

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
MUNICIPAL YEAR 2015/16**

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

21st MARCH 2016

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR, CABINET AND
PUBLIC RELATIONS IN DISCUSSIONS
WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO
HOLDER, COUNCILLOR MONTAGUE**

Agenda Item No: 6

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

AUTHOR(s): JAMES VALE (01443 424066)

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to inform Members of the development of a Youth Forum as part of the Council's commitment to effective engagement with residents.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Members consider and comment on the planned approach as outlined at Section 4 of the report

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council recognises the importance of effective consultation and engagement with residents and service users and, over the last 18 months – 2 years, has sought to develop its approach to engagement to ensure residents have every opportunity to have their say on matters affecting service delivery, service change proposals and budget consultation.

- 3.2 Developments have included the use of:

- Consultation events to support service change and budget consultation;
- Cabinet Engagement events which give residents the opportunity to speak directly to Cabinet Members and Senior Management;
- Road show events in town centres;

- An interactive budget simulator as part of the 2016/17 budget consultation;
 - Engagement with young people via School Councils and Youth Forums regarding service change proposals and budget consultation;
 - Twitter takeovers giving residents the opportunity to tweet questions to the Leader of the Council;
 - Young people's engagement event;
- 3.3 The Council has also committed to undertaking a bi-annual residents survey to seek residents views on the services the Council provides.
- 3.4 Feedback received from the recently held Young People's engagement event, Chaired by the Deputy Leader, suggested young people wanted to be able engage with the Council on a more structured and regular basis.
- 3.5 Each secondary school in Rhondda Cynon Taf is required to have a school council and the Council's Youth Engagement and Participation Service also runs youth forums – both give young people the opportunity to meet at a local level and discuss issues regarding individual schools and their local area.
- 3.6 Young people, via their school council's and youth forums are consulted with directly regarding service change proposals affecting young people such as the recent consultations on Library Services and Youth Engagement and Participation Service.
- 3.7 Older people in Rhondda Cynon Taf are represented via OPAG and it is proposed that an RCT wide Youth Forum is established to ensure young people have a structured opportunity to engage with the Council.

4. PROPOSED RCT YOUTH FORUM STRUCTURE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 4.1 It is proposed that the Rhondda Cynon Taf Youth Forum meets on a quarterly basis with agendas and topics for discussion set by agreement at the previous meeting.
- 4.2 Rhondda Cynon Taf has 17 secondary school clusters and 4 special schools and, to ensure representation from each cluster, it is proposed that each school sends one member from their school council with one member also attending meetings from each cluster youth forum.
- 4.3 The RCT Youth Forum will be consulted on as part of their annual cycle of meetings regarding any service change proposals which may need to be considered, budget strategy consultations and the bi-annual residents survey.

4.4 Representatives from organisations such as South Wales Fire and Rescue Service, South Wales Police, Cwm Taf Health Board, Interlink etc. as well as Rhondda Cynon Taf Council will be invited to attend meetings of the Youth Forum at the request of members.

4.5 Meetings will take place in the Council Chamber at Clydach Vale and draft terms of reference for the RCT Youth Forum can be found at Appendix 1.

5. YOUTH MAYOR

5.1 The Council has previously introduced the position of Youth Mayor and Deputy Youth Mayor to represent the young people of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

5.2 Youth Mayors and Deputy Youth Mayors were elected by the peers at an annual Youth Conference which has not been held in recent years due to reduced capacity following service changes. As a result there has not been a Youth Mayor or Deputy Youth Mayor for the last two years and it is recommended that these roles be deleted accordingly.

5.3 Whilst the Youth Mayor and Deputy Youth Mayor positions gave young people elected to hold the positions excellent experiences, the proposed new Youth Forum for Rhondda Cynon Taf is considered a more effective model of engagement with young people which will also provide greater opportunities for participation.

6 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Age is a protected characteristic and through the development of a Youth Forum, the Council will be taking positive action to engage with youth people and give them an opportunity to have their say on issues affecting young people.

7 CONSULTATION

7.1 The proposal will positively contribute to the requirements of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

7.2 The Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 requires local authorities to promote and facilitate participation by children and young people in decisions that might affect them, both in respect of the single integrated plan, and other decisions. Section 12 requires local authorities to: *"make such arrangements as they consider suitable to promote and facilitate participation by children in decisions of the authority which might affect them, and to publish and keep up to date information about its arrangements."*

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

8.1 This proposal will not have any financial implications.

9 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

9.1 N/A

10 LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/ SIP.

10.1 This proposal seeks to enhance further the Council's engagement activity.

10.2 Engagement activity will play a key role in supporting the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan and the priorities outlined in the Single Integrated Plan.

11 CONCLUSION

11.1 The Council's approach to engagement has developed significantly over the last 18 months to 2 years.

11.2 There are opportunities for youth engagement at a local level for young people via school councils and youth forums but at present there are limited opportunities on a county wide basis.

11.3 Feedback from a recently held young people's engagement event suggested young people want to have the opportunity to engage with the Council on a county wide basis and would welcome the development of a Youth Forum.

11.4 The proposed introduction of a Youth Forum would further strengthen the Council's approach to engaging with residents and service users.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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Background Papers:

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APPENDIX 1

Rhondda Cynon Taf Youth Forum Terms of Reference

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Purpose

To give young people the opportunity to engage effectively with RCTCBC and provide a platform that allows them to discuss and influence decisions that affect them and their communities.

Code of Conduct (Ground Rules)

BEHAVIOUR

- Be Positive
- Be Kind
- Be Friendly
- No Bullying or being mean (everybody should have the opportunity to enjoy meetings)
- Treat others as you would like to be treated
- Be Trustworthy
- Cooperate

RESPECT

- Consider and listen to the views and ideas of others (even if you disagree)
- Avoid interrupting others
- Avoiding shouting
- Unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated
- Where you feel confident - get involved/participate
- Encourage all members to participate and have their voices heard
- Respect all invited guests by maintaining a sense of interest and interaction – but equally show that interest and interaction to all members of the Youth Forum.

LANGUAGE

- Think before you speak
- **No offensive language**
- Be respectful in your language to others

This Code of Conduct will be revised on annual basis.

Membership

The Youth Forum is open to every young person throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf between the ages of 11 and 18

1 Member from each secondary School Council and 1 member from each cluster Youth Forum will have the opportunity to attend each meeting of the RCT Youth Forum

Representatives from each School Council and Youth Forum can vary from meeting to meeting to allow as many young people as possible to engage via the Youth Forum

RCT Youth Forum attendees are expected to feedback to their respective School Council/Cluster Youth Forum following RCT Youth Forum meetings.

RCT Youth Forum Structure

Meetings will be held on a quarterly basis

Meetings will last for a maximum of 3 hours

Meetings will be co-chaired by the relevant Cabinet Member and a representative of the RCT Youth Forum

Young People must be aged between 11 and 18 years old

Agendas and officer/organisational involvement will be agreed at the previous meeting by members of the RCT Youth Forum present at that meeting

Review Period

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed on an annual basis by the RCT Youth Forum to ensure their continued suitability