about decisions that have been made, or that will be made by the council.
- 94% agree with Providing and promoting opportunities for residents to provide feedback to the council, including comments, complaints and other types of representations.
- 84% agree with Arrangements made to bring the views of the public to the attention of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
- 72% agree with Promoting awareness of the benefits of using social media to communicate with residents to Councillors.



To what extent do you agree that the following will encourage local people to participate in the Council's decision making?



<b>To what extent do you agree that the following will encourage local people to participate in the Council's decision making</b>					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
<b>Promoting awareness of the functions the council carries out to local residents, businesses and visitors</b>	43%	45%	6%	1%	4%
<b>Sharing information about how to go about becoming an elected member – or councillor – and what the role of councillor involves</b>	31%	44%	10%	3%	12%
<b>Providing greater access to information about decisions that have been made, or that will be made by the council</b>	57%	31%	7%	4%	0%
<b>Providing and promoting opportunities for residents to provide feedback to the council, including comments, complaints and other types of representations</b>	60%	34%	3%	3%	0%
<b>Arrangements made to bring the views of the public to the attention of Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committees</b>	56%	28%	7%	3%	6%
<b>Promoting awareness of the benefits of using social media to communicate with residents to councillors</b>	32%	40%	15%	6%	7%

- 4.4 Respondents were asked if there was anything else that they thought should be included in the Draft Public Strategy. The following are a selection of the comments received;

Communication/Accessibility

*“The channels of communication used and the vocabulary used could be made more appropriate and accessible.”*

*“The main point here for me is to ensure all parties who would be impacted by council decisions are given the opportunity to participate in the process. Communication is key to successful outcomes”*

Feedback/Evidence

*“Easier access to feedback”*

*“Providing evidence that the public are listened to, especially once you obtain better engagement.”*

*“Provision of detailed feedback from consultation to the consultees”*

*“Council to be transparent in all its decisions so as the public know how you are going to implement whatever the decision is!”*

Councillor information

*“Details of what councillors earn, what expenses they are paid and what they undertake, in easy access, or a link advertised on facebook”*

Social Media

*“Clarity on how people can engage fully if they do not want to use social media”*

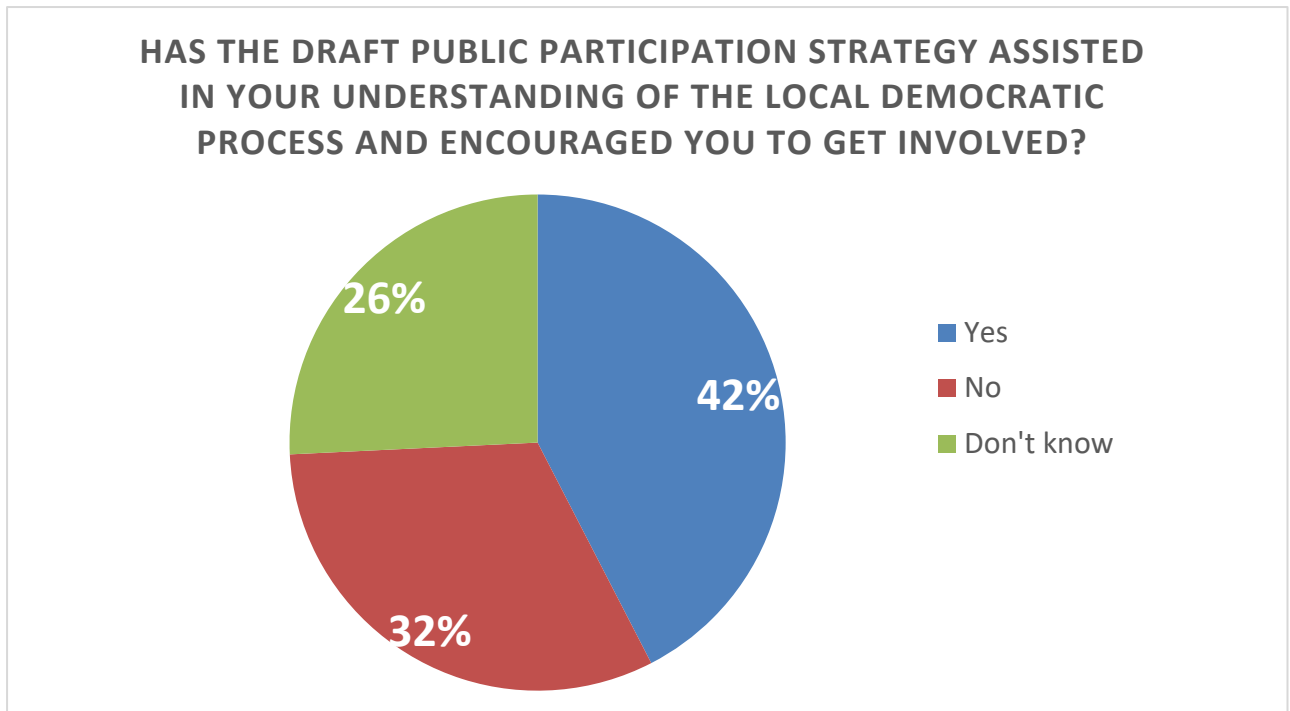
*“It's important to remember that many people - older people in particular - are digitally excluded for a host of reasons. It's important that online means of communication don't come at the expense of the digitally excluding otherwise some very important voices won't be heard that have a lot to say and a lot to lose through digital exclusion.”*

*“Ensure there are a variety of comms models in place to make sure no one is left behind. We know older people for instance struggle with social media. There are also a lot of people whose first language isn't English.....”*

Third Sector

*“.....If it's truly about participation then maybe working with the third sector to better represent people and hear people's views would be a good starting point....”*

- 4.5 42% of respondents said that the draft Public Participation Strategy assisted in their understanding of the local democratic process and encouraged them to get involved, with 26% unsure.



- 4.6 A number of comments were made about the need to make the Strategy easier to read, with suggestions to improve the presentation, including case studies and graphics.

*“It was a really helpful, comprehensive document. But, as below, it might benefit from some revision and changes to presentation to make it less ‘Council Report’ like and more interesting and engaging for the intended readers”*

- 4.7 Respondents were asked if they had any other comments to make on the Draft Participation Strategy. In addition to detailed suggestions on the text and layout of the document (which will be considered in the development of the final Strategy), the following are a selection of comments received;

Young people

*“The voice of children and young people is not being heard. I welcome this initiative in that it may open the dialogue and widen the variety of voice that the Council can hear.”*

## Resources

*“This is all well and good some of the suggestions made, but has the Council got the resources of implementing them? What would be deemed a success? Are you going to continually monitor the progression?.....”*

## Plain English

*“Information surrounding projects should be simpler and more concise, facts often buried in the technical aspects and takes days of digging. At least clearer summaries, a proper overview not just principals should be clear. My experience is that council ataff need coaching in writing information for the public*

## About you

4.8 Under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duties, the Council has a legal duty to look at how its decisions impact on people because they may have particular characteristics. Respondents were asked how the proposals affect you because of?:

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Ethnicity
4. Disability
5. Sexuality
6. Religion / belief
7. Gender identity
8. Relationship status
9. Pregnancy
10. Preferred language

The following are a selection of the comments received.

### Age

*“Proposals are ageist. Many older people do not use, know how to use or do not want to use social media so why encourage communication with council and Councillors by social media?”*

*“Age - because of Digital Exclusion - there needs to be a bigger focus on maintaining other engagement methods that do not rely on access to an electronic device”.*

*“As working adult and taxpayer council meetings etc are more often than not during the general working hours.*

### Other

*“Perhaps there should be more representation, training and better understanding of the needs of minority groups living in the locality. Please come into communities and spend time with alongside people instead of instigating additional and unwieldy processes”*

*“They don't affect me personally but, more generally, there are opportunities unseized in each of these areas.”*

- 4.9 With regards to the proposals, and the impact it may have, respondents were asked how they could impact opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh Language (Positive, Negative or Neutral) and if, in any way, it treats the Welsh Language less favourably than the English Language? How neutral effects could become positive, how positive effects could be increased, or negative effects be decreased?

In addition to a number of comments suggesting that there is too much emphasis on the Welsh Language. The following are a selection of the comments received;

*“As long as the process is available in the Welsh language then there would be no negative, only positive effects”*

*“Enabling us to support Welsh speaking is always a positive. not having that barrier can help and being able to have someone who could offer a translation service would really help so many organisations”*

*“You need to indicate that you wish to speak in Welsh before coming to a meeting. Someone whose first language is Welsh might overlook that requirement, it could also be seen as an extra hurdle to jump through”*

**The comments received for the above 2 questions have been made available to officers for the development of the associated impact assessments.**

## 5 Feedback from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

- 5.1 The full minutes of the meeting and a webcast are shown [here](#) and will be included as part of the review of the Draft Strategy, along with the consultation responses received.
- 5.2 The key points/questions raised included;
- A Member referred to Section 3 of the report and asked how success will be measured and what are the benchmarks to ensure targets are being met.
  - A Member commented on the accessibility of the Strategy and recommended an easy-read version to 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.
  - 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 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.
  - 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.
  - 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.