Minutes of the **Rhondda Fach Pride in Place Neighbourhood Board** meeting, which took place on **Thursday 12th November 2026** at **6pm** at the **Morlais Hall, Ferndale.**

Board Members in attendance:

Mr W Carter (Interim Chair, see minute no.1)
Mr A Carter (AC)
Mr K Montague (KM)
Ms E Villis (EV)
Mr K Jones (KJ)
Ms C Silver (CS)
County Borough Councillor J Edwards (JE)
Mr C Bryant MP (CB)

Others in attendance:

Councillor M Norris – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Housing (MN)
Mr S Gale – Director, Housing & Regeneration Services, RCT Council (SG)
Mr S Humphreys – Service Director, Legal Services, RCT Council (SH)
Mrs H Jones – Council Business Unit, RCT Council (HJ)

Apologies for Absence:

Mrs T Thomas (TT)
Mr T Broadway (TB)
County Borough Councillor J Smith (JS)

DRAFT

1. APPOINTMENT OF INTERIM CHAIR

Further to the notification that the Chair would be stepping down from the Board for a short period, nominations were invited for the position of Interim Chair.

The Board **AGREED** to appoint Mr W Carter as Interim Chair of the Rhondda Fach Pride in Place Board.

Mr Carter accepted the appointment and took the opportunity to thank Board Members for their support.

2. INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed attendees to the inaugural meeting of the Board, and introductions were made.

3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

County Borough Councillor J Edwards declared the following personal interest: "I work for Interlink, which are the administrator of the grant".

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Board **AGREED** the Terms of Reference for publication on the Rhondda Fach Pride in Place webpage on the Council's website, subject to the following amendments:

- Section 4.7 to be amended to read: *'A representative of the Member of Parliament may attend as a voting substitute';* and
- Section 8.5 to be amended through the removal of the final bullet point: *'Their term of appointment expires and they are not reappointed.'*

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Pride in Place Co-ordinator Role

Further to the circulation of the draft job description for the Pride in Place Co-ordinator role, the Chair invited comments and feedback from Board Members.

SG confirmed that, subject to the Board's feedback, the position was ready to be advertised. It was explained that the role would sit within the Council's Community Services Directorate, within a team with extensive experience of community engagement and the administration of community grant programmes. Board Members were assured that support would also be provided by other Council services, including Regeneration, Legal Services and Democratic Services.

It was confirmed that the post was intended to be a full-time, fixed-term GR11 position and that it would likely be advertised internally as a secondment opportunity, rather than externally, in order to avoid further delays to the production of the Board's plan.

Discussion ensued regarding the proposal to advertise the position internally. Whilst Board Members acknowledged the value of providing opportunities to local residents, they recognised the need to appoint a Co-ordinator as a matter of urgency to support the collation of engagement data and the development of the four-year Rhondda Fach Pride in Place Plan.

JE emphasised that, in addition to the skills and experience outlined within the job description, the successful candidate would need to listen carefully to the needs of the community and communicate these effectively to the Board.

DRAFT

The Chair referred to the extensive engagement activity undertaken by the Board to date, including the well-attended event held at Rhondda Golf Club in September. He stressed the importance of having the Co-ordinator in post before the New Year to collate evidence, identify gaps and support the development of the Pride in Place Plan for submission to MHCLG by 26 February 2027.

The Chair queried whether a template was available to assist the Board in structuring the evidence gathered to date. SG confirmed that Welsh Government had recently published guidance outlining the ten-year vision for the programme, including key questions for consideration and a template to support the development of Pride in Place Neighbourhood Board Plans.

It was **AGREED:**

1. That the Council to advertise the role of the Pride in Place Co-ordinator internally and in its current format;
2. That the Council to circulate the newly released Welsh Government guidance pack; and
3. That the Board receive the information on the GR11 annual salary.

Interlink Update

JE provided the Board with an update on the Rhondda Fach Pride in Place Community Engagement Grant.

It was reported that, to date, 19 community and voluntary organisations had applied for funding, of which seven had been successful, with grants totalling £4,450 awarded.

Key themes emerging from the applications included:

- Increasing participation;
- Engaging under-represented groups;
- Capturing the voices of the otherwise unheard; and
- Building community pride.

By way of example, JE highlighted the work of the Ink & Coal Collective, which facilitates regular gaming sessions for young people. The sessions bring together participants of different ages, backgrounds and abilities to build friendships, develop confidence and enhance transferable skills. It was further noted that the sessions provide an inclusive outlet for neurodivergent individuals and others who may find more traditional social environments challenging. As part of the project, a unique Rhondda Fach-themed Dungeons & Dragons event was proposed.

DRAFT

It was confirmed that more than 400 residents were expected to participate in engagement activity across the Rhondda Fach. Successful organisations had been asked to submit the outcomes of their workshops by 11th December, with findings to be reported to the Board.

Several Board Members raised concerns regarding public understanding of the programme's 70/30 capital and revenue funding split.

KM noted that capital funding can be difficult to spend within short timescales and does not always have the same reach as revenue funding. It was suggested that any capital investment would need to be targeted carefully to ensure the long-term sustainability of community groups and activities.

AC referred to the experience of Morlais Hall, outlining the work undertaken to achieve financial sustainability and reduce dependence on revenue funding. Whilst acknowledging the increased costs faced by community facilities today, he noted the possibilities with the right group of volunteers in place.

JE advised that the capital and revenue funding split had been discussed with all successful groups and that they had been encouraged to raise awareness of the distinction within their communities. The reporting template also incorporated the key elements of the programme to reinforce that its objectives extended beyond revenue investment alone.

SG confirmed that funding could be carried forward into future years and noted that additional opportunities may arise to leverage funding from other sources, which was a benefit of the Co-ordinator role sitting within the Community Services directorate.

In discussing potential short-term improvements for the area, CB suggested that investment in shopfront improvements across the Rhondda Fach could deliver visible community benefits. MN advised that the Council already offered grant support for such works but that uptake was often limited by the requirement for businesses to provide 50% match funding. The Board considered whether programme funding could potentially assist businesses in overcoming this barrier, whilst recognising the need to take account of absentee landlords.

In relation to future funding opportunities, JE noted that the Pride in Place Programme had been established at an opportune time, highlighting complementary initiatives including the Abergorki Wind Farm, Lottery-funded activity within the Rhondda Fach, the Welfare Hall project and the Penrhys regeneration plans.

The Chair emphasised the importance of collaboration in developing an effective strategic plan and avoiding duplication. He noted that key themes emerging from engagement activity included parks and green spaces, local

facilities, transport, employment opportunities and antisocial behaviour, adding that work was already underway across a range of these areas.

Turning to the theme of employment, CB observed that the Rhondda Fach had historically experienced a shortage of office accommodation and suggested that capital investment could support employment growth whilst aligning with wider government sustainability objectives.

It was noted that the Co-ordinator would firstly need to collate the evidence from the community for the Board to consider what is their priorities and what is sustainable.

The Board discussed where the Co-ordinator would be based and spoke of the potential of utilising any accommodation offered by local businesses.

Schools Update

KJ informed the Board of his recent visits undertaken to the seven schools in the Rhondda Fach; Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Llyn y Forwen, Darak Park, Maerdy, Pontygwaith, Tylorstown and Ynyshir Community/Primary Schools. In total, 87 pupils from School Seneddau/Councils in all of the schools provided feedback and detailed information had been circulated to the Board.

KJ praised the pupils for their enthusiasm and engagement during his visits and explained that he had emphasised the importance of young people's voices in shaping the future of the Rhondda Fach.

KJ advised that pupils had been asked three open questions and that the most common responses were as follows:

1. **What makes the Rhondda Fach special to you?**
   Family and Friends;
   Schools; and
   Welsh Culture and Language.

2. **What are the biggest challenges facing our communities in the Rhondda Fach?**
   Affordable Housing
   Cost of Living; and
   Anti-Social Behaviour.

3. **Which of the following should be the highest priorities for the next 10 years?**
   More affordable housing;
   Improve Health and Wellbeing services; and
   Improve public transport.

DRAFT

Other key concerns raised by the pupils were the cost of living, support for local shops, the closure of vape shops and transport costs to school, particularly during the winter months.

KJ stated that this data, alongside data he had collected whilst knocking doors in Wattstown, would need to be added to the current views generated.

The Chair thanked KJ for his update.

Discussion followed on the importance of reframing the narrative around the Rhondda Fach and promoting the area's strengths and opportunities.

KM noted that perceptions of Pontypridd had improved considerably in recent years, demonstrating that public perceptions can change over time.

Board Members agreed that the Rhondda Fach benefits from significant natural assets, including its scenery and walking routes such as Darren Park and Pen y Cymoedd Wind Farm, and that opportunities to develop tourism should be explored.

SG suggested the Board look at the Council's Tourism Strategy, which aims to enhance the areas appeal to visitors. SG spoke of the area's breathtaking landscape, together with nearby attractions such as Zip World, Penderyn Whiskey and Maerdy Reservoir. SG suggested that increasing visitor accommodation, such as Airbnb provision, could help attract visitors and encourage local spending.

KM referred to the Tour de France routes scheduled to pass through the County Borough in 2027 and suggested that the Board consider how this opportunity could be leveraged to benefit the Rhondda Fach.

CB referred to thriving cafes in neighbouring areas such as Treorchy and suggested that the refurbishment of commercial premises could help increase footfall in the Rhondda Fach.

Whilst supportive of the principle, CS raised concerns regarding the lack of parking provision throughout the Rhondda Fach and the impact this has on footfall and local businesses.

The Chair noted that parking had also been identified as an issue during discussions at the Welfare Hall.

The Board acknowledged that parking infrastructure could be a future capital investment consideration, subject to community feedback and identified priorities.

In relation to future community engagement activity, JE highlighted the success of a recent pop-up event in Pontypridd, which had generated positive engagement from a broad range of residents.

DRAFT

The Chair also referred to potential opportunities for collaboration with other Business Improvement Districts.

JE emphasised the importance of remaining ambitious for the Rhondda Fach whilst building upon the area's existing strengths and assets.

SG encouraged the Board to be aspirational in its ambitions while ensuring that any commitments made through the Pride in Place programme were realistic and deliverable.

Chair's Closing Remarks

The Chair thanked Board Members and Council officers for their updates and contributions throughout the meeting.

The Chair acknowledged the significant consultation work undertaken by the Board and recognised that members were volunteers, many balancing full-time employment and other commitments. It was noted that these factors, alongside the vacancy in the Interim Chair position, had contributed to a slight lull in progress.

Looking ahead, the Chair emphasised the need to strengthen the Board's organisational approach by better capturing available data, identifying any information gaps, and using this evidence to support future planning. The Chair also proposed undertaking an internal audit of Board members' skills and experience to enable roles and responsibilities to be allocated more effectively, allowing members to contribute according to their strengths and availability. Progress updates could then be reported at each Board meeting. This point was echoed by KM, who thought it would be beneficial for the Board to develop their knowledge of each other's skills and background.

The Chair advised that a programme of meetings would be scheduled through to the February deadline, with virtual attendance options available to maximise accessibility and participation.

In concluding, the Chair stressed the importance of reviewing and refining the ideas put forward by the community and bringing them together into a coherent and deliverable plan. Members agreed on the need to focus on tangible outcomes that would help challenge and change the negative perceptions and mindset that some communities had experienced over many years.

The meeting closed at 19:15

DRAFT