



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL**

**DIRECTOR OF CHILDRENS SERVICES**

**APPLICATION PACK**

**NOVEMBER 2019**

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## **1. WELCOME LETTER TO CANDIDATES**

Dear Applicant,

### **DIRECTOR OF CHILDRENS SERVICES**

I am really pleased you have asked for more information about this key role.

Rhondda Cynon Taf Council is an ambitious local authority where its Members and officers are committed to the delivery of public services that matter to local people. The Council is committed to driving up standards and achieving the best possible outcomes for residents.

With a challenging backdrop facing local government and the public sector in general, our Council is focused on the need to continue the strong financial management and ethos of continuous improvement which has been embedded here in Rhondda Cynon Taf over the last decade and seek innovative ways of delivering services with our partner organisations.

Despite the need for tough choices in the current financial climate, the Council has developed a strong track record for innovation in the delivery of the services we provide and in particular working collaboratively with our partners in the public sector to deliver genuine benefits for the communities we serve.

Our Members and Officers are committed to facing these challenges head on with the strategic approach and determination necessary to ensure Rhondda Cynon Taf, and the services we provide continue to move forward.

We have a great pool of talent here in Rhondda Cynon Taf and if you believe you are up to the challenge and have a similar 'can do' approach to deliver on these objectives, I very much hope you will want to become part of this agenda.

Yours sincerely,

**GIOVANNI ISINGRINI,  
GROUP DIRECTOR FOR COMMUNITY & CHILDRENS SERVICES**

## 2. THE COUNCIL

### 2.1 Our Vision for Rhondda Cynon Taf is.....

*“for a County Borough that has high aspirations, is confident and promotes opportunity for all”.*

**Our purpose and the reason why the Council exists is.....**

*“to provide strong community leadership and effective services for the people of Rhondda Cynon Taf to enable them to fulfil their potential and prosper”.*

**For the next four years our focus is on three priorities.....**

1. **Economy** - Building a strong economy;
2. **People** - Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone;
3. **Place** - Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work.

**and to deliver our Priorities we will need to.....**

- Provide essential services well
- Help people and communities help themselves
- Build a Sustainable County Borough
- Live within our means

**Over the next four years the Council will respond to challenges and opportunities it faces .....**

1. **By redesigning local services**, making them integrated and efficient by joining with other public sector organisations where we can i.e. WG, Health, Police and Third sector and target the areas of greatest need;
2. **Through more involved and resilient communities** – greater community participation, engagement and involvement through the RCT Together Community Participation Programme and more community involvement;
3. **Putting in place Health and Social Care services that are personalised and integrated**, with more people supported to live longer in their own homes – working with health, housing and other partners to improve the experience

- of those using health and social care services, and helping to keep our residents healthy and active;
4. **With Rhondda Cynon Taf's schools amongst the best in the country**, with all children achieving the best they can;
  5. **Making sure that children and young people get a great start in life** by helping families and keeping children and young people safe;
  6. **Making sure there is a broad offer of skills and employment programmes in place for all ages** - by using European Social Fund monies where we can;
  7. **Making Rhondda Cynon Taf's local environment clean and attractive**, with well-maintained roads and pavements, flowing traffic, increased recycling and less waste sent to landfill – with further investment in highways and pavements;
  8. **With Rhondda Cynon Taf's parks and green spaces continuing to be valued by residents** – by ensuring they are well maintained and looked after;
  9. **With Rhondda Cynon Taf being amongst the safest places in Wales**, with high levels of community cohesion, and residents feeling safe – with effective working between the Council and the Police further reducing crime rates;
  10. **By residents seeing a responsible approach to regeneration**, with new homes being built and job opportunities created – this approach will include investments in town centres and the commercial infrastructure such as Treforest Industrial Estate;
  11. **By making it easier and quicker for residents to contact and do business**, with the majority of Council services, with increased user satisfaction.
  12. **By providing the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf with the assurance that the Council is doing everything it can to keep Council Tax increases among the lowest in Wales**, e.g. reducing our office accommodation, investing in IT so staff are able to work more effectively, increasing energy efficiency and becoming a more efficient Council.

## 2.2 COLLABORATION

To deliver the Council's Corporate Plan it has to work in partnership with a range of public, private and third sector organisations across South East Wales. The Council prides itself on its effective collaborations which include:

- The Cwm Taf Public Services Board that represents the partner organisations of the area. Its members include the Chief Executive and Leader of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council; the Chief Executive and Leader of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council; the Chair and Chief Executive of Cwm Taf

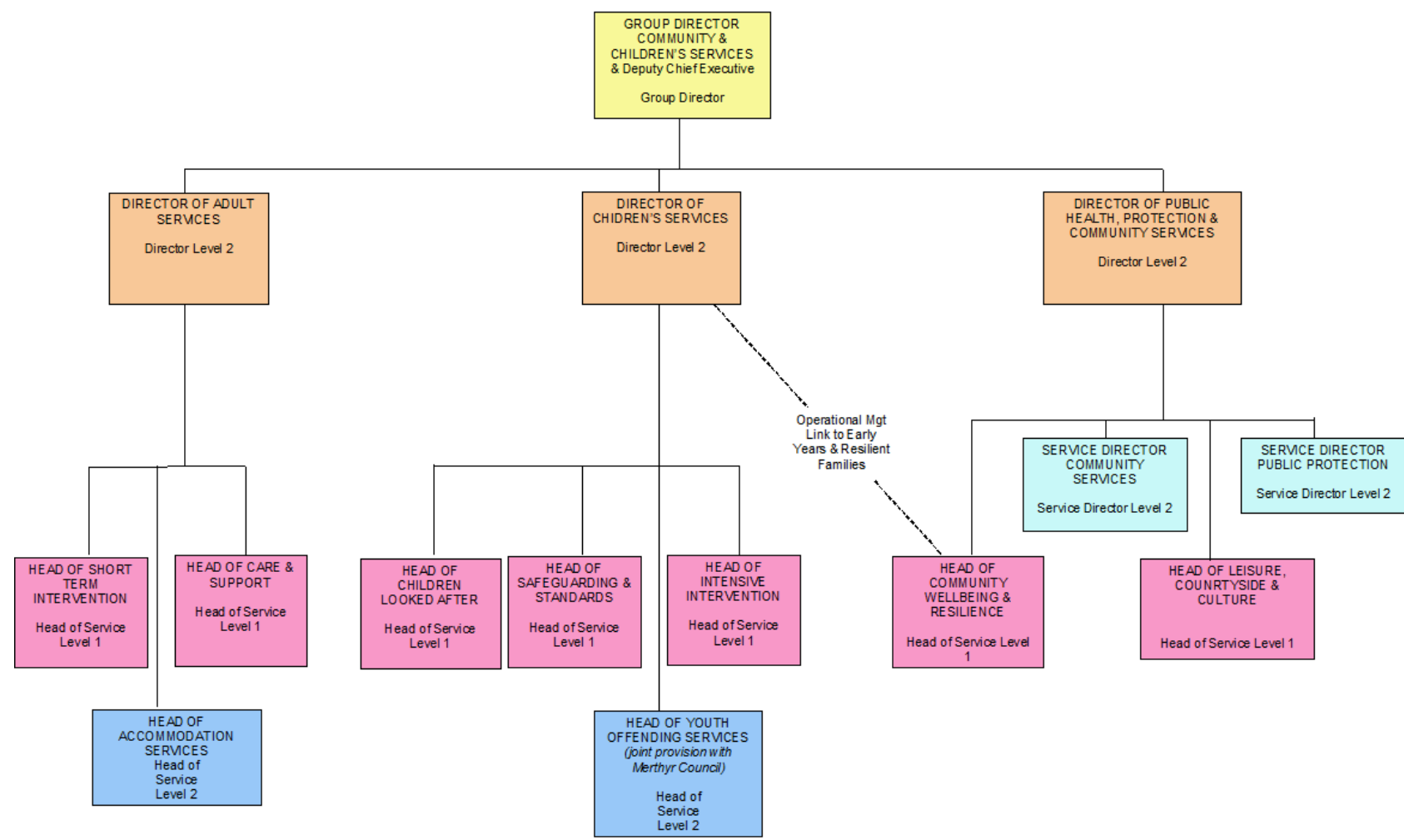
Health Board; the Chief Constable of South Wales Police; the Chairs of Merthyr Tydfil's and RCT's County Voluntary Councils; and representatives from Welsh Government, the Fire Service, Probation Service, and Natural Resources Wales;

- The Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership Board bring together health, social services, housing, the third sector and other partners taking forward the effective delivery of integrated services in wales. The Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Commissioning Unit works on behalf of the Regional Partnership Board.
- The Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Safeguarding Board covers the local authority areas of Bridgend, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf with a total population of almost 440,000 and is made up of the agencies that are responsible for safeguarding children and adults at risk in the Cwm Taf Morgannwg area. The Board ensures that people of all ages, living in the region, are protected from abuse, neglect or other kinds of harm. This also involves preventing abuse, neglect or other kinds of harm from happening. Keeping children and adults who may have needs for care and support safe is everyone's responsibility. This means feeling safe and being safe within their home or in their community, school, work place or anywhere else they go.
- The Cardiff Capital Region – the ten councils in South East Wales have committed to a £1.2billion City Deal with the UK and Welsh Governments to raise the economic output of the Region;
- Joint council services with a number of local councils on a wide range of services, to improve the quality of the services provided, and deliver services efficiently and effectively.

You can find out more about the Corporate Plan by going to:

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/Performancebudgetsandspending/Councilperformance/RelatedDocuments/CorporatePlan201620/CorporatePlan201620.pdf>

2.3 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OVERVIEW – COMMUNITY & CHILDRENS SERVICES



## **2.4 GROUP OVERVIEW**

### **COMMUNITY & CHILDRENS SERVICES**

**Childrens Services** – Childrens Business Support; Early Years & Family Support; Childrens Early Intervention; Safeguarding Services; Childrens Intensive Intervention; Cwm Taf Youth Offending Services

**Public Health, Protection & Community Services** – Environmental Health; Trading Standards; Leisure, Parks & Countryside; Licensing; Bereavement Services; Community Housing; Community Safety & Enforcement; Libraries, Adult Education, Cultural Services, Welsh Translation Services

**Adult Services** – Accommodation Services; Adults Business Support; Adult Short Term Intervention; Adult Social Work; Adult Direct Services



### **3. THE ROLE OF THE DIRECTOR**

#### **3.1 ADVERT**

##### **DIRECTOR OF CHILDRENS SERVICES**

**Salary: £90,252**

##### **'TOGETHER WE CAN BUILD ON OUR SUCCESSES'**

If you are looking to join a forward thinking and ambitious organisation then this is the opportunity for you. Rhondda Cynon Taf is a progressive, high performing and driven Council providing services to a population of approximately 230,000 across the Rhondda, Cynon and Taf Ely valleys. Our success has been based on an innovative and enabling culture that has generated new ideas and ambitious initiatives throughout the Council.

Due to the retirement of the Director, an opportunity has arisen for you to join us in this success and to lead the Council's services for children and young people. While we are confident we are certainly not complacent and we want to continue our improvement journey. The post holder will be responsible for the delivery of services for this service user group. You will be responsible for a budget of circa £48 million and around 600 staff. Your responsibilities will cover children's social care, safeguarding, early intervention and prevention and youth services (including youth offending).

We believe that we have built a motivated management team with bags of experience and local knowledge. You will need to bring your own style of leadership, creativity and innovation as part of a well-established and experienced management team. You will be given strong management and political support, with elected Members and partners who understand the complexity and importance of our work.

We want you to play your part in delivering our improvement strategy, to ensure that the County Borough continues to move forward in a way that connects our communities and supports our children and families, by keeping them safe, healthy and giving them every opportunity to thrive.

Whether you are an existing Head of Service or searching for the next step in your career, this role will give you the opportunity to make a real impact. If you are looking to work with colleagues across the Council and with our partners to improve the lives of all our children, young people and families, we will be delighted to hear from you.

You will be joining an ambitious leadership team led by Chief Executive Christopher Bradshaw, and will be part of the Community and Children Services group led by Giovanni Isingrini.

If you have the determination, passion and flair to be part of the Council's future success then we would like to hear from you. For a confidential discussion, please contact Giovanni Isingrini, Group Director for Community & Childrens Services on 01443 424141.

## 3.2 JOB DESCRIPTION & PERSON SPECIFICATION

### Job Description

<b>Group:</b>	Community & Childrens Services
<b>Division:</b>	Childrens Services
<b>Section:</b>	Childrens Services
<b>Sub Section:</b>	Childrens Services
<b>Post Title:</b>	Director of Childrens Services
<b>Vision Post Number:</b>	
<b>Grade:</b>	Director – Level 2
<b>Responsible to:</b>	Group Director - Community & Childrens Services
<b>Posts Reporting to this Post:</b>	Children Services SMT
<b>Team:</b>	GMT
<b>DBS Required Level:</b>	Enhanced
<b>Location:</b>	Ty Trevithick
<b>Date of Description:</b>	April 2019

### KEY OBJECTIVES

- To support the Chief Executive, Group Director and the Cabinet in formulating and delivering the County Borough Council's strategic policy agenda for fulfilling its Community Leadership role, particularly as set out in its Council Corporate Plan, 'The Way Ahead'.
- To provide the leadership and vision necessary to co-ordinate the activities of a related group of key services, and to motivate staff to deliver high levels of performance and to develop their full potential.
- To commission the delivery of integrated, accessible, high quality services to the local people of Rhondda Cynon Taf, and to bring about continuous improvement year-on-year.
- To act as an "ambassador" for and to promote the influence of the Council locally, regionally, and nationally.

- To ensure the Council meets its statutory obligations, and that the highest standards of probity and good conduct are maintained at all times.

## **SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITY**

### **Responsible For:**

The financial, personnel and physical resources of the Division, including the following key functional areas:

- Early Years and Prevention
- Children Looked After
- Intensive Intervention
- Safeguarding & Standards
- Youth Offending Services - *(joint provision with Merthyr Council)*
- Fostering and Adoption Services
- Child Protection
- Assessment and Care Planning

## **KEY ACCOUNTABILITIES**

### **Strategic Management**

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- To make an active and positive contribution to the Council's strategic plans and policies, as well as to the process for implementing cultural change and organisational development, and facilitate the creation of a common purpose across the organisation, by team working as a member of the Group Management Team (GMT).
- To seek innovative and creative solutions to meeting the Council's need to bring about change and improvement within limited resources.
- To promote equality of opportunity and access in service delivery and in the employment of staff, as part of the Council's Social Inclusion strategy.

### **Service Management**

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- To act as the Council's expert and head of profession for a related group of key services, and to provide high quality advice on their development and operation.
- To set standards, frameworks, and protocols for service functions and to ensure that these are effectively implemented and complied with.

- To ensure that all corporate policies, objectives, and processes are implemented and complied with, and are communicated to all staff within the service area in a timely and effective way.
- To provide clear direction and purpose for staff at all levels, by translating political decisions into achievable service delivery targets and processes.
- To actively manage and enhance the performance of Senior Managers, Service Managers and Team Leaders, particularly in terms of their participation in the activities of the Senior Management Team and multi-disciplinary corporate project teams.
- To implement and maintain an effective framework of formal delegation of responsibility to Service Managers and Team Leaders.

### **Service Quality and Performance Management**

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- To ensure that services are planned and delivered in a co-ordinated way, and in compliance with the Council's scrutiny and continuous improvement processes.
- To ensure the formulation, implementation, monitoring , and evaluation of Service Plans for each service area; identifying, analysing, and responding to changing trends, patterns of demand, and performance issues, as necessary.
- To ensure that service delivery and planning takes account of and is benchmarked against national and local Performance Indicators, and contributes to the targets set out in the Council's Plans.
- To put in place effective arrangements for agreeing personal targets for Service Managers and Team Leaders, and for regularly appraising and reporting on their performance.
- To identify and provide opportunities for meeting the professional development needs of senior managers within the service area.
- To be accountable for personal performance, through meeting agreed personal targets and through undertaking planned programmes of professional development.

### **Resource Management**

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- To regularly review and evaluate the resource requirements of the Service Area, in terms of both maintaining essential service delivery and bringing about necessary improvements and developments.
- To ensure the efficient and, imaginative management of all resources, (people, finance, property and information), in support of the Council's agreed targets for service delivery and improvement.
- To demonstrate an entrepreneurial approach to identifying, and pursuing as appropriate, all additional sources of funding or other resources, which could be

used to augment those provided by the Council, ensuring that any special accounting or evaluation requirements involved are complied with, and that such resources are integrated fully into the Council's processes.

- To make an active contribution to the formulation and delivery of the Council's strategy for the deployment of funding, to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of local communities.
- To work closely with other agencies and partners to improve the impact of the way in which budgets are spent and resources are allocated.

### **Partnership Working and Communication**

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- To develop and maintain the wider networks and partnerships the Council needs to deliver its Community Leadership role and to enhance services to its local communities.
- To actively foster and develop positive relationships with all local agencies and partners, including the voluntary sector and local businesses, as well as with other statutory bodies at regional and national levels, including the Welsh Government.
- To communicate the Council's vision, strategy and processes effectively, both internally to staff, and externally to partner agencies and the public.
- To develop and implement effective arrangements for formal consultation with local agencies and partners, and with the public, on service planning and delivery issues, and for ensuring that comments received feed into policy and decision making, as appropriate.
- To contribute to the Council's strategy for maintaining positive relationships with the media, dealing with and responding to enquiries, and taking advantage of public relations and media opportunities as appropriate.

To carry out health and safety responsibilities in accordance with the Division's Health & Safety Responsibilities document.

The contents of the document will be subject to review from time to time in consultation with the post holder. Job descriptions may be amended to reflect and record such changes.

**PROTECTING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS IS A CORE RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL STAFF. STAFF ARE EXPECTED TO ALERT THEIR LINE MANAGER TO ANY CONCERNS THEY MAY HAVE REGARDING THE ABUSE OR INAPPROPRIATE TREATMENT OF A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON, OR VULNERABLE ADULTS.**

## **PERSON SPECIFICATION**

This Person Specification sets out the knowledge and / or qualifications, past experience and personal competencies that would be ideal for this particular post.

The **Knowledge/ Qualifications and Experience** sections describe what is required in terms of the technical ability that is needed to do this job successfully.

The **Competencies** section describes the kinds of non-technical skills, abilities and personal characteristics that the ideal person for this particular role would have. The competencies describe how that person would ideally work with other people and how they would approach their responsibilities.

The **Special Conditions and Professional Requirements** section describes any other qualities appropriate to the particular circumstances associated with this role.

ATTRIBUTE	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE
<b>KNOWLEDGE / EDUCATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Welsh Language Level 1 - All employees will be required to undertake a basic Welsh Language Induction to reach this level. Please refer to The Welsh Language Skills Guidance online <a href="http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/WelshSkills">www.rctcbc.gov.uk/WelshSkills</a></li> <li>degree or equivalent</li> <li>relevant professional qualification</li> <li>thorough knowledge of legislative and regulatory framework</li> <li>detailed knowledge of relevant area(s) of service delivery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>understands the political context at national, regional and local levels</li> <li>understands the application of commercial and business concepts and techniques</li> <li>Welsh Language Level 2 – 5 (for details on the levels please refer to the Welsh Language Skills Guidelines, which can be found in the Welsh Services section of the RCT Council Website)</li> </ul>
<b>EXPERIENCE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>experience of running a major related service, at Chief Officer level or the equivalent</li> <li>substantial experience of leading management of change successfully in a large and complex organisation</li> <li>managing large and complex financial budgets successfully</li> <li>making a major contribution to corporate strategy</li> <li>successful management of industrial relations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>extensive experience of working closely with elected Members or the ability to demonstrate that such political sensitivity could be acquired quickly</li> <li>dealing with the media over sensitive issues</li> <li>service and business planning, including service review and use of Service Level Agreements</li> </ul>

COMPETENCIES	
<b>1. Developing and Motivating People</b>	Inspires others by being passionate and enthusiastic and having a positive 'action-focused' attitude, and empowers people by giving space, freedom, flexibility and trust, where appropriate.
<b>2. Working in Partnerships and Teams</b>	Builds lasting, positive & constructive relationships with a wide variety of people, and constantly looks for opportunities to improve service provision through working with other service areas and beyond the Council.

<b>3. Communicating Effectively</b>	Demonstrates open, honest and regular communication with all those who might need it, whilst tailoring their style and language to different groups of people e.g. customers, Councillors, staff. Communicates early to flag up potential 'surprises' in advance.
<b>4. Leading Change</b>	Understands and embraces the need for change and responds positively to a modernising agenda. Supports innovation with appropriate structures and frameworks, and Accepts responsibility and takes on the role of 'team captain'.
<b>5. Working Strategically</b>	Drives strategic priorities based on real need, grounded on well-informed evaluation of data. Is aware of, and acts on, emerging issues, trends and implications for Appreciates why decisions have been made and sees them in the wider context their service and the Council.
<b>6. Managing Resources</b>	Develops creative and radically different approaches to maintain high quality delivery with fewer resources (Workforce Planning), and finds efficiency savings without compromising service delivery (Workforce Planning). Is positive about what can be achieved with existing resources (Workforce Planning).
<b>7. Achieving Results</b>	Understands the implications of performance metrics in a broader context. Prioritises to get the best out of the available time. Is able to make tough decisions. Reviews outcomes in order to make improvements and learn from mistakes.
<b>8. Political Knowledge &amp; Awareness</b>	Understands how political decisions are made and is aware of political sensitivities but maintains non-political objectivity. Helps politicians to see the wider strategic picture when making decisions. Take opportunities to build stronger relationships with politicians and share information
<b>SPECIAL CONDITIONS AND PROFESSIONAL REQUIREMENTS</b>	Ability to travel throughout the County Borough to meet the requirements of the post.

### 3.3 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

Rhondda Cynon Taf Council recognises and values the diversity of its workforce and is committed to creating a working environment where everyone is respected and where all current and potential staff are afforded dignity and equality of opportunity.



We recognise that false assumptions, prejudice and stereotyping can lead to discrimination. That's why we're committed to actively promoting equality and combating prejudice, discrimination and harassment through the use of policies, procedures and education.

#### Our Mission Statement is:

'To eliminate discrimination and achieve equality in the workplace and in service delivery.'

#### Work-Life Balance Statement

Rhondda Cynon Taf Council recognises that in today's society people want a workplace that is flexible, and understands individuals' outside commitments. Our approach to work-life balance is based upon this principle and we seek to provide appropriate ways of achieving this.

#### Personal Data Statement

This is sensitive personal data and will be treated with the utmost confidentiality, in line with the requirements of the Data Protection legislation. The information will only be used for general statistical and monitoring purposes. It will be separated from the application form and will not be given to the selection panel.

#### The Disability Symbol Scheme

Rhondda Cynon Taf has been awarded the Disability Symbol by Job Centre Plus.

This means that all disabled applicants who meet the minimum criteria for a job, as identified on the Person Specification, will be invited for interview if the disabled applicant chooses to participate in the scheme.

If you are disabled and wish to be considered under the scheme you may do this when registering on the web site if you are applying on-line. Alternatively if you are applying by post, please complete the form with your application. The information provided will be treated confidentially.

#### Reasonable Adjustments / Alternative Formats

At any stage of the recruitment and selection process, should you require any information in alternative formats or reasonable adjustments to participate, please do not hesitate to contact a member of the Equality, Diversity & Social Justice Team on telephone number 01443 424121 or by e-mailing [equality@rhondda-cynon-taf.gov.uk](mailto:equality@rhondda-cynon-taf.gov.uk) Should you be successful in obtaining a post, there are a number of schemes available to assist with reasonable adjustments within the workplace.

#### 4. RECRUITMENT TIMETABLE

<b>CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS</b>	Midday Monday 6 <sup>th</sup> January 2020
<b>SHORTLISTING BY APPOINTMENT COMMITTEE</b>	Thursday 9 <sup>th</sup> January 2020
<b>ASSESSMENT CENTRE</b>	<b>DAY 1</b>  Monday 20 <sup>th</sup> January 2020
	<b>DAY 2</b>  Tuesday 21 <sup>st</sup> January 2020

## **5. LIVING IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF**

### **Places and attractions**

The region of Rhondda Cynon Taf has much to offer, whether you are looking for culture, shopping, sporting opportunities or all three. There are also plenty of places to socialise.

### **Heritage**

There are plenty of museums and heritage sites to visit in the region. At the Rhondda Heritage Park in Trehafod, experience the great days of the nineteenth-century coal boom, as well as its decline. For Pontypridd's story, pay a trip to the Historical and Cultural Centre, found beside the single-arch pack-horse bridge, built in 1756. Fact finders may also be interested to learn that the Welsh National Anthem, Hen Wlad fy Nhadau (Land of my Fathers), was composed here in 1856.

### **The Great Outdoors**

If you love walking you couldn't come to a better place. But it's not just walkers who will enjoy our spectacular views. If you prefer a less energetic approach to appreciating the great outdoors, you're also in luck. Near Aberdare, you'll find the beautiful Dare Valley Country Park. We have some of the highest main roads in the UK, with viewpoints at all the summits, and sweeping vistas of the picturesque Brecon Beacons and the sea.

Rhondda Cynon Taf is actually home to a section of the Brecon Beacons National Park. The magnificent stretch of country to the south of the main peaks slopes west to the limestone country at the head of the Hepste and Mellte valleys. You can walk into Powys on a path passing behind the 100-ft Sgwd yr Eira waterfall.

### **Sports**

Pontypridd's Rugby Club is well known the world over, however there are numerous Rugby clubs in the area catering for all age groups starting with the under 7s through to seniors. Considerable investment has gone into modernising and upgrading many of our sports centres. There are a variety of sporting clubs such as football, netball and boxing in Rhondda Cynon Taf that cater for all tastes.

## **Shopping and going out**

There are a large variety of shops in Rhondda Cynon Taf, everything from craft and gift shops to town-centre stores, retail parks and traditional markets. There is also Talbot Green shopping centre, where you will find many of the major chains.

Fans of the performing arts are well catered for, too, with the Coliseum Theatre in Aberdare and the Park and Dare Theatre in Treorchy. In Llantrisant – one of Wales' oldest towns – the Model House is well worth a visit. Originally a workhouse, it's now a centre for exhibits and the sale of crafts of all kinds.

## **Facts and figures**

The County Borough of Rhondda Cynon Taf is made up of three parts – the Cynon Valley, the Rhondda Valleys and the Taff Ely area. Situated in the heart of Wales just north of Cardiff, between the Brecon Beacons and the M4 Motorway, we are the second largest local authority in Wales, with approximately 232,000 people living in 424 square miles.

While the region grew with the coal industry, it is all change in the 21st century. The coal tips have long gone and today you will find a wide range of landscapes. There are many valleys in Wales, but nowhere is there such pride and passion, and nowhere will you find so warm a welcome.

## **Housing**

Here in Rhondda Cynon Taf, you will find a wide range of housing solutions, from budget rental accommodation through to large detached executive homes. Although property prices have been rising in recent years, prices still remain relatively competitive in Rhondda Cynon Taf, compared to other areas in the UK.

## **Transport**

Here in Rhondda Cynon Taf, we can offer excellent bus and rail services right across the region – and plenty of recent investment has been meant bus and train stations are now vastly improved. The road network has also seen lots of change, with major projects being delivered and we are well placed for the M4 motorway, with easy access to Cardiff and beyond. We're also keen to promote walking and cycling in Rhondda

Cynon Taf. We believe that introducing walking and cycling into the daily routine will help improve public health, at the same time protecting the environment.

### **Access to the rest of Wales**

Wherever you are in Rhondda Cynon Taf, you are always within easy reach of Cardiff, thanks to excellent road and rail links. In Wales' capital, you can enjoy a rich and varied cultural environment including provision at centres such as the New Theatre, St David's Centre and the Cardiff Motorpoint Arena. There is also the Principality Stadium which is widely regarded as one of the best sporting and entertainment venues in the world. Along with international rugby and football games, it is host to some of the biggest music stars. Cardiff Castle is located in the heart of the city and enjoys a history spanning nearly 2,000 years. The castle is one of Wales' leading heritage attractions and a site of international significance.

There is also Europe's Largest Waterfront Development in Cardiff Bay. Transformed by the Cardiff Barrage that impounds the Rivers Taff and the Ely a massive fresh-water lake has been created. Cardiff Bay is home to a number of attractions such as Techniquest Science Discovery Centre - ideal for all the family, Craft in the Bay, The Welsh Government Building at the Pierhead, Butetown History and Arts Centre, Goleulong 2000 Lightship, the Norwegian Church Arts Centre and the Wales Millennium Centre, a stunning international arts centre.

The Glamorgan Heritage Coast stretches for 14 miles from Barry to Porthcawl. With plunging cliffs, tiny secluded coves and breathtaking views make the Heritage Coast a must for walkers, cyclists or anyone with a love of the countryside. The whole coastline is fringed with delightful towns, small villages and miles of footpaths and country lanes. You are also close to the Gower Peninsula that is both beautiful and unspoilt. There are many historic features located over an area that measures just sixteen miles by seven miles wide. Not surprisingly, such an enclosed peninsula surrounded by the Bristol Sea and Atlantic Ocean, has become a haven for some of the richest wildlife and varied habitats in the UK.

Scattering the landscape in Gower are historic reminders of the past, from castles, medieval churches, Iron Age fortifications, and prehistoric standing stones. All this

against an awe-inspiring, natural backdrop of hills, valleys, beaches and cliff tops, commons, woodland, dunes, marshes and caves.