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Let's talk
RCT

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STRATEGY



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

FOREWORD

Public participation is essential to ensuring that the voices of citizens are at the heart of decision-making. It provides an opportunity for the needs and aspirations of communities to be heard and allows public service providers to respond. Our Public Participation Strategy sets out how we will talk and listen with all of those who live, work and study in Rhondda Cynon Taf in relation to the democratic process. The Strategy focuses on how people can get involved in the Council's decision making and looks to improve public awareness

of the democratic process and how the Council works. It runs alongside the Council's Involvement and Engagement Framework 2020-24, which sets out how we will inform, engage and consult with and involve people who live and work in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The framework provides guidance to Council services and partner organisations on how to involve stakeholders in decision making and ensure that the voices of people and communities are heard.

Our Public Participation Strategy details how the Council aims to promote:

- awareness among local people of the council's functions;
- awareness among local people of how to become a member of Rhondda Cynon Taf Council, and what membership entails;
- ways of facilitating access for local people to information about decisions made, or to be made, by the Council;
- ways of promoting and facilitating processes by which local people may make representations to the Council about a decision before, and after, it is made;
- arrangements made, or to be made, for the purpose of the Council's duty in bringing views of the public to attention of overview and scrutiny committees
- ways of promoting awareness among members of the Council of the benefits of using social media to communicate with local people

A plain English Summary of the Strategy is available [here](#).

Our Public Participation 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 as outlined in the Council's Involvement and Engagement Framework . There are difficult times ahead, and a key focus of our approach will be to ensure the broadest understanding of these challenges and the necessary decisions required by the Council, to make best use of the resources available to us.



The Council's Vision is for Rhondda Cynon Taf to be the best place in Wales to live, work and play, where people and businesses are independent, healthy, and prosperous. The continuing involvement and feedback from our residents and communities have shaped Council decisions that are helping to achieve this Vision and deliver the priorities set out within the [Corporate Plan 2020 - 2024 Making a Difference.](#)



Cllr Andrew Morgan

Leader & Chair of the Cabinet



Cllr Gareth Hughes

Presiding Member of the Council



Cllr Julie Edwards

Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee



Cllr S Rees

Chair of the Planning & Development Committee



Cllr A Fox

Chair of the Licensing Committee

SUMMARY

- The Council comprises seventy-five elected Councillors representing Electoral Wards local communities across Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- The Council normally meets on a monthly basis and has a list of functions that include;
 - » adopting and changing the Constitution (a written legal document that guides the council on its decision making processes)
 - » approving and adopting the Budget
 - » appointing the Leader
 - » determining and agreeing Committees (smaller groups of Councillors tasked with certain roles) and their terms of reference.
- Up to ten of the Council's members make up the Cabinet (also known as the Executive), including the Leader of the Council.
- The Cabinet is responsible for carrying out functions which are not the responsibility of the Council. Cabinet Members are responsible for decision making within specific areas of interest, known as portfolios.
- Scrutiny Committees act as a 'critical friend' 'friendly challenge' to the Cabinet and other decision makers in order to promote better services, policies and decisions. Working in a similar way to parliamentary select committees, scrutiny involves councillors who are not in the cabinet.
- The Planning Committee, Licensing Committees and Governance & Audit Committee make the Council's regulatory decisions.
 - » Planning Committee determines planning applications
 - » Licensing Committee determines licences to drive a hackney carriage or a private hire vehicle (taxis), public entertainment licences for premises amongst others
 - » Governance & Audit Committee reviews and scrutinises the Council's financial affairs
- Democratic Services Committee reviews the adequacy of provision by the Authority to support the democratic process.
- Standards Committee promotes high standards of conduct and supports Councillors to comply to such standards of behaviour

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THIS DOCUMENT

Section 1

How will the Council comply with the requirements of the Local Government & Elections Wales Act 2021?

Section 2

Reference to the following documents to assist the public with participation with the Council

- The Council's Involvement & Engagement Framework 2020-24
- Council Participation Guide for Residents
- Scrutiny Participation Guide for Residents
- Cabinet Participation Guide for Residents
- Regulatory Committees Participation Guide for residents

Section 3

How we will measure success?

A Glossary of some of the terminology used through the Strategy can be found at the end of the document.



[A plain English version is also available here](#)

(N.B. All documents linked within this strategy are available in paper copy upon request by contacting the Council Business Unit in any of the following ways:

By writing to: Council Business Unit, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale, CF40 2XX

By telephone: 07385 401845

By email: Councilbusiness@rctcbc.gov.uk)



SECTION 1

How will the Council comply with the requirements of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021

Section 40 of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 places a duty on each Council to prepare and publish a Public Participation Strategy (this document).

This Public Participation Strategy will complement the Council's Consultation & Engagement Framework. The Strategy is required to promote six Duties:

- 1. The Council's functions.**
- 2. How to become a Member (Councillor) of the Council, and what membership (Being a Councillor) entails.**
- 3. Accessing information about decisions made, or to be made, by the Council.**
- 4. Making representations to the Council about a decision before, and after, it is made.**
- 5. 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).**
- 6. Benefits of Councillors using social media to communicate with local people.**

DUTY 1.

THE COUNCIL'S FUNCTIONS

Promoting awareness of the functions the council carries out to local residents, businesses and visitors

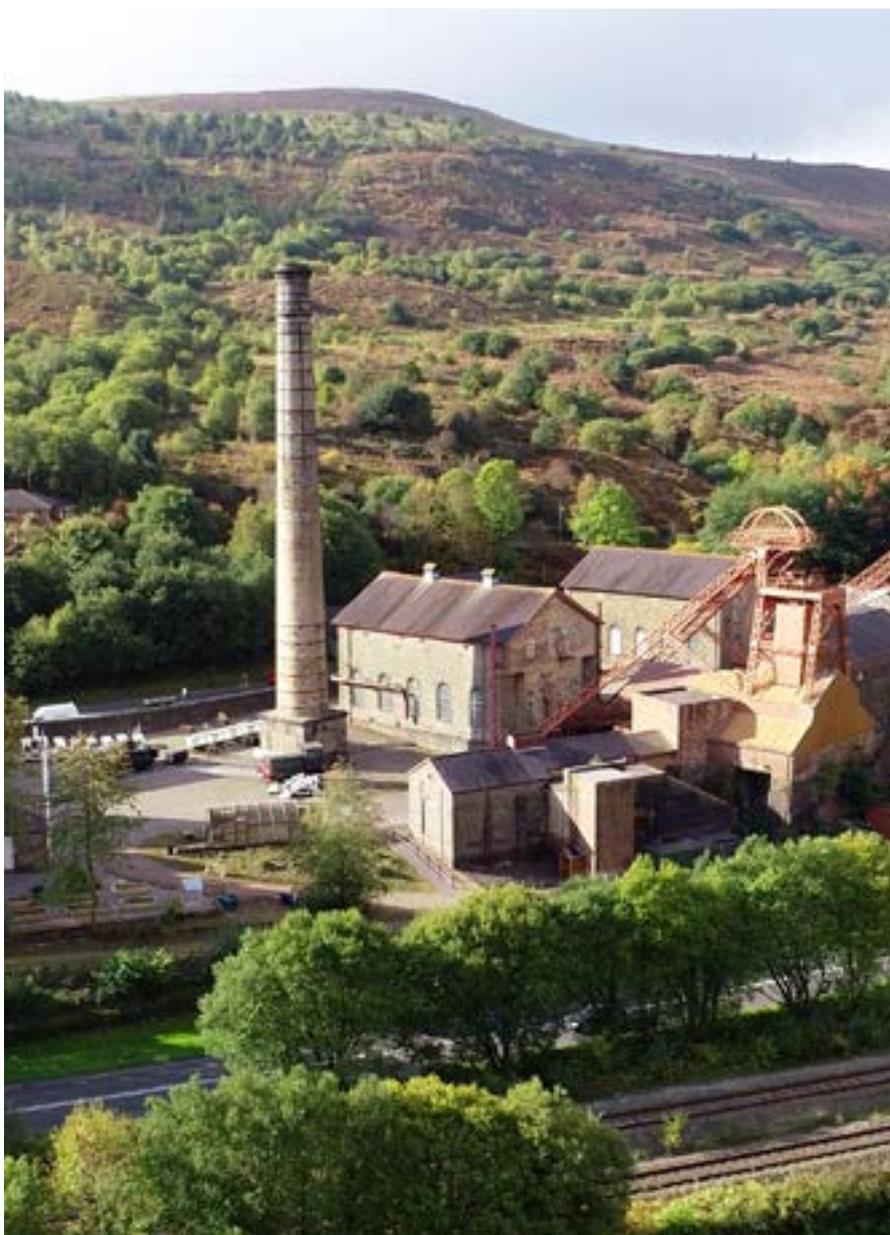
This information is available in printed format and can be found at the Council Headquarter building through documents such as the Council Constitution and the Council's Corporate Plan. Electronic copies of these documents can also be found on the Council website.

We will further promote this information by looking to ensure copies of the documentation are available at other Council businesses such as Libraries upon request.

How the Council Operates

All 75 Councillors meet as the Council of Rhondda Cynon Taf. All meetings of the Council are open to the public, but occasionally the Council will resolve to go into private session if confidential or exempt business is to be transacted, as outlined on the Committee agenda. Private sessions of Council are rare.

At Council meetings Councillors decide the Council's overall policies and set the budget each year (these are termed as Non-Executive Functions). The Council has a Cabinet which is responsible in turn for implementing policies agreed by the Council and taking executive decisions on matters which are not the responsibility of the Council or its Committees (these are termed as Executive Functions).



How the Council Works

The Council comprises 75 Councillors representing 46 Electoral Wards. Further information may be found [here](#).

The Council normally meets monthly and has a list of functions including adopting and changing the Constitution, approving and adopting the Budget and Policy Framework, appointing the Leader of Council, determining and agreeing Committees and their terms of reference. The Council has a fluid work programme identifying the business to be addressed at each Committee, which is available [here](#)

Several Councillors (this can include Job Share Cabinet Members) make up the [Cabinet](#) (the Executive). The Leader of the Council is the Chair of Cabinet. The Cabinet is responsible for carrying out all the Local Authority functions which are not the responsibility of the Council. The Cabinet take forward 'Key Decisions.' Cabinet Members are responsible for decision making within specific areas, known as Cabinet Portfolios.

It is at the discretion and decision of the Leader of the Council as to how Executive functions are discharged. At the Annual Meeting of the Council, the Leader will present a document for inclusion in the Scheme of Delegation containing the following information about Executive functions for the ensuing municipal year:

- the extent of any authority delegated to Cabinet Members individually, including details of any limitation on their authority;
- the terms of reference and constitution of such Cabinet Committees are determined by the Leader



[A copy of the Leader's Scheme of Delegation can be found here.](#)



Senior Officers within the Council's [Senior Leadership Team](#) are able to take forward decisions on behalf of the Council, which are termed as 'Officer Delegated Decisions'. A record of delegated decisions can be found [here](#). The nature and extent of any delegation to Officers, with details of any limitation on that delegation, and the title of the Officer to whom the delegation is made is also contained within the Leader's Scheme of Delegation.

Scrutiny Committees act as a 'critical friend' to the Cabinet and other decision makers to promote better services, policies, and decisions. Working in a similar way to Parliamentary Select Committees, scrutiny involves Councillors who are not in the Cabinet.

The Planning Committee, Licensing Committees and Governance & Audit Committee make the Council's regulatory decisions.

- i. Planning Committee determines planning applications.
- ii. Statutory Licensing Committee determines public entertainment licences for premises amongst others.
- iii. General Licensing Committee determines licences to drive a hackney carriage or a private hire vehicle (taxis).
- iv. Governance & Audit Committee reviews and scrutinises the Council's financial affairs.

The Council's Governance Committees carry out certain roles within the Local Authority in ensuring high standards of conduct are adhered to.

- i. Democratic Services Committee reviews the adequacy of provision by the Authority to discharge the democratic services function.
- ii. Standards Committee seeks to promote high standards of conduct and support Councillors to comply with the Code of Conduct.



The Council's Decision-Making Structure

Council

All 75 Councillors, normally meet monthly and are responsible for agreeing the budget and the corporate policy framework. A link to the Council's Corporate Plan can be found [here](#).

Council determines the political management framework of the Authority and appoints a Leader of the Council and specific committee chairs, such as scrutiny Chairs. Council is also responsible for appointing its Chief Executive & Directors.

Cabinet

The Cabinet is comprised of eight voting Councillors, including the Leader of the Council (from a maximum of ten). Job Share Cabinet Members are permitted. The Cabinet is appointed by the Leader of the Council and each Cabinet Member is assigned a thematic Cabinet Portfolio.

The Cabinet proposes the budget strategy to the Council and is responsible for taking decisions upon Council policies under the political guidance of the Leader of the Council.

The Leader agrees his scheme of delegation and provides delegated authority for executive decisions to Cabinet Members and senior Officers, in accordance with Council policy and budget.

Scrutiny

There are 4 Scrutiny Committees, including co-ordination of scrutiny activity by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Scrutiny Working Groups undertake detailed consideration on specific matters of concern.

Scrutiny holds the Cabinet (Executive) to account, including responsibility for pre-decision scrutiny and call-in of decisions. Ultimately it is the role of scrutiny to monitor and challenge the effectiveness of service delivery, polices and performance and improvement.

A full list of the Council's scrutiny committees and their respective terms of reference can be found [here](#).

Other Committees



[Further information relating to Committees may be viewed here.](#)



DUTY 2. HOW TO BECOME A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL, AND WHAT MEMBERSHIP ENTAILS

Sharing information about how to go about becoming an elected member – or councillor – and what the role of councillor involves

This information can also be found on the Council website with additional information including case studies of Members, providing examples of their roles and the reasons they became involved in the democratic process. Information about the role of a Councillor is also provided at the Council electoral registration offices. Democratic Services Officers are happy to take forward meetings or calls with anyone who is interested in becoming an Elected Member.

Further general details of how to become an Elected Member can be found on other websites and offices such as the Welsh Local Government Association and Electoral Registration Office.

We will further promote this information by producing a booklet in respect of the essential information to becoming a Councillor which will be located at central Council locations across the County Borough such as libraries. Work will also be undertaken to take forward the promotion of the role of a Councillor through attendance at certain Council Events across the County Borough.



How to become a Councillor

The next Local Government Elections will be held in May 2027. This section provides you with information on how to stand for election and what is expected of you should you be elected as a Councillor for Rhondda Cynon Taf.

The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) has produced the “Be a Councillor. Be the Change” website. This is a useful guide for prospective candidates. This may be viewed at

 www.beaCouncillor.wales

Rhondda Cynon Taf Council has a “Becoming a Councillor” website, including useful ‘questions and answer’ section and video footage of comments from current and past Members about their experiences as a Councillor.

 [This may be viewed here](#)

How much time does it take up to do a Councillors role?

It is estimated that on average, Councillors spend the equivalent of three to four days a week taking forward work associated with their role as a Councillor, such as responding to queries, attending meetings with constituents, attending meetings of the Council.

There are some Councillors who spend more time than this, and some less, which can be dependent on your role within the Council or

the number of queries you receive from your constituents. If you are in employment and intend to stand as a candidate you may wish to ask your employer what provisions they may have in place to allow you to take time away from work, to allow you to attend to your Council duties including attendance at Council meetings.



Standing as a Candidate

A candidate for election must complete a set of nomination papers that must be signed by the candidate in the presence of a witness who must attest the signature. You then need to win a majority of the votes cast at the ballot box (if there is a contest for the seat). Some electoral wards have up to three Councillors, therefore the top three would be elected.

Nomination packs will be available early in 2027. If you would like to register your interest, please contact electoralservices@rctcbc.gov.uk

 [Further useful information may be viewed here](#)

If you are thinking of standing as a candidate for a particular political party, then you should first contact that party's local organisation. If you plan to stand for election as an independent Councillor, contact us and we will be pleased to give you more information.

Councillors receive a salary which is determined annually by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) and can also claim travel and subsistence costs (subsistence is paid for 'out of county' meals and accommodation only) when undertaking official duties. Councillors can also claim towards the costs of care and personal assistance for them to carry out their approved duties.

 Further information on Councillor Salaries & allowances may be viewed at <https://gov.wales/independent-remuneration-panel-wales>



Support for Disabled Candidates Seeking Election

The Welsh Government has approved funding for a pilot scheme to fund reasonable adjustments and support for disabled candidates seeking election to the Local Government.

Further information may be viewed at <https://www.disabilitywales.org/projects/access-to-elected-office-fund-wales/>



What being a Councillor entails

Councillors are elected every five years. Councillors are democratically accountable to residents of their electoral ward. The overriding duty of Councillors is to the whole community, but they have a special duty to their constituents, including those who did not vote for them.

Once elected, Councillors are expected to attend various training and development sessions during their term of office. A Councillor Induction programme is provided for all new and returning Councillors during the first 12 months in office with further training provided on an ongoing basis through member development events. Councillors should set aside time during the first 3 months after the election for the Councillor Induction Programme.

Councillors are expected to attend meetings and committees and must observe the provisions of the Councillor's Code of Conduct. Further information may be viewed [here](#).

The Council fully support hybrid meetings, where Councillors can physically or remotely

Councillor Facilities & Support

The Council Business Unit, often known as Democratic Services, is responsible for supporting and arranging meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Committees etc., and provides a dedicated support service to all Elected Members, providing advice on the practice of meetings to Councillors, Officers, and the public. The service also helps Councillors with queries and admin related requests as well as supporting Councillors' health and wellbeing.

The Head of Democratic Services whose role is to support Members in non-executive roles will offer all Members the opportunity to undertake a Personal Development Review at least once a year, to provide in confidence an opportunity for all Members to discuss their role, training opportunities and other areas of support if required. A dedicated training programme is developed following the review process.

attend Council, Cabinet, and the majority of Committee Meetings. These are called hybrid / Multi-Location Meetings (MLM). They can be useful for people with responsibilities such as work, caring etc., by allowing them to participate from a location convenient to them.

As local representatives, Councillors have responsibilities towards their constituents and local organisations. These responsibilities and duties often depend on what the Councillor wants to achieve and how much time is available and may include: attending governing body meetings of schools within their ward, attending meetings of local organisations such as tenants' associations, bodies affecting the wider community, raising issues on behalf of members of the public, holding surgeries for residents to raise issues and meeting with individual residents in their own homes.

Councillors are entitled to a basic salary (£17,600 per annum in 2023-2024). Senior Salaries and other allowances / expenses are paid dependent on the roles and responsibilities the Councillor may have after the election.

Digital devices, broadband provision and ICT support are essential to enable Councillors to carry out their responsibilities effectively and securely. All Councillors have been provided with suitable digital devices and telephony provision following the Member Induction Programme following the 2022 Local Government Election.



DUTY 3. ACCESSING INFORMATION ABOUT DECISIONS MADE, OR TO BE MADE, BY THE PRINCIPAL COUNCIL

Providing greater access to information about decisions that have been made, or that will be made by the council

This information can also be found on the Council website through the provision of Cabinet Decision Notices / Minutes (in respect of Decisions taken by the Council at certain Council meetings) and through Committee work programmes which provide an overview of the forthcoming business to be considered at different meetings of the Council. Glamorgan Archives also hold information in relation to Council Committee business for the public to access.

Notices of Meeting

The Council will give five clear working days' notice for any formal meeting of the Council by posting details electronically on the Council's web site (in some circumstances it may be necessary to publish committee papers no-later than three clear working days). Committee summons will also be sent electronically to core Council services, such as libraries and one for all centres. Members of the public will be able to enquire about any forthcoming meetings at these locations where officers will be able to assist.

However, an exception will arise where the Council has received an application from the Police under section 53A of the Licensing Act 2003 for the summary review of a premises

We will further promote this information by taking forward Decision Notices for every Committee of the Council, in addition to the production of Council minutes. These Decision Notices will further promote transparency by providing a succinct overview of a meeting including attendees, decision taken and the outcome of any vote, which will be published within 7 days of the meeting.

licence (The Council being required to decide on whether to take any preliminary measures within 48 hours of receiving the application), the Council may give less than 3 clear days' notice of the meeting of the Licensing Committee meeting called to consider the application.



Access to Agenda & Reports Before the Meeting

Copies of the agenda and reports open to the public shall be available for inspection [here](#) and at the Council Headquarters following a request for such information.

If an urgent item is added to the agenda following its original publication, the Head of Democratic Services will publish the amended agenda and report to the website once available. The period of public inspection will be from the time the item was added to the agenda.

Access to Minutes etc., After the Meeting

The Council will make available copies of the following on its website for a period of six years after a meeting:

1. Minutes of formal Council, Cabinet & Committee meetings or record of decisions taken by the Cabinet.
2. The agenda for the meeting.

If a Member of the Public would like a hard copy of the above then this can be produced, following receipt of request through the Democratic Services team, located at the Council Headquarters.

From May 2023, the Council will introduce Decision Notices to assist the public in understanding the outcome of reports relating to items when the meeting was open to the public. A decision note will detail, attendance, any interests declared, and decisions will be published on the Authority's website within 7 days of the meeting.

Access to View Meetings

The Council will ensure members of the public can attend or view meetings that are open to the public either:

1. In person
2. Through the Council's online meeting platform (zoom) if making representations /asking questions.
3. By watching a meeting live via our webcast page or in archive (the webcast will be available to view for 6 months). Requests for copies of archived webcasts beyond 6 months can be made through Democratic Services.

Note: This does not apply when exempt or confidential information is being discussed. In these instances, Members of the public would be asked to leave the meeting whilst this item of business is considered. To ensure the smooth running of meetings, where possible any exempt or confidential items will be noted on an agenda as the final items of business, so that once these items are considered the meeting is closed to avoid the public having to return to the meeting. If an item was considered during the middle of a meeting, the Democratic Services Officer would ensure that the press and public were removed from the meeting for the duration of the item and would then be invited back into the meeting once a decision had been taken. The outcome of a confidential item will still be displayed within the Committee minutes and decision notice for transparency. Reports are determined to be confidential due to the view that due to the nature of the business to be transacted, exempt information would be disclosed. Exempt information means information falling within the 7 categories outlined in 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended). Report authors would need to choose which category of exemption relates to their report and authorisation for the exemption needs to be obtained from the relevant Senior Leadership Officer and the Council's Monitoring Officer.



DUTY 4. MAKING REPRESENTATIONS TO THE COUNCIL ABOUT A DECISION BEFORE, AND AFTER, IT IS MADE

Providing and promoting opportunities for residents to provide feedback to the Council, including comments, complaints and other types of representations

This information can also be found on the Council website on Committee agenda's and further information regarding speaking at Committee meetings can be found on the general Council business information pages. The Council's 'news feed' also highlights items to be presented to Cabinet and Council to assist in promoting this information. Details of access to the Council's comments, compliments and complaints scheme will also be made available at the Council Headquarters as well as other Council locations.

We will further promote this information by providing the public speaking engagement guidance information booklets linked within this document as hard copies within the Council Headquarters and other central locations such as Council libraries, Leisure Centres.

As part of this public participation strategy, the Council has created useful engagement guides to enable the public to understand how to submit a question or address a Committee. These guides can be found under the links in section 2 of this strategy.



The Council's accompanying Involvement and Engagement Framework outlines a number of approaches to allow people to be involved and provide feedback before decisions are made. This Framework focuses on four levels of Involvement: Providing Information, Consulting, Engaging and Co-producing and provides a commitment to;

- Strengthen the culture of involvement
- Make sure our Involvement is focused and has a purpose
- Make it easy for everyone to be involved
- Train and enable staff so that they have the skills they need
- Provide feedback to people about how their views have been used
- Evaluate what we have done so that we can improve in future

We provide a range of methods to allow a wide range of views from a wide range of stakeholders, this includes digital online platforms as well as face to face engagement, postal and telephone options. As a Council we value all customer feedback, good or bad, and use this information to both improve and develop services to meet

the needs of both customers and local communities. The Council's Comments, Compliments and Complaints [policy](#) outlines the Council's process for dealing with complaints and other customer feedback such as compliments and comments and explains what we do with the feedback we receive.

If a Member of the Public wished to submit a comment or complaint about a service received by the Council the following options are available:

- Contacting a local County Councillor
- Contacting the member of Cabinet responsible for the service area
- Using the Council's Comments, Compliments and Complaints [procedure](#)
- Contacting the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales at 1 Ffordd Yr Hen Gae, Pencoed, CF35 5LJ. Telephone: 0845 601 0987 or via the website www.ombudsmanwales.org.uk.

Comments or complaints regarding the conduct of a councillor should be directed to the Council's Monitoring Officer (director.legal@rctcbc.gov.uk) or the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.



DUTY 5. 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)

How can I become Involved in Scrutiny?

Scrutiny provides an opportunity for the public (residents, community organisations, partners, etc.), to become involved in Council activities. If you are a resident you may ask questions at Scrutiny meetings. Further information is included in the Scrutiny Participation guide.

Getting involved in scrutiny is one of the best ways to influence decision making at the Council, as Councillors will hear your experiences first hand. There are several ways you can get involved in the work of scrutiny at the Council:

1. Attending a Scrutiny meeting.
2. Contribute views / evidence on issues being examined by scrutiny.
3. Keeping up to date with what's happening in scrutiny.
4. UserVoice Feedback

All scrutiny meetings are open to the public except where exempt information must be discussed. A list of meeting dates and agenda items can be found [here](#). If you would

like to attend a meeting (physically or remotely) simply follow the instructions on the agenda.

Regardless of the thematic Scrutiny Committee and the business going forward, all Scrutiny Committees value the user voice to assist them in undertaking their role. Therefore whenever possible, Committees take forward pre-scrutiny of a decision, which means to scrutinise a policy or service change prior to a decision being made, to ensure the proposed decision is robust before considered by Cabinet. As part of this process, any consultation undertaken is provided to Scrutiny to allow both Scrutiny and then Cabinet / Council the opportunity to hear the UserVoice in respect of the matter. This information and feedback allows Members to gain a better understanding of a potential impact of a decision both positive and negative. Scrutiny will use this information before them to seek further clarity on an item or to propose alternatives that might not have been considered, before all of this information is presented to Cabinet and or Council for the final decision to be made.

Going forward, we will look to utilise the service user voice following public consultations to engage in work programme planning for the appropriate scrutiny committee.

We will also further strengthen the existing arrangements we have in place to evaluate the impact the Council's work has had on service users and the achievement of outcomes, and incorporate this into our performance management processes.

In line with the legislative requirements in respect of petitions scheme, the Council's revised petition scheme will further promote the opportunity for the UserVoice to become part of the democratic process by allowing petitions to be presented to Council, and for this to be referred to the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee for the petition content to be scrutinised in full, if deemed appropriate, subject to the petition adhering to certain criteria.



DUTY 6. BENEFITS OF COUNCILLORS USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO COMMUNICATE WITH LOCAL PEOPLE

Promoting awareness of the benefits of using social media to communicate with residents to councillors

Social media is a powerful tool for Councillors, helping them to engage with communities, raise awareness of community issues, events, or Council initiatives and to seek views and receive feedback.

Social media has changed how politics works. It makes politicians and public institutions more accessible, allows individuals to have their voices heard and helps share ideas or promote campaigns.

By using social media Councillors can:

1. Learn about local issues and concerns.
2. Find the latest news and publications from Rhondda Cynon Taf Council, other Local Authorities, the Welsh Government, and organisations such as the Welsh Local Government Association.
3. Promote their role and what they do on a day-to-day basis.
4. Share information quickly and gain opinions of their constituents.



Many Councillors already use social media; however, Councillors must remember that they are bound by the Code of Conduct as it equally applies to online and social media content. Councillors are personally responsible for the content they publish and must abide by the Code of Conduct when posting information.

Councillors have been provided with social media training opportunities to help with the managing of their Council social media accounts. Councillors are strongly advised to take forward a separate Councillor account and refrain from sharing any personal information on this account with their own personal social media platforms. A social Media policy is also available.

Infographics to assist Councillors with online activity have been promoted by the Council Business Unit, for Councillors to utilise.

Councillors' social media accounts are listed under each Councillors profile on the Council website to assist with constituents being able to access Councillors.

It should be noted that the use of social media by Councillors and the Council in general is in addition to the other offline methods of engagement and face to face approaches. The Council provides a range of methods to ensure a range of views that include those who may be digitally excluded.

Other resources for Councillors to use in respect of personal safety and online abuse are listed below:

The Welsh Local Government Association has provided free guidance for Councillors along with tips and advice in terms of handling on-line abuse.

 www.wlga.wales

 [Handling online abuse](#)

 [Rules of Engagement](#)





SECTION 2

Details of how the public can participate with the Council can be found here.

The following links will provide detailed information and advice to assist you in participating with the Council in respect of Committee meetings, however, a brief overview is also provided below.

- **The Council's Involvement & Engagement Framework 2020-2024**
 [can be found here](#)
- **Council Participation Guide for Residents**
 [can be found here](#)
- **Scrutiny Participation Guide for Residents**
 [can be found here](#)
- **Cabinet Participation Guide for Residents**
 [can be found here](#)
- **Regulatory Committees Participation Guide for residents**
 [can be found here](#)

(N.B. Where Members of the public are not able to access the hyperlinks referenced above hard copies of the documents can be made available by the Democratic Services team, whose contact details are listed at the end of Section 2 of this document.

Participating in meetings of Rhondda Cynon Taf Council.

Full Council meets once a month and details of the calendar of meetings can be found [here](#).

Any resident of or Council taxpayer or non-domestic ratepayer in the County Borough may ask questions of Members of the Executive or the Chairpersons of Committees, or any Member of the Council. You can only submit one question per Council meeting and no more than one question may be asked on behalf of one organisation.

A question may only be asked if notice has been given by delivering it in writing or by electronic email to the Proper Officer not later than 5.00pm at least eight clear working days (not including the date of the meeting) before the date of the meeting.

Each question must give the name and address of the questioner and must specify the Member who will need to respond to the question.

Participating in meetings of Rhondda Cynon Taf Scrutiny Committees.

A schedule of all the Scrutiny Committee meetings for the current municipal year is available on the Council website on the following [link](#).

Anyone who lives or works in Rhondda Cynon Taf and who has registered in advance is entitled to speak at a scheduled meeting of one of the Council's Scrutiny Committees

The number of speakers will be limited to two per agenda item with the discretion for the Chair to increase this limit if they feel it appropriate to do so.

Members of the public wishing to speak must notify Democratic Services by no later than 5.00 p.m. on the penultimate working day preceding the relevant Scrutiny Committee meeting.

Requests must include details of the agenda item of the relevant Scrutiny Committee at which you wish to speak. Applications will be dealt with in the order that they have been received.

At the meeting itself, a participant will have up to a period of 5 minutes for their question and they will be permitted to ask an additional supplementary question, without notice. However, this question must relate to the answer given to the initial question asked. This supplementary question must be within the 5-minute allocation time.

There is a criteria for the types of questions that are permitted and details of which are found in the detailed guidance linked above.

To participate at meetings of Full Council then please see the full guidance provided or please contact us on the contact details listed at the bottom of this section.

A maximum of 10 minutes 'speaking time' will be allocated to each agenda item therefore, individual speakers will be limited to 5 minutes per agenda item

To participate at meetings of Scrutiny Committees then please see the full guidance provided or please contact us on the contact details listed at the bottom of this section.



Participating in meetings of Rhondda Cynon Taf Cabinet Committee.

A schedule of all the Cabinet Committee meetings for the current municipal year is available on the Council website and can be found [here](#).

Anyone who lives or works in Rhondda Cynon Taf has the opportunity to address the Cabinet at a scheduled meeting, subject to the discretion of the Chair, as long as they have registered in advance their intention to speak.

The number of speakers permitted to speak to an agenda item will be at the discretion of the Chair, and where appropriate the Chair may request that one speaker addresses the Cabinet on behalf of a group if a number of requests are made to the same agenda item.

Members of the public wishing to speak must notify the Executive and Regulatory inbox by no later than 5.00 p.m. on the penultimate working day preceding the relevant meeting.

Requests must include details of the agenda item of the relevant Cabinet meeting at which you wish to speak. Applications will be dealt with in the order that they have been received.

All those registered to speak will be advised prior to the meeting, either by email or through the contact telephone number that has been provided, if your request to speak has been accepted.

Individual speakers will have a maximum of 5 minutes to address the Cabinet. If there a number of public speakers on a specific agenda item the Chair, through their discretion may reduce the time allocation to allow for the number of speakers and speakers will be advised of this amendment in advance of the meeting.

To participate at meetings of Cabinet then please see the full guidance provided or please contact us on the contact details listed at the bottom of this section.



Participating in meetings of Rhondda Cynon Taf Planning and Development Committee.

A schedule of Planning and Development Committee meetings for the current municipal year is available via the Council's website [here](#).

The most simple and appropriate way for members of the public and other interested parties to comment on a planning application is by expressing any views they may have in writing. Comments must be submitted within a specified time period, typically 21 days from the date of the consultation letter. This will ensure that any comments received can be fully considered before a decision on the application is made. Further guidance on such can be found [here](#)

Should an application require determination by the Council's Planning and Development Committee, you can address the Committee on the relevant application as it is presented during the meeting.

Alternatively, should you be unable to attend the relevant Planning and Development Committee meeting to address the Committee on an application, a written representation can be submitted.

Applicants, professional advisors or agents, and members of the public are entitled to speak at a scheduled meeting of the Planning and Development Committee, providing they have registered their intention to address the Committee by the specified deadline.

General Information

In respect of all our committee meetings, simultaneous translation facilities can be made available should a participant wish to make their address through the medium of Welsh. If a participant has a disability or any additional needs and require assistance to participate in any of the processes outlined above then support arrangements can be provided. Should a person aged under 16 years of age wish to address any of the Council Committees, arrangements will be made for them to be accompanied by an adult and the relevant GDPR documents will need to be completed.

Non-committee members and members of the public may request the facility to address the committee at their meeting on the business listed. It is kindly asked that such notification is made to planningservices@rctcbc.gov.uk by 5pm, on the penultimate working day preceding the relevant Planning and Development Committee meeting. Alternatively, a person can register an interest to speak via the Council website through the following [link](#).

Public speakers are afforded a maximum of 5 minutes to address the Committee on an application. It should be noted that a further 5 minutes is offered for response by the applicant or their professional advisor to new material or detail introduced by the objector(s) or by their professional advisor(s).

To participate at meetings of Planning and Development Committee then please see the full guidance provided or please contact us on the contact details listed at the bottom of this section.



To participate at any of the above listed meetings of the Council then please see the full guidance which is linked above at the start of section 2. If you have any questions concerning public speaking at a meeting, then please do not hesitate to contact one of our team on the contact details as shown below:-

By writing to: Council Business Unit,
Democratic Services, The Pavilions, Cambrian
Park, Clydach Vale, CF40 2 XX

By telephone: 07385 401845

By email: Councilbusiness@rctcbc.gov.uk

An aerial photograph of a town, showing a mix of residential houses, a large church with a prominent tower, and a cemetery. The town is surrounded by greenery and hills in the background.

SECTION 3

How will we measure success?

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 places a number of duties on local authorities regarding participation, listed 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 – or councillor – 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
- Arrangements made to bring the views of the public to the attention of Overview & Scrutiny Committees
- Promote awareness of the benefits of using social media to communicate with residents to councillors

Specifically in relation to the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, we will look to take forward the following actions to improve experiences for Members of the Public and the Council as a whole. The intended impact of such actions are listed below and where appropriate, Measures have also been included to assist us with our aims:

AIM:

Promote awareness of the functions the council carries out to local residents, businesses and visitors:

Existing	Actions to Improve	Impact/Measure
Council Website, where people can access agendas, minutes and decisions – Committees	Reviewing the Council webpages to ensure they are engaging and are updated as and when necessary. Utilising the promotional banner to display information regarding special meetings of Council that may be of general interest. i.e Leader’s Debate / Large Planning applications	Impact - Members of the Public feel better informed due to the information made available and ease of access to obtain the information.
Corporate Plan and associated strategies that are publicly available	New Corporate Plan for 2024, will be informed by residents and stakeholder priorities	Impact - Publish Corporate Plan 2024, shaped by residents and stakeholders.
Live streaming of Council meetings	Taking forward live streaming of Hybrid meetings that are conducted within the Council	Measure - No. of views/ attendance
Let’s Talk RCT Engagement website provides an online platform to engage with the public on key projects	Evaluate the site annually and continue to build and promote the use of the site for digital engagement	No. of projects and engagement levels

AIM:

Share information about how to go about becoming an elected member – or councillor – and what the role of councillor involves

Existing	Actions to Improve	Impact/Measure
Local Democracy Week – The role of the councillor promoted through the Council’s social media platforms / Attendance at the Council’s local Job Fair and face to face engagement whenever possible	Take forward a further campaign during Local Democracy Week	Impact - The public have a better understanding of the role of a Councillor and how they can potentially become a future candidate
Dedicated ‘Becoming a Councillor’ section on the Council Website, including videos (with Members experiences of the role) and details of remuneration and allowance entitlement.	To review the website to ensure accuracy of information – utilising the ideas of Newly Elected Members as to what additional information would be helpful	Impact - The public have a better understanding of the role of a Councillor and how they can potentially become a future candidate.
Promotion of training and support provision to equip Councillors to undertake their role	To promote the provisions of support on the Council’s website	Impact - Prospective candidates are able to access information to assist them in their knowledge of the support opportunities available to Councillors to assist them in their roles.
Bilingual provisions	To continue to provide bilingual opportunities and support arrangements for all Elected Members including provisions of materials / translation facilities / training opportunities	Impact - To support all Members with their preferred language choice and to provide learning opportunities to all Members in respect of the Welsh language.

AIM:

Provide greater access to information about decisions that have been made, or that will be made by the council

Existing	Actions to Improve	Impact/Measure
Council Website – Decision Notices / Minutes / Key Delegated Decisions / Cabinet Member Decisions / Leaders Debate.	Ensuring the website is easily navigated to in respect of the decision-making arrangements within the Authority	Measure - Take forward meeting Decision Notices following every Committee of the Council. Impact – Greater transparency and access to information.
Live streaming of Council meetings	Taking forward live streaming of Hybrid meetings that are conducted within the Council	Measure - No. of views/attendance
Forward Work Programmes	Ensuring Forward Work Programmes add value to the scrutiny process and are outcomes based focussed.	Measure - No. of items taken on the work programme versus the no. of items actually considered.
Annual Reports	Ensuring Annual reports are provided for some of the main Committees of the Council to provide context and information about the work undertaken	Measure - Publication of Reports

AIM:

Provide and promote opportunities for residents to provide feedback to the council, including comments, complaints and other types of representations

Existing	Actions to Improve	Impact/Measure
Consultation – The Council consults on all service change and policy development and promotes the process, with the aim of obtaining a wide range of feedback from a wide range of stakeholders	Continue the approach, ensuring the hard to reach and digitally excluded groups are included.	Measure - No. of consultations, engagement figures
Council Website gives people the opportunity to provide feedback	Increase prominence/ease of access to feedback portal	Measure - No. of comments, complaints, compliments
Petition Scheme	The Council are looking to review their current petitions scheme to promote the tool of engagement and ensure accountability and transparency	Measure - Increased engagement in the scheme
Attending and speaking at a Committee meeting – Cabinet / Council / Planning	Webcast of Meetings showing Public engagement at meetings. Taking forward an area on the Council webpages for 'involvement'	Measure - Number of residents attending and engaging at Committee meetings.

AIM:

Arrangements made to bring the views of the public to the attention of Overview & Scrutiny Committees

Existing	Actions to Improve	Impact/Measure
Attending and speaking at a Scrutiny Committee	Continue to promote the availability of this opportunity through the publication of the Scrutiny Participation Guide for Residents	Measure - Number of residents attending and engaging with the scrutiny process
Suggest a topic for scrutiny to consider on its forward work programmes via the dedicated scrutiny mailbox	Continue the current approach of publishing/updating the scrutiny work programmes to provide transparency and forward planning	Measure - Public engagement with the forward work programmes
Use of Social Media platforms to share information about Scrutiny Committees and encourage participation	Develop plans to use social media to promote and share information. Investigate the best avenues to facilitate engagement with the public	Measure - Interaction/comments from the public
View the live streaming of scrutiny committees	Continue to publish the link to the council webcasting pages on the scrutiny committee agendas	Measure - Number of views on the council webcasting pages

Aim:

Promote awareness of the benefits of using social media to communicate with residents to councillors

Existing	Actions to Improve	Impact/Measure
Comprehensive Member Induction programme/ training (and ongoing training) Which is strengthened through the Members Personal Development Reviews (PDR's) process.	Taking forward refresher training to Elected Members as and when requested and asking Members specifically about Social media usage and training opportunities at PDR reviews	Measure - No. of Members engaging in training and feeling confident in taking forward a social media presence Impact – Members can learn of the benefits of social media through PDR process
Availability of Infographics to assist Members with communication	Surveying Members on the infographics needed	Measure - No. of Members engaging with the provision
Social media contact details e.g. Twitter promoted on each Member's profile page on the council website	Survey Members for Useful contact details including social media accounts	Measure - Increased promotion of engagement details

GLOSSARY

Attest	To be a witness to something
Ballot Box	A sealed box that votes are put into on an election day
Budget	The Budget is an amount of money that the Council can spend on delivering services (schools, social care, collecting rubbish etc) each year. The budget comes from money raised from Council tax and from Government funding
Budget and Policy Framework	A name for all the Council policies that must be used when making any decisions
Cabinet	The Cabinet is a smaller group of Councillors chosen by the Council Leader to lead Council work and decisions. They each have a set area of responsibility.
Candidate	Anyone who is standing for election is called a candidate
Chief Executive & Directors	The Chief Executive is in charge of all RCT staff (not elected Councillors). The Directors are in charge of specific parts of RCT County Borough Council.
Code of Conduct	A set of rules that describe how Councillors are expected to behave in different parts of their job as a Councillor
Committees	Smaller groups of Councillors who meet regularly to discuss specific issues
Constitution	A written legal document that guides the council on its decision making processes
Council	The full group of elected Councillors who make decisions.
Senior Leadership Team	The Chief Executive and Directors of RCT who are in charge of different parts of Council work and services
Councillor Induction Programme	The training that all Councillors take part in to learn how to be a Councillor
Councillors	Elected representatives from each part of the Rhondda, Cynon and Taf area
Critical Friend	A person or group of people who help make sure that work is being done properly and within the rules
Democratic Services	A group of staff who work to make sure that Councillors have the support they need, and who help carry out meetings and training of Councillors
Democratically accountable	Being held responsible for your work by the people who can vote for you in elections
Digital devices and telephony provision	The computers, internet and phones that are needed for Council work
Discretion and decision	This means it is only the Leader's choice, not a group decision
Duties	The responsibilities and work that a person must do

Elected Members	Another name for Councillors
Electoral Wards	The smaller local areas and communities in RCT that vote for local Councillors
Executive Functions	Decisions that can be made by individuals or groups such as Cabinet, Committees or officers
Fluid work programme	A list of topics that need to be considered by Committees and that can change over time
Functions	The different types of work being done
Hybrid meetings	Meetings that people can take part in online and in person
In confidence	Privately
Infographics	Pictures and graphs that explain information
Initiatives	New ideas and plans
Job Share	Two or more people share the work of one full-time job
Key Decisions	High-level or very important decisions that affect a lot of other decisions
Making representations	Speaking to and giving information or opinion to the Council
Municipal year	This runs from the date following the Councils Annual General Meeting until the next Annual General meeting. The Annual General Meetings are usually held in May
Officer Delegated Decisions	Decisions that are made by RCT staff rather than by Councillors
Officers	People who work for RCT/Members of staff
Portfolio	The list of work areas that a group is responsible for
Pre-decision scrutiny	Examination of information and evidence by the Scrutiny Committee before a decision is made by an officer or Cabinet
Reasonable adjustments	Changes that can be made to make sure everyone can access and do a job, attend a meeting and so on, taking into account any disability or other needs they have
Remuneration	Money that is paid in return for work or to cover costs
Returning Councillors	Councillors who have been re-elected
Salary	An annual sum which is usually paid monthly in exchange for doing a job
Scheme of Delegation	A plan for who is responsible for different parts of work given to them
Subsistence	Money paid for food, drinks, travel and other essential costs whilst working
Surgeries	Times when members of the public can visit their Councillor in a public place to discuss issues in their communities
Terms of reference	The agreed plan of what the group is for and how they will do their work
Constituents	People who live in the area and vote for Councillors

CONTACT US:

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF

