



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EISTEDDFOD CABINET SUB-COMMITTEE

11th MARCH 2024

UPDATE ON THE RCT NATIONAL EISTEDDFOD 2024 – COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

REPORT OF DIRECTOR - PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH CLLR. RHYS LEWIS, CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION, YOUTH PARTICIPATION & WELSH LANGUAGE

Author(s):

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members with an update on the work currently being undertaken in collaboration with National Eisteddfod officers in preparation for the 2024 Eisteddfod in Rhondda Cynon Taf, specifically in relation to community engagement and fundraising.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet Sub-Committee:

- 2.1 Notes the content of the report.
- 2.2 Considers whether further information is required.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The report is to update the Eisteddfod Cabinet Sub-Committee Members of the approaches that have been adopted to engage with communities to ensure that the National Eisteddfod 2024 in Rhondda Cynon Taf is a success, in both the lead up to and during the Eisteddfod week and that a significant positive legacy remains for the longer term.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The previous Eisteddfod Cabinet report, dated 13th December 2022, outlined the background to The National Eisteddfod of Wales being hosted by Rhondda Cynon Taf in August 2024, and the initial preparations and discussions that were underway between the Council and Eisteddfod Officers.

- 4.2 Since that time there has been significant progress, with preparation work undertaken with the Eisteddfod's National Lottery Heritage Fund community engagement project continuing to be delivered successfully and providing opportunities to engage with a small number of targeted groups to inform and pilot a new approach to National Eisteddfod engagement in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 4.3 Eisteddfod Officers held a virtual community forum meeting in December 2022, where they were able to promote opportunities for local people to apply and be appointed to specific roles on their Executive and Local Fund Committees.
- 4.4 These two Committees are set up to be the driving force that brings people from across the County together and as a committed group of volunteers, they work closely with the Eisteddfod team, local communities and the Council to organise awareness-raising and fundraising events.
- 4.5 In January 2023, the National Eisteddfod appointed a Chair and Vice Chair for the Rhondda Cynon Taf Eisteddfod Executive Committee, namely Helen Prosser and Andrew White respectively and a Chair of the Local Fund Committee, Iolo Roberts.
- 4.6 Following these appointments, Eisteddfod officials and Members were provided with a report detailing options of how RCT could be split for fundraising purposes using the Council's already established Neighbourhood Network model and considering key data such as population, deprivation levels and average household income.
- 4.7 Consideration was given to setting up fundraising sub-committees in Rhondda, Cynon and Taf that would feed into the main Local Fund Committee (chaired by Iolo Roberts), with smaller potential fundraising targets for each area.
- 4.8 Three sub-committees were initially established, and first meetings held:
- Rhondda – 27th April 2023
 - Cynon – 18th May 2023
 - Taf – 7th June 2023
- 4.9 During this period, Council Officers, in consultation with Cabinet Members, developed an internal governance structure which brings together key officers and services to support the National Eisteddfod in planning and delivering a successful event in Rhondda Cynon Taf and provide regular updates on progress.
- 4.10 The Director for Public Health, Protection and Community Services has Lead Officer responsibility for the National Eisteddfod in Rhondda Cynon Taf, with two Lead Work Stream Officers in place to support and co-ordinate work on

both the National Eisteddfod and Infrastructure and Community Engagement and Fundraising, including Legacy.

(Appendix 1 – RCT Governance structure arrangements).

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND EVENTS

5.1 The National Eisteddfod has organised and held a number of events this year, with support from Council Officers, Members and local community groups to launch and promote the event coming to Rhondda Cynon Taf in 2024.

5.2 Some of the main events have included:

- A Launch of the National Eisteddfod with 500 days to go – event held on 4th March in The Lion, Treorchy, with over 4,000 people attending.
- Proclamation – event held on 24th June in Aberdare, where over 500 children and local people joined in a procession, with the ceremony taking place at The Ron Jones Stadium.
- Announcement of Rhondda Cynon Taf's National Eisteddfod 2024 Maes location, with National Eisteddfod presence at the Big Bite event in Pontypridd on 4th August.
- The National Eisteddfod 2023 Llyn ac Eifionydd – Council Cabinet members, staff and young volunteers travelled to Gwynedd to host a stall at last year's event from 5th to 12th August, promoting the event coming to Rhondda Cynon Taf in 2024.

5.3 Key messages for the National Eisteddfod in Rhondda Cynon Taf is the need for it to be inclusive, ensuring that people understand there is something for everyone at the National Eisteddfod and that it's not just for people who can speak Welsh.

5.4 As such, the Council are working closely with Eisteddfod Officers and local members across RCT to ensure effective approaches are established for community engagement. A schedule of local engagement activities and events is being developed and will be widely promoted in the run up to the event in August 2024.

5.5 Cultural venues across Pontypridd town centre are also being considered for use by the National Eisteddfod as part of its offer, during daytimes and evenings the week of the event.

5.6 Relationships have been developed between the National Eisteddfod's Artistic team and Rhondda Cynon Taf's Arts Service and there are ongoing discussions in relation to artistic programmes.

5.7 The Council and the National Eisteddfod are committed to ensuring the Eisteddfod is as accessible as possible to everyone in RCT. In partnership with the National Eisteddfod, a proposal to fund subsidised access has been

developed and a business case submitted to Welsh Government regarding access and inclusion for the event requesting subsidised cost of entry, especially for specific vulnerable groups. A decision on additional funding is awaited.

5.8 A 'Let's Talk' Eisteddfod survey was recently undertaken which gave RCT residents an opportunity to give their views about the Welsh Language in general, which received over 700 responses. The results of the survey have identified opportunities for us to ensure residents are provided with information, so they fully understand what an Eisteddfod is and the benefits that come with it.

5.9 Survey results will also be used to inform our communications plan that is currently in development, and has been welcomed by Eisteddfod Officers, as it helps them get an understanding of the local demographic and any barriers/opportunities for engagement.

(Appendix 2 – Let's Talk Report).

5.10 More recently a Community Workstream group has been established to bring together key officers from across Council services to build on the work already undertaken to date and to co-ordinate future efforts under specific priority areas of work.

5.11 Officers will lead on identified priorities and support engagement with RCT's local business community, local schools and young people to take advantage of the opportunities the National Eisteddfod brings, including volunteering, fundraising, sponsorship.

5.12 Council services are developing opportunities for wider participation in Welsh medium/bilingual activities and events, which include:

- Welsh language taster sessions delivered with Menter Iaith and Welsh for Adults in local communities and town centres.
- Toolkit for businesses to promote use of basic Welsh for their staff.
- Using Welsh in a casual setting with young people through delivery of activities.
- More Welsh Language courses delivered for Council staff and Members to increase take up and improve skill levels.

5.13 Council Officers in partnership with Eisteddfod Officers, have developed a school strategy, highlighting opportunities for Welsh and English medium schools to engage with Eisteddfod preparations. The strategy continues to develop as new opportunities become available, which in turn will be shared with all primary and secondary schools.

5.14 Council Officers working with key partners such as Menter Iaith, Helo Blod (Welsh Gov) and Town Centre BIDS, have begun work developing a business

toolkit. Included in the toolkit will be further information about the Eisteddfod, resources from Helo Blod and a pamphlet to help local businesses and town users to develop their conversational Welsh skills. Purpose of the toolkit is to create a Warm Welsh Welcome in our town centres.

6. FUNDRAISING

- 6.1 The National Eisteddfod is a charitable organisation and its funding model requires that a contribution to the operating costs of the festival is raised by community fundraising activities in the host local authority area. There is already lots of effort being made by the National Eisteddfod, local communities supported by local members, voluntary groups, to fundraise across the County Borough. It is expected that these efforts will escalate and gain momentum over the next 5 months in the run up to the event in August 2024. The Council is supporting the community activity as necessary in their fundraising endeavours.
- 6.2 The National Eisteddfod's three main local fundraising committees are well established with a number of smaller sub-committees being set up to ensure local communities and voluntary organisations have the best opportunities to become involved. These committees continue to promote and deliver locally organised fundraising activities and events run by their volunteers.
- 6.3 The National Eisteddfod has developed and launched a webpage providing information on Rhondda Cynon Taf's Eisteddfod this year and enables donations from individuals or businesses to be made online, either via sponsorship of competition prizes or general donations which will go to the local fundraising committees.
- 6.4 Collection boxes have been placed in key Council buildings across the County Borough (e.g.) Libraries, One4All centres, Theatres to support the fundraising efforts. Posters with a QR code directing members of the public to the National Eisteddfod's donation system have also been placed in high traffic areas at Council operated buildings.
- 6.5 The Council will, where possible, enable the use of its venues as part of community fundraising efforts. Requests will need to be approved on a case-by-case basis, as services will need to take into account activities that are already scheduled in.
- 6.6 The Council's Mayor, Councillor Wendy Lewis has also agreed for the National Eisteddfod to be one of her chosen charities this year, which will support the fundraising efforts.
- 6.7 Collections can be made at Council events, either through staff or local community/voluntary groups. Two licenses will be granted for each event to allow fundraising activities to take place. Council services and staff will also be encouraged to fundraise at their scheduled events and activities.

6.8 Council Officers will promote opportunities to local businesses and town centres to ensure they are fully aware of the opportunities that the National Eisteddfod will present.

6.9 A full list of planned events linked to the National Eisteddfod and fundraising activity can be found on the Menter Iaith website <https://menteriaith.cymru/events/>

7. LEGACY

7.1 The National Eisteddfod's aims in relation to legacy for Rhondda Cynon Taf are as those outlined in the Eisteddfod Cabinet report in December 2021 and include:

- More Welsh and bilingual activities and events locally.
- Increase in interest in local culture and heritage and more people interested in the story of RCT at a national level.
- More people choosing to learn Welsh and choosing to use the language as part of their daily life.
- Effect of around £15.9 million on the local economy during Eisteddfod week.
- Community project aims to improve people's digital skills.
- People of all backgrounds feeling more confident about Welsh and feeling that the language and culture belongs to everyone, and choosing to come to Welsh and bilingual events.
- A bank of volunteers of all ages with the skills to continue volunteering bilingually in local groups and organisations following the Eisteddfod.

7.2 The above aims align to Council priorities as identified in the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy and Action Plan and the Corporate Plan.

7.3 The Community Workstream group will be capturing information on activities being developed and delivered and their relation to each of the Legacy aims by developing measurable outcomes that can be reported against. We want to ensure that networks, activities and opportunities to engage with Welsh language and Welsh culture continue beyond the event next year.

7.4 We have already seen a greater interest in learning to speak Welsh from residents, businesses and council staff. Again, we would want to continue to build on this momentum, not only increasing interest in the run up to the event but also maintaining and building on it as part of RCT's legacy aims.

7.5 It is worth noting that Census 2021 figures published for the number of Welsh speakers showed Rhondda Cynon Taf as being one of only a small number of Local Authority areas which had an increase, with the majority of areas across Wales seeing a decrease.

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 8.1 This is an information report and therefore no equality and diversity screening is necessary.

9. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 This is an information report and therefore no Welsh Language assessment is necessary.

10. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 10.1 This is an information report therefore no consultation is required.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 11.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 12.1 There are no legal implications aligned to this report.

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

- 13.1 The Welsh language is a cross-cutting theme in the Council's Corporate Plan and the Council has a Strategy for the Promotion of the Welsh Language and supporting Action Plan, which includes a focus on increasing the use of the Welsh Language within communities by working with partners to deliver and/or facilitate events and activities as well as improving the number of services the Council offer through the medium of Welsh. The work undertaken in partnership with the National Eisteddfod will support this as well as contributing to [Cymraeg 2050 : A Million Welsh speakers](#) – the Welsh Government's Strategy to achieve 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050.
- 13.2 The Corporate Plan recognises the important role that culture and heritage plays in supporting the wellbeing of residents enabling them to be independent or maintain their independence for longer. Supporting the development of events to engage with residents of all ages will contribute to the Council's aim of increasing participation in arts and culture.
- 13.3 The success of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Eisteddfod is dependent on a partnership between the National Eisteddfod, the Council and local communities. This report highlights how the National Eisteddfod and the Council are working together to ensure that communities across the County Borough are involved in the preparations for the festival, that no one feels excluded and that they have an opportunity to shape the events and activities that will be developed so that there is a longer-term legacy after 2024.

13.4 The main well-being goal being addressed is goal 6 – A Wales of Vibrant Culture and thriving Welsh Language. However, as recognised in the Corporate Plan, participation in arts and culture has a positive impact on promoting health and well-being and brings people together, thereby increasing community cohesion.

14. CONCLUSION

14.1 The piloting of new approaches to community engagement in Rhondda Cynon Taf will ensure that communities across the County Borough will be involved in shaping the events that take place in the run-up to and during Eisteddfod week.

14.2 The Council's Eisteddfod Project Officer and other Council Officers will continue to work closely with the National Eisteddfod team especially in relation to their work of engaging with communities across the whole of the County Borough. Our common aim is to ensure maximum involvement by communities and to promote the message that the Eisteddfod is for everyone and you do not need to be able to speak Welsh to enjoy and participate in its activities and events.

14.3 Much of the preparation work is already underway for the event and good promotion and engagement achieved to date. However, there is a recognition that there is still a lot to do and efforts will increase significantly over the next 5 months to ensure Members, residents and businesses across the County Borough are involved and engaged and fundraising is maximised.

14.4 The importance of this work cannot be under-estimated as it will be central to the success of the festival and its legacy in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

14.5 Further reports will be prepared for Members in the period between now and the RCT Eisteddfod, updating Members on a range of issues associated with the event in addition to the ongoing community engagement work.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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Background Papers:

None

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Relevant Scrutiny Committee:

Overview and Scrutiny Committee