

Dewch i
siarad RhCT
Let's talk
RCT



LET'S TALK YOUR VIEWS INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY

2025-2030

Delivering the priorities of the
Council's Corporate Plan
WORKING WITH OUR COMMUNITIES



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Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg

Mae croeso i chi gyfathrebu
â ni yn y Gymraeg

This document is also available in Welsh

You are welcome to communicate
with us in Welsh

53320-45 • 2025

FOREWORD



Deputy Leader / Cabinet Member for
Council Business and Corporate Estates

Cllr. Maureen Webber BEM

This Council believes that everyone who lives and works in Rhondda Cynon Taf should be able to get involved with Council decisions. This new Involvement Strategy sets out our vision for enabling everyone, regardless of their situation or experiences, to take part in the conversations around our services, our spending and our choices.

Involvement is about more than just consultations. Involvement means that we find ways to capture as wide a range of views as possible in different settings, and by different methods. It means we accurately report on the public points of view to Councillors and senior management in the Council, so that they can think about what people across the County are saying when they make decisions. It means we don't just listen to people, but that we also report back and explain what decisions are made, why they are made, and how the voices of RCT residents were factored in.

This Strategy will guide services across the Council in their consultation and involvement planning. It shows that whilst we embrace the flexibility and innovation of digital services, we remain committed to ensuring anyone without access to online activities is still able to be involved. It states our commitment to tackling exclusion, including disability, age or any other characteristic. Working alongside the Council Corporate Plan, the Strategic Equality Plan and a range of strategies and action plans from all parts of RCTCBC, we look forward to "a Rhondda Cynon Taf where everyone in the community is able to have their say in the planning and delivery of Council services."

INTRODUCTION

The Council has a good track record of engaging with residents from all backgrounds in many different ways and we take account of what they tell us in our planning and changing of services. We also know that there is always room to do better.

We will continue to look at how we engage with residents, communities and stakeholders and see where we can improve, so that more people can get involved in the decisions that affect them and their communities.

This Involvement Strategy will provide a framework for Council services to follow to meet our vision of;

A Rhondda Cynon Taf where everyone in the community is able to have their say in the planning and delivery of Council services.

Where people know how to have their say, have a range of ways to have their say and know that their views are considered when decisions are being made.



The Strategy provides some overarching guidance to Council services on how to involve stakeholders in decision making and ensure that the voices of people and communities are heard.

There are a number of links and documents throughout the Framework that provide the more detailed guidance and advice needed to meet our Vision.

2

SECTION

BACKGROUND

The 2025 strategy builds on our Involvement Framework 2020. The framework was overtaken by the events of the pandemic, where we moved to a “digital by default” approach for a time, supported by telephone and postal options.

With residents adapting to online approaches and the range of methods available we will continue to make use of them, whilst ensuring that we continue to engage with those who are digitally excluded. We have always provided a range of face to face opportunities for residents, and this will continue.

This strategy has also been updated to provide a link to the new requirements of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act. The Act places a duty on Local Authorities to produce a Public Participation Strategy, to encourage people to participate in Local Government and have a greater involvement in the democratic process.



2. BACKGROUND

The new Involvement strategy is timely, as the Council has recently adopted a number of new overarching strategies that will work alongside.

These include;

1 Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Corporate Plan: **Working with our Communities 2024 – 2030**

It commits to putting residents and customers at the centre of all that we do and the decisions we make through more meaningful involvement and engagement.

It has four well-being objectives to help improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Rhondda Cynon Taf; these are:



PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES

Supporting and empowering RCT residents and communities to live safe, healthy, and fulfilling lives.



WORK & BUSINESS

Helping to strengthen and grow RCT's Economy.



NATURE & THE ENVIRONMENT

A green and clean RCT that improves and protects RCT's environment and nature.



CULTURE, HERITAGE & WELSH LANGUAGE

Recognising and celebrating RCT's past, present and future.



The Involvement Strategy will align with the timescales of the Corporate Plan, until 2030, but will be reviewed annually.

NIHR

Health Determinants
Research Collaboration
Rhondda Cynon Taf

In addition, the Council was awarded £5m from the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) in 2023 to establish a 5 year Rhondda Cynon Taf Health Determinants Research Collaboration (RCT HDRC) programme.

This is a formal collaboration between RCT Council, Cardiff University, Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board and Interlink RCT to change the culture within the Council to become more research active and to embed evidence-based decision making at all levels. The work of the RCT HDRC includes involving and engaging with the public as 'citizen researchers' to ensure that the lived and living experience of residents is routinely used to inform decisions made by the Council to address health inequalities and improve outcomes for individuals and communities. We will work closely with the HDRC programme in reviewing and monitoring the action plan of this Strategy.

2

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's **Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028**

Commits to listening and seeking to understand the experiences of all.

It should be noted...

any consultation or engagement is only one part (albeit an important part) of the decision making process and should be used alongside other data, evidence and knowledge that exists to inform decision(s).

3

SECTION

WHAT WE WILL DO: OUR VISION FOR BETTER INVOLVEMENT

This Involvement Strategy will run from 2025 to 2030 when we will review how well we have met our goals and write a new Strategy.

During the life of this Strategy we will review our progress annually so that we can spot and act on any improvements or changes that are needed.

We will check our progress against these specific goals:

- Be clear about when and why consultation or other types of involvement are needed.
- Make sure that Council services provide clear, accessible information for all involvement activity.
- Ensure that all involvement feedback is reported, and that decision-makers are clear about how feedback has been considered.
- Ensure that people who have taken part in involvement work are given feedback on decisions made.
- Make sure that everyone who wants to be involved can be involved.



We know that every decision matters to the people who have given their time and effort to take part. We also know that there will always be lots of different opinions on every topic, and that sometimes decisions have to be made based on things other than public feedback.

Our aims in this Involvement Strategy are to make sure that everyone who lives and works in RCT feels able to share their views and is confident that they will be listened to, and that when decisions are made the reasons behind them are shared.

3. WHAT WE WILL DO

OUR APPROACH...

is based around a key vision and 7 involvement objectives, which both link closely with the National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales.

National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales

The National Principles provide set of guidelines to organisations within the public and voluntary sectors in Wales. Organisations who follow these principles will ensure that people and communities can engage with decisions that affect them.

1. Design your engagement to make a difference.
2. Invite people to get involved, if they choose to.
3. Plan and deliver your engagement in a timely and appropriate way.
4. Work with relevant partner organisations.
5. Provide jargon free, appropriate, and understandable information.
6. Make it easy for people to take part.
7. Ensure people benefit from the experience.
8. Ensure the right resources and time are in place for your engagement to be effective.
9. Let people know the impact of their contribution.
10. Learn and share to improve your engagement.

➔ www.wcva.cymru/influencing/engagement

OUR KEY VISION...

A Rhondda Cynon Taf where everyone in the community is able to have their say in the planning and delivery of Council services.

Where people know how to have their say, have a range of ways to have their say and know that their views are considered when decisions are being made.



3. WHAT WE WILL DO



OUR INVOLVEMENT OBJECTIVES

1 Strengthen and develop clear opportunities for residents to have their say and have an influence on decisions made by the Council.

- Involve people at the earliest opportunity, identifying the people who may be affected by the issue or proposed change, and / or who have an interest in taking part.
- Clearly communicate the purpose of our engagement (why should people give up their time and how they and their communities could benefit) and the process (what can people expect from it, how and when).
- Use the most suitable method(s) for those involved.
- Consider the importance of current and future generations in our engagement activity, using suitable methods.

2 Make it easy for everyone to take part.

- Provide plain Welsh and English language information to everyone in a way that's easy to understand.
- Provide sufficient time, space and resources for meaningful and appropriate involvement.
- Talk to people in their communities.
- Provide a range of opportunities, through a variety of accessible formats.

3 Encourage a wide range of people and groups to get involved.

- Monitor the diversity of our engagement, to make sure that we are hearing the voices of people with different protected characteristics.
- Ensure that those who are digitally excluded have opportunities to have their say. Include digital engagement alongside in person face to face engagement.
- Consider any distinct experiences and situations, e.g. physical and attitudinal barriers that people with disabilities may face.
- For those with particular needs provide specific approaches and opportunities to get involved in engagement, e.g. children and young people.

4 Working together - coordinate community engagement activities to ensure consistency, quality and partner participation to avoid duplication.

- Work across services to maximise the opportunities for involvement and make best use of resources.
- Effectively use our resources by utilising existing groups and stakeholders.
- Work with other organisations to reduce duplication and create an engagement process which is more effective and produces less consultation fatigue.

3. WHAT WE WILL DO

OUR INVOLVEMENT OBJECTIVES

5 Feeding back.

- Let people know the impact of their contribution with a “You Said We Did” approach.
- Timely feedback about the decisions or actions taken as a result, using methods and forms of feedback that take account of participants’ preferences, even when not every contribution has been acted on.
- Provide updates on our website and Council reports and in different ways so that it meets the needs of different audiences.

6 Provide staff with the skills they need.

- Invest in training for involvement and engagement skills to ensure effective involvement.
- Provide staff with the right resources and time for engagement to be effective.
- Training for a range of staff across Council services.

7 Evaluate and improve.

- Check the effectiveness of any involvement activity.
- Use local demographic data including accessibility, equality and diversity to identify gaps for future improvement.
- Share findings, processes and learning amongst services and partners.



4 SECTION

WHAT IS INVOLVEMENT?



Involvement can mean different things to different people and can cover a range of approaches.

This strategy outlines four levels of Involvement: Information, Engaging, Consulting, and Co-producing. All of these levels can be achieved through a range of delivery methods.

A participative process, with an ongoing conversation. Uses different methods to listen to ideas that will influence and shape the development of policy and service change.

ENGAGEMENT

Working with people and communities in equal partnership to develop and deliver services that matter together, recognising that everyone has a contribution to make.

CO-PRODUCTION

INVOLVEMENT

PROVIDING INFORMATION

At its simplest form, this approach involves giving people information in order to raise awareness. This is the easiest and most straight forward level of involvement.

CONSULTATION

A formal process providing the opportunity for people to feedback their views and opinions on specific questions, policies or service changes.

In Rhondda Cynon Taf, the levels of involvement will vary from service to service and the approaches taken will vary based on the type of decision being made, timescales and the resources available. We need to further develop and improve our engagement and co-production levels of involvement, looking at the best practice that already exists.

5

SECTION

WHO WE WILL INVOLVE?

RCT is home to a wide range of people, and the Council uses data from a number of sources to understand as much as we can about the people our services support. Information from the Office for National Statistics, Welsh Government, the Health Board and other organisations is studied to help us to do this.

We will continue to use high-quality and trusted data as much as possible to ensure that we are clear about the characteristics, needs and facts of life for the people of RCT, supported wherever possible by direct information from our front-line services and feedback through involvement with the communities of the area.

For example, this data taken from the Council's Corporate Plan 'Working With our Communities 2024-2030' shows some of the key information available about the people of RCT.

OUR DATA INCLUDES...

239,018

TOTAL POPULATION

Aged 65+: **47,329** (19.8%)

*Mid year population estimates
2022 StatsWales*

LIFE EXPECTANCY:



Male:

77.0 years

Healthy life expectancy:
57.1 years



Female:

80.5 years

Healthy life expectancy:
60.7 years

*Healthy life expectancy is the
proportion of life in good health*



12%

of people in RCT said
they had disabilities



68.5%

of people in RCT who
own their own home
with or without a mortgage



13.7%

rent social housing



17.7%

rent private housing



8,461

(22.0%)

Pupils in RCT who are
eligible for Free School
Meals (FSM)

In Wales: 20.3%

*School Census Results January 2023,
Welsh Government*

All data refers to RCT and is taken from the 2021 Census unless stated otherwise.

5. WHO WE WILL INVOLVE?



FUTURE TRENDS SUGGEST...

BY 2030...



3.4% increase
in population with RCT projected
to remain third largest Local
Authority (LA) by population in
Wales.

11.7% increase
in population of aged 65+
(52,884)

of which...

6,573 are of aged 85+
(21.5% increase)

*Population projections by Local Authority
and year 2018-based, StatsWales*

33% increase
in the prevalence of stroke by 2035

70% increase
in people living with dementia by 2040

*Science Evidence Advice: NHS in 10+ years,
An examination of the projected impact of
Long-Term conditions and risk factors in Wales,
September 2023*

BY 2043...



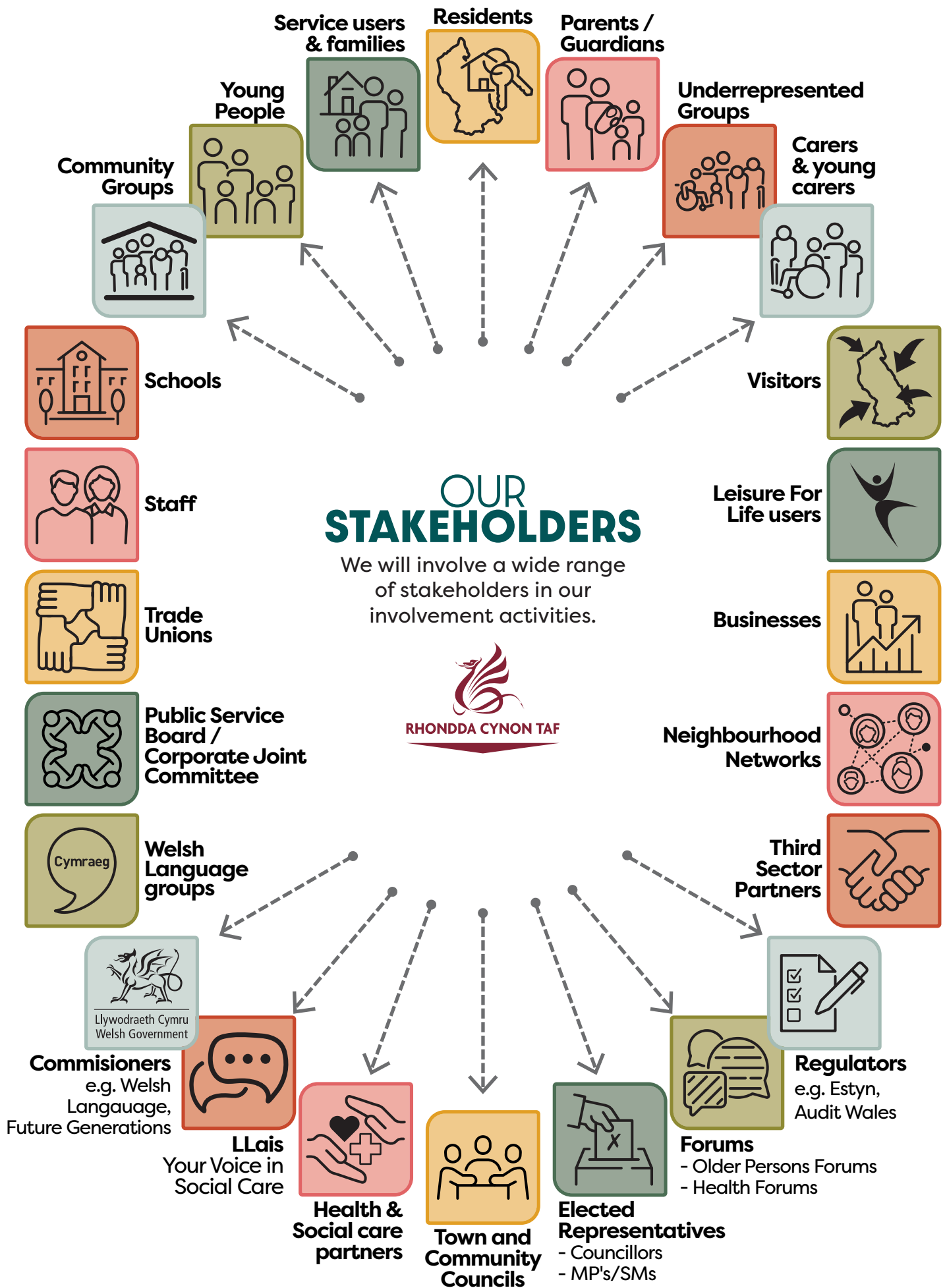
27% increase
Single person households

25% increase
1 adult households with children

16% reduction
2 adult households with children

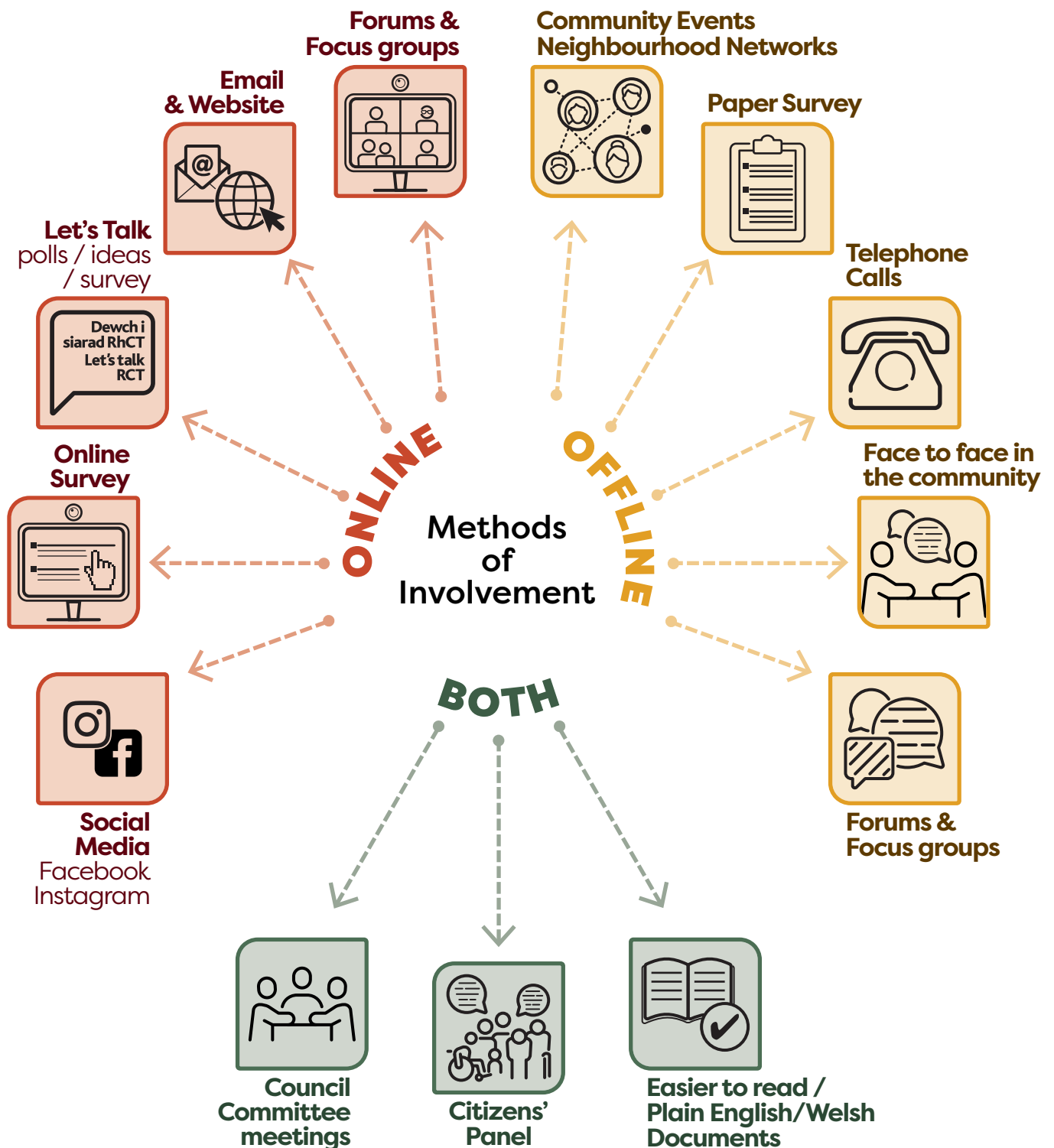
*Household projections by Local Authority,
household type and year 2018-based, StatsWales*

5. WHO WE WILL INVOLVE?



5. WHO WE WILL INVOLVE?

There are many ways in which people can get involved;



6 SECTION

THE DRIVERS OF INVOLVEMENT

The Council is committed to working with its residents and communities as the views we receive help us in our development of policy and service change.

There are a number of relevant standards and principles that inform our approach across the Council, these include;

■ Participation Cymru's National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales

➔ wcva.cymru/influencing/engagement

■ Children and Young People's National Participation Standards (2016);

➔ www.gov.wales/children-and-young-peoples-national-participation-standards and the

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

➔ www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention

■ The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014

States that Local Authorities must put in place transparent arrangements where people are equal partners in designing and operating services.

➔ www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2014/4/contents

■ The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011

Places a duty on councils to promote and encourage participation in council decision-making. It does this by placing requirements on all principal councils to prepare and publish a public participation strategy.

➔ www.legislation.gov.uk/mwa/2011/4/contents

■ The Equalities Act (2010) and The Public Sector Equality Duty:

➔ www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance

■ Welsh Language Standards

In particular standards 44, 91, 92 and 93

➔ www.rctcbc.gov.uk/WelshLanguageStandards



6. THE DRIVERS OF INVOLVEMENT

■ The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Asks public bodies to work better with people, communities and each other to meet the Sustainable Development principle, i.e. the process of improving the social, environmental, economic and cultural well-being of residents. The 'Ways of Working' Progress Checker, provided by the Future Generations Commission, was completed as part of the development of this strategy.

To deliver the Sustainable Development principle, the Act sets out 5 ways of working;

1. Involvement of those with an interest in our plans and seek their views
2. Balancing short term need with long term and planning for the future
3. Collaborating with others to deliver objectives
4. Considering the impact on all well-being goals together and on other bodies by integrating our plans and policies etc.,
5. Putting resources into prevention so that problems don't occur or get worse

By implementing this Strategy, we will help services to embed 'Involvement' into their plans and arrangements and enable the Council to meet its requirements under the Act.

→ futuregenerations.wales/discover/about-future-generations-commissioner/future-generations-act-2015



We also have a number of Rhondda Cynon Taf specific Strategies that align with our approach, some of which have already been mentioned.

These include;

■ Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Corporate Plan: **Working with our Communities 2024 – 2030**

Commits to putting residents and customers at the centre of all that we do and the decisions we make through more meaningful involvement and engagement.

→ www.rctcbc.gov.uk/councilcorporateplan

■ **Public Participation Strategy**

Sets out how the council will comply with the new duties set out under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act in order to promote and encourage participation in council decision-making.

→ www.rctcbc.gov.uk/PublicParticipationStrategy.pdf

6. THE DRIVERS OF INVOLVEMENT

Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028

Developed so that we can set out how we aim to meet our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and how we will meet legal obligations contained within the Equality Act 2010.

→ www.rctcbc.gov.uk/StrategicEqualityPlan2024to2028

Youth Engagement & Participation Service (YEPS)

Committed to developing a culture of young person's participation by engaging and listening to young people. The aim is to use young people's feedback to inform internal services and external partners' developments.

→ www.yeps.wales

Better Together RCT

The Council's first framework on how we will work together with our communities and residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough. Currently under development, the framework will describe how the Council will work alongside communities to deliver the commitments made within our Corporate Plan.

→ www.rctcbc.gov.uk/RCTTogether

Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC)

Working to create a vibrant research culture in the Local Authority. Driving evidence-based decision-making which breaks the cycle of poverty, by improving the life chances of the most disadvantaged and addressing the wider determinants of health.

Children's Services

Through our Children's Participation Strategy and Corporate Parenting Pledge for Rhondda Cynon Taf we are committed to supporting the rights of children, young people, parents, carers, and families in receipt of care and support, to have their voices heard and to actively participate in decisions about their life and help to shape future service developments.

→ www.rctcbc.gov.uk/ChildrensServices

Adult Services

The Adult Services Strategy outlines a commitment to co-produce a strategic commissioning model for adult services that prioritises the needs and preferences of the local population, best practices, and available resources. It emphasises the importance of involving individuals in the design and delivery of services, ensuring their needs are central to their care, and giving them voice and control over the outcomes that help them achieve their wellbeing.

→ www.rctcbc.gov.uk/AdultsandOlderPeople

Social Partnership

The Council recognises its staff and employees as one of its most important assets and strengths. For this reason, the Council proactively supports the principles of social partnership, and most importantly fostering good working relationships and dialogue with our Trade Unions Partners. Where appropriate, the Council will work with Trade unions to address challenges and improve service delivery. Through the Joint Consultative Committee of the Council, we will proactively consult and involve trade union representatives in matters that impact or affect our employees.

7
SECTIONMEASURING
SUCCESS

The Involvement Strategy sets out the overarching vision and 7 objectives that Council services will need to work towards.

The consultation and subsequent feedback received has been used to inform an overarching action plan that is found as an Appendix to this Strategy. A detailed action plan will be developed using the expertise of the new HDRC project.

We will also link in with existing Council Strategies that already have Involvement actions within them, for example the Strategic Equality Plan has an objective to monitor engagement and consultation activity and review and improve communication methods to residents ensuring accessible versions such as BSL, easier to read and non-digital formats.

Our progress in delivering the objectives will be subject to annual internal review to establish progress towards the relevant short-term actions. Delivery of the objectives will be led by a senior officer, but they will depend on all our services working together to improve involvement across the board.

Progress can also be considered as part of the Council's performance arrangements. Services are required to submit Delivery plans, which shape and inform Council policy and strategy. These plans ask services how they will apply the sustainable development principles to service priorities, including Involvement. All Service Delivery Plans are monitored by the Group Director and Cabinet Member as part of the Council's performance management arrangements.

In addition to Service Delivery Plans we have a well-established and effective self-assessment process in place, which focuses on impact and outcomes of the services being delivered, it leads to improvements in the experiences and the outcomes for our customers.

3 questions are asked;

? How well are we doing?

? How do we know?

? How can we improve things further?

These questions are often informed by public consultation and engagement and we can monitor these plans where involvement is recorded.



8

SECTION

ACTION PLAN

This high level action plan has been developed using feedback from the consultation on the Strategy. More specific actions will be developed with relevant groups within and outside the Council and reviewed to ensure that the Objectives are being met and to deliver on specific goals.

1 OBJECTIVE 1:

Strengthen and develop clear opportunities for residents to have their say and have an influence on decisions made by the Council.

ACTIONS	HOW WILL WE DO THIS?
Opportunities to get involved	• Use appropriate methods of engagement for specific groups and individuals. • Increase in-person face to face engagement. • Appropriate materials for the audience. e.g. Easier to read, Sign language versions.
Engage with existing groups	• Establish a directory of local community groups. • Attend more groups on a regular basis. e.g. Neighbourhood Networks.
Listen to people	• Develop a 'You Said We Did' approach. • Be transparent and honest with what has happened / or what is decided and tell people why.

2 OBJECTIVE 2:

Make it easy for everyone to take part.

ACTIONS	HOW WILL WE DO THIS?
Promotion	• Use a variety of methods to advertise consultation. e.g. screen clouds in leisure centres. • Timely consultation - inform people of consultations in plenty of time so they can respond. • Councillors to promote and advertise involvement opportunities in the local community.
Accessibility	• Increase involvement out in the community. • Make consultations more accessible to more people. • Provide transport to consultation events if needed. • Engage with working people on weekends / evenings.

8. ACTION PLAN

3

OBJECTIVE 3:**Encourage a wide range of people and groups to get involved.**

ACTIONS	HOW WILL WE DO THIS?
Youth engagement	- Engage with children from a young age (Primary school). - Use simple, straightforward information, use familiar language that's easy to understand. - Use school technology. e.g. Parent App to reach parents about issues that affect them and young people. - Work with YEPS to carry out youth sessions on current topics and consultations.
Use existing contacts to reach other stakeholders	Existing groups to help share consultations. e.g. Neighbourhood Networks, OPAG.
Consider incentives	Group incentives for communities. e.g. Lido / gym / theatre vouchers.

4

OBJECTIVE 4:**Working together - Coordinate community engagement activities to ensure consistency, quality and partner participation to avoid duplication.**

ACTIONS	HOW WILL WE DO THIS?
Partnership working	- Link with Community Events and meetings. e.g. Family fun days. - Link with Voluntary organisations with established audiences. - Work with partners. e.g. South Wales police, to share and avoid duplication of activity.

5

OBJECTIVE 5:**Feeding back.**

ACTIONS	HOW WILL WE DO THIS?
Identify sources of engagement, to provide appropriate feedback	Website improvements. e.g. Develop URL and QR code tracking.
Feedback - Essential that we close the loop	- Make people feel valued and help them see the value in taking part. - Attend follow up meetings in person where possible. - Develop a 'You Said We Did' approach. - Feedback should be timely and easier to read.

8. ACTION PLAN

6

OBJECTIVE 6:**Provide staff with the skills they need**

ACTIONS	HOW WILL WE DO THIS?
Provide staff with relevant information	• Further develop guidance and a checklist for services to consider ahead of consultation. e.g. minimum timescale of 6 weeks for service changes. • Staff to be made aware of key information, so they can help with any public queries. e.g. Contact centre.
Train staff	• Provide training to key consultation contacts, partners, volunteers prior to consultations or those sharing consultations. • Training staff on engaging with people with Protected Characteristics. • Training on production of easier to read documents.

7

OBJECTIVE 7:**Evaluate and improve**

ACTIONS	HOW WILL WE DO THIS?
Evaluate Involvement Activity	• Develop guidance to assist services to evaluate activities. • Consider what works well and what didn't and what could be improved.