



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CLIMATE CHANGE, FRONTLINE SERVICES & PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee held on Monday, 16 September 2024 at 5.00 pm.

County Borough Councillors – The following Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee Councillors were present:-

Councillor C Middle (Chair)

Councillor G L Warren Councillor V Dunn
Councillor G Holmes Councillor G O Jones
Councillor W Hughes Councillor P Evans

Officers in attendance:-

Mr D Macey, Heritage & Outreach Services Operations Manager
Ms C O'Neill, Strategic Arts & Culture Manager
Mr S Humphreys, Head of Legal Services

County Borough Councillors in attendance:-

Apologies for absence

Councillor J Barton Councillor P Binning
Councillor E L Watts Councillor M Powell
Councillor G Jones Councillor W Treeby
Councillor R Yeo

1 Welcome

The Chair extended a welcome to all Members and Officers in attendance at the virtual meeting held on the 16th September 2024.

2 SCRUTINY RESEARCH

The Scrutiny Officer referenced the research facilities that are available to Members within the Council Business Unit. Members were advised that if they have any specific queries to email them to Scrutiny@rctcbc.gov.uk.

3 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

In accordance with the code of conduct, there were no declarations of interest pertaining to the agenda.

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 4th March 2024 were **APPROVED** as an accurate record.

5 CONSULTATION LINKS

The Scrutiny Officer referenced the consultation links, which are provided in respect of relevant Welsh Government and Rhondda Cynon Taf consultations for consideration by the Committee, which are circulated on a monthly basis and updated on a fortnightly basis.

6 CLIMATE CHANGE, FRONTLINE SERVICES & PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2024-25

Members of the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee were presented with the final Forward Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2024-25 since its agreement at the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on the 15th July 2024.

Members were reminded that on the 3rd July the Scrutiny Committee met to discuss and formulate its forward work programme from a number of sources which included legacy items, consideration of the Cabinet forward work programme and priorities as identified by the Directors/Service Directors for the Committee. The work programme was subsequently agreed by the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the 15th July 2024, in line with its terms of reference.

Members were asked to acknowledge the final work programme for the 2024/25 Municipal year, attached at Appendix 1 to the report and agree that it be reviewed at timely intervals.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

1. Acknowledge the final Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme for the 2024/25 Municipal Year (as set out in Appendix 1).
2. Agree to review the work programme at timely intervals to ensure it is relevant and that any additional referrals are incorporated.

7 A HERITAGE STRATEGY FOR RHONDDA CYNON TAF: PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Head of Arts, Culture and Libraries presented the report of the Director of Public Health, Protection and Community Services which asked Members to provide their feedback and comments on the draft Heritage Strategy, as required by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). It also sought to advise them of the interim responses of the public consultation to date, which commenced on 17th July and closes on 25th September 2024.

The Head of Arts, Culture and Libraries advised that as a National Lottery

Heritage Fund (NHLF) Priority Area, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council received a solicited invitation to apply to the NLHF for grant funding towards a project that would look to rebuild capacity within Rhondda Cynon Taf and the community in relation to heritage. The 'Altered Images' project was developed as a result of this approach and was awarded a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant of £250,000 for a three-year project in August 2021.

One of the project's key objectives is the development and formalisation of a heritage strategy and creating connections with the sector to gain a fuller understanding of RCT's heritage and those involved in its management. Engaging and involving the public in the development of that strategy is a key expectation.

The Head of Arts, Culture and Libraries referred to the details of the Strategy's vision and its four strategic priorities (which have been identified with target outcomes and identified actions that will formulate the annual Implementation Plan) attached to the draft Heritage Strategy 2024-2030 at Appendix 1.

In conclusion, Members were referred to the interim report which set out a summary of the responses received in the survey relating to the draft Heritage Strategy consultation 2024-2030 up to 1st of September 2024. Members were invited to comment on the draft Heritage Strategy in their role as consultees, providing Scrutiny with the opportunity to respond to the consultation by the 25th September 2024 and have its say on the proposals which set out a number of objectives.

In summary, Members commented as follows:

- Have specific heritage projects such as the Hetty Winding Gear/Rhondda Tunnel Society been approached to engage with the consultation process to date? This could be a missed opportunity if smaller heritage projects are not directly targeted and involved in the process.

In response Members were advised that a number of individuals have been approached as part of the consultation process such as Beddau Welfare but it is a matter of resources for the small team to be able to approach each and every project. It was confirmed that the Rhondda Tunnel Society would be approached for their feedback.

- With regards to the smaller projects, could the service area undertake a mapping exercise of the local projects/organisations across the county borough as a formal database to be used?

Members were advised that an RCT Heritage Forum has been established to create a narrative for the purposes of signposting but it was agreed that a mapping exercise would be of value and of benefit to RCT Heritage Services and other voluntary organisations.

- Can we ensure that other means of engagement is being undertaken with our communities other than online only? What do they involve to date?

The Heritage & Outreach Services Operation Manager advised that in total fourteen events have been held in the communities across RCT, including engagement at the National Eisteddfod in August, bringing the

total number of responses to over 1,000 (In comparison Neath Port Talbot CBC has generated only 93 responses to a similar consultation). The Head of Arts, Culture and Libraries Engagement added that sessions have also been targeted across different age ranges and those whose voices are not always heard.

- It is positive to see the number of visitors to the Rhondda Heritage Museum increase year on year, what challenges does this bring in terms of maintaining future interest in the Museum?

Members were advised by the Heritage & Outreach Services Operation Manager that currently the Museum is supported by a Capital Transformation funding from the Welsh Government, which has seen investment in developing a digital exhibition space using touch screens containing interactive digital content in six languages including BSL. Equally important is looking past the carbon/coal aspect and re-evaluating the future of the Museum to develop other possibilities which will engage different audiences and link in with the school's curriculum. Expanding and working with other organisations such as 'Buglife' who are working to save wildlife within colliery habitats across Wales.

- Is there currently engagement between our local schools from the Rhondda Cynon Taf Heritage Service?

Outreach work is a key and important part of the work of Rhondda Cynon Taf Heritage Service and schools are encouraged to visit the Rhondda Heritage Museum. School budgets are difficult but there are reduced transport rates for schools to use. The Head of Arts, Culture and Libraries also referred to the Altered Images Project, which has developed a toolkit for schools which explores the Cynefin theme as part of the school curriculum.

- What other opportunities are there to engage children and young people in heritage and does that include the Council's YEPS team?

The Heritage & Outreach Services Operation Manager explained that the service area does work with the Yeps team and every opportunity is taken to connect heritage with the residents of RCT and interpretation boards have been installed on bridges at the same time as repair work has been undertaken. Recently the service area supported a project in conjunction with Rhondda Radio which saw the installation of thirteen listening stations which provide information via QR Codes. The Head of Arts, Culture and Libraries added that funding from the Arts Fund has been sought to retain the Altered Images current project co-ordinator whose post is funded through the National Heritage Lottery until the end of January 2025. The Arts Fund will seek to retain her and her expertise. Altered Images project is working with children and young people via schools or the Library service to increase their engagement in practical projects across the communities of RCT.

The Heritage & Outreach Services Operation Manager stressed the importance of looking at contemporary themes such as migration, civil rights movement, and solidarity to engage with the whole population.

The Head of Arts, Culture and Libraries referred to the engagement of

the Yeps team and young people with the Morwedd Owen Festival which will take place in Pontypridd over one weekend in October. The Yeps teams and young people have been exploring her work through the creation of art exhibitions and celebrating the life of the not so well known composer Morwedd Owen who was born in Pontypridd. The new festival will take place to celebrate the life and work of the composer, Morwedd Owen, in conjunction with the Arts and Heritage Service, the Library Service, Pontypridd Town Council, Park Arts in Treforest, The Muni and YMA.

- How does the service engage with the business sector across RCT (capitalising on the Eisteddfod) and other smaller towns such as Aberdare and what plans are there to celebrate and showcase RCT's rich local heritage the Aberdare Festival next year (so as not to miss this opportunity in 2024)?

The Heritage & Outreach Services Operation Manager advised that the service area works closely with the Council's Town Centre Regeneration Team and other town centre groups such as Aberdare town centre BID and support these groups as much as possible.

- How does the Heritage Strategy link into other service areas in terms of supporting other service area plans and policies? Can this be evidenced in reports that come to the Scrutiny Committee, so Members understand the correlation?

The Heritage & Outreach Services Operation Manager commented that this would be a positive step as a key part of the strategy is about and linking with other service area e.g. highways (where the Heritage Services work has linked into the Rhondda Fach active walkway)

- Is there evidence to demonstrate the data for the number of hits on the QR code as this could be a way of pushing out other information?

The Heritage & Outreach Services Operation Manager confirmed that the apps are relatively new therefore data is yet to be collected but it will be gathered in the not-so-distant future so the data can be recorded and lessons learned.

- Does the Service Area link in with other organisations and local authorities and if so what lessons can be learned from other local authorities?

The Heritage & Outreach Services Operation Manager confirmed that there is interaction with all the other local authorities who each bring a differing level of knowledge and experience to the discussions.

- Does the Council have linkages with Heritage trails?

The Heritage & Outreach Services Operation Manager referred to the Rhondda Heritage trail with thirteen stations advocating different sections of heritage history. Recently the board for the Barry Sidings Heritage trail has recently been updated for visitors and residents attending the National Eisteddfod in RCT.

- How are RCT's key heritage sites promoted on a wider scale and how do budgets restraints impact on the levels of promotion?

The Heritage & Outreach Services Operation Manager advised that through the numerous groups and committees that he is engaged with such as the European wide forum the 'European Trail of Industrial Heritage' and a Steering Committee called the 'Valleys that Changed the World' he can promote the work and rich heritage of RCT but with competing budgets, (circa £4K in total for the service area to use on exhibition/promotional material) promotional work is difficult. Grant funding can be accessed and has been for specific projects such as to re assess a number of the RCT heritage collections. He added that much collaboration is undertaken with other groups and organisations so that equipment and spaces can be shared for talks, exhibitions and external presentations.

- How will we measure our strategic aims?

The Heritage & Outreach Services Operation Manager advised that following the closing date of the 25th September for the public consultation, the strategy will be revised and the action plan, that is embedded within the strategy, will be re assessed. The Head of Arts, Culture and Libraries added that there will be opportunity to gather data that may be missing and in terms of governance, the action plan will be reported to the Strategic Arts and Culture Committee on an annual basis.

Discussions focussed on the listed Buildings within the county borough, such as the Pump House in Tonypany and Bronwydd House and Members requested information on the status of some of the Listed buildings within the county borough. In response to a query, the Legal Officer confirmed that any works to a listed building, would require consultation or the consent of Cadw. The Head of Arts, Culture and Libraries commented that many listed buildings within the county borough are not owned by the Council. It was agreed that information on the status of the Listed Buildings discussed would be circulated following the meeting.

In conclusion, the Chair thanked Members and Officers for their contribution and he confirmed that comments raised by the Scrutiny Committee, as consultees, would contribute to the draft Heritage Strategy.

It was **RESOLVED** that the comments from the Scrutiny Committee, as consultees, would contribute to the draft Heritage Strategy.

8 CHAIR'S REVIEW AND CLOSE

The Chair thanked Officers and Members for attending and reminded Members that the next meeting will be held in November, date to be confirmed. The Chair summarised the Committee's requests for further information and advised that this will be made available to Members accordingly.

This meeting closed at 5.45 pm

**Councillor C Middle
Chair.**

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