



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITY LIAISON COMMITTEE

23 APRIL 2021

DIGITAL SUPPORT FUND

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATION.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To present, for Members' information details of the digital support fund bid that was submitted by Rhondda Cynon Taf Council, to support Town and Community Councils with digital engagement with residence.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Members note the content of the report and receive further updates in respect of the development of a support programme at a future meetings.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The need to advise Members of the development of a digital support programme to assist them in their future engagement with residents.

4. DIGITAL SUPPORT FUND

- 4.1 To support the implementation of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 Welsh Government announced a £500,000 digital democracy fund to support the digital transformation of democracy required to underpin many of the provisions contained within the Act.
- 4.2 Applications were sought from Councils over a short time period during January, with Councils needing to demonstrate that their application would contribute to the ongoing digital transformation of local democracy.
- 4.3 Rhondda Cynon Taf Council submitted 3 separate bids to the fund:

Bid 3 Included "the development of a digital support framework to further support RCTs Town and Community Councils with digital engagement as the Council recognise that Community and Town Councils offer a means of connecting with residents at a local level. If successful, this work would

promote participation within communities and support broader diversity in terms of engagement and representation at a Community Council level”.

- 4.4 The bid outlined how, as a Council, RCT recognise that Town and Community Councils provide a vital connection for communities into decision making and the Council already regularly engage with Community Council members through the Community Liaison Committee. It was advised that these meetings have seen sharing of good practices and support provisions for all involved, which has allowed a positive working relationship between the Council and the Community and Town Councillors.
- 4.5 Throughout the Covid pandemic, additional support was provided to Community and Town Councillors by the Council supporting them with their conduct of virtual meetings through the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020, providing support and guidance with the digital platforms available and taking forward the digital engagement agenda.
- 4.6 Through the use of the digital support fund the Council would look to further support Town and Community Councils with digital engagement as the Council recognises that Community and Town Councils offer a means of connecting with residents at a local level. If successful, this work would promote participation within communities and support broader diversity in terms of engagement and representation at a Community Council level. The Council feels that we would be able to provide and work with Community and Town Councils to identify digital solutions to assist their democratic processes and respond to the Act.
- 4.7 This funding will enable practical support to be provided to support Town & Community Council Clerks to develop their digital environment, ensuring that their Elected Members can represent and communicate with residents in a digital way
- 4.8 This funding would enable ‘good digital working practices’ to be shared with our respective town and community councils. Through this support we would provide access to training available to principal council members.

Details of the Support.

- 4.9 **Details of the suggested support provided were as follows:**
 - Officer support to 12 Community / Town Councils on virtual meetings
 - Support to clerks on scheduling and supporting virtual meetings
 - Supporting respective Town and Community Councils with digital participation and identification of solutions to support Community Councils to deliver upon the new requirements contained within the local government Act.

- 4.10 On the 10th March, 2021 the Council received notification from Welsh Government that they had been successful with all 3 of their applications.
- 4.11 Going forward, a meeting with the clerks will be taking forward to discuss the general support needs and a programme of support will be built upon.

5. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 5.1 Not applicable.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not needed because the contents of the report are for information purposes only. However, the support with digital democracy within Town and Community Councils would provide the opportunity for further engagement within the democratic process.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 8.1 Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 Supporting Members and Clerks within the Community and Town Councils of RCT is essential to the work of the County Borough as whole, to ensure residents receive the services that are needed.
- 9.2 Engagement with residence needs to be through both a physical and virtual platform, and it is important that Community & Town Councils are supported in the digital platforms of engagement.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

5th MARCH 2019

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS & INTERIM HEAD OF
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE LEADER AND
DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL.**

Item: CABINET WORK PROGRAMME: 2018- 19 MUNICIPAL YEAR.

Background Papers

- Paragraph 12.1 (Part 4) of the Council's Constitution.

Officer to contact: Emma Wilkins, Council Business Unit.