SECTION 3

3. Getting Information and Getting Involved

3.1 Getting Information

3.1.1 Information Available to Members of the Public

(a) When Meetings of the Member Bodies Will Take Place

A programme of meetings is available by contacting the Council direct or via the website.

(b) Forward Work Programme

From the Forward Work Programme, see what decisions will be taken by the Cabinet or Council and what issues the Scrutiny Committees will be considering and when these matters will be discussed.

(c) Information Available Prior to a Meeting

5 clear days before a meeting, the agenda, any report likely to be discussed and background papers to that report shall be available for inspection at the offices of the Council and on the website. If an item is added to the agenda later, the revised agenda will be open to inspection from the time when the item is added to the agenda and any report will be made available to the public as soon as it is available and sent to Councillors.

(d) Information Available at a Meeting

The Council will make available to the public present at a meeting a reasonable number of copies of the Agenda and of the Reports for the meeting (save during any part of the meeting to which the public are excluded).

(e) Information Available After a Meeting

For a period of six years the agenda, reports and the minutes of the meeting shall be available for inspection. The background papers shall remain open for inspection for a period of four years.

(f) Council's Accounts

Inspect the Council's accounts and make views known to the external auditor (sections 29 and 30 Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004). Under the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2005, the accounts will be available for public inspection for twenty (20) working days after the date appointed by the auditor.

Information which is confidential or exempt (as defined in paragraphs 14.10.3 and 14.10.4) will not be disclosed to members of the public at any time.

3.1.2 Information Available to Members of the Council

(a) Members can see any information, which is available to a member of the public.

(b) In addition, a Member may see any information which he or she needs to know in order to fulfil his or her role as a Member of the Council (otherwise known as "need to know"). A Member will not make public information which is confidential or exempt (as defined in Section 14) without the consent of the Council or divulge information given in confidence to anyone other than a Councillor or person(s) or organisation(s) entitled to know it.

3.1.3 Members of any Scrutiny Committees

A Member of a Scrutiny Committee may also see any document containing material relating to:

(a) any business transacted at or meeting of the Cabinet;

(b) any decision taken by an individual Member of the Cabinet.

A Scrutiny Committee Member is not be entitled to:

(c) any document in draft form;

(d) any part of a document which contains confidential or exempt information unless that information is relevant to an action or decision they are reviewing or scrutinising or intending to scrutinise and is included in the Committee's Forward Work Programme.

NB. No Member is entitled to see any information relating to a matter in which he or she has a prejudicial interest.

3.1.4 Information Available to Officers

The Monitoring Officer, the Section 151 Officer and the Chief Executive may see any papers or records held by any part of the Council or its Officers. Other Officers may see any information held by the Council provided:

(a) they need to see the information to do their job; and

(b) that information is processed lawfully in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

3.2 Getting Involved

3.2.1 Members of the Public

Members of the public can get involved in the following ways:

(a) Voting for Councillors

If they are over 18 years and registered as a local elector with the Council;

(b) Suggesting Items of Business for Meetings

A member of the public can seek to get a matter included in an agenda by asking the Chair of any Member Body to add an item to the agenda;

(c) Taking Part in Meetings

(i) Members of the public can come to and speak at any meeting which the Council has resolved should include participation by members of the public. The rules on when you may speak and for how long are contained in Section 4.

(ii) You can also ask Formal Questions at meetings of Full Council (Section 4).

(d) Views of the Public

Under the arrangements put in place by the Authority under section 62 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, to bring to the attention of the relevant Scrutiny Committees their views on any matter under consideration by the relevant Scrutiny Committees, the relevant Scrutiny Committees must take into account any views brought to their attention under these arrangements.

(e) When are Meetings Open to the Public?

Meetings will be open to the public wherever possible. The public must be excluded from meetings whenever it is likely that confidential information will be disclosed. The public may be excluded from meetings where it is likely that exempt information will be disclosed. (See section 14.10 for definition of exempt information and section 14.11 for definition of public interest.)

(f) Making Comments/Complaints

(i) A member of the public may comment or complain about Council services by:

(A) contacting their local councillor;

(B) contacting the Member of the Cabinet responsible for the service;

(C) contacting the Officer responsible for delivering the service or their manager;

(D) using the Council's complaints procedure;

(E) contacting the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales at 1 Ffordd Yr Hen Gae, Pencoed, CF35 5LJ. Telephone: 0845 601 0987 or via the website www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk.

(ii) Comments or complaints can be made about an Officer or Member by:

(A) Officer

Contacting the Officer or the Officer's manager.

(B) Members

If the complaint is against a Member then the complaint should be referred to the Monitoring Officer or the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (contact details above).

(g) Engage with Overview and Scrutiny

All members of the public who live or work in the area of the Council may bring to the attention of a Scrutiny Committee their views on any matter under consideration by that Scrutiny Committee. Scrutiny Committees must take into account any views brought to its attention by a member of the public.

3.3 Getting Involved – Members

Members can get involved by:

3.3.1 Suggesting Items of Business for the Agenda

As a Member of the Council, you have the same rights as members of the public. In addition to these rights you also have the following rights:

(a) Member bodies in Column A can request that Member bodies in Column B consider or reconsider an issue.

Column A	Column B
Democratic Services Committee	Council
Scrutiny Committees	Cabinet

(b) Any Member can submit a Notice of Motion to Council (Section 4) and also ask questions (Section 4).

3.3.2 Participating in Meetings

Members of the Council are entitled to attend any formal meeting of the Council, its committees or sub-committees or the Cabinet.

(a) Members of the Council may attend and speak at any meetings where they are a Member of that body. Where they are not a Member of that body, their attendance and right to speak is at the discretion of the Chair of the body.

(b) Members of the Cabinet have a special role to play within the Council. They are entitled to exercise any Executive Function provided the Executive Function has been delegated to them by the Leader of the Council.

3.3.3 Comments and Complaints

(a) Members may comment, subject to restrictions in the Code of Conduct for Members (Section 18) on any aspect of Council business by:

(i) talking to Officers;

(ii) talking to the Leader or Member of the Cabinet;

(iii) talking to the Chair of a Scrutiny Committees. .

(b) If a Member wishes to complain about an:

(i) Officer

The procedure set out in the Protocol on Member/Officer Relations may be used (Section 21).

(ii) Member

The procedure set out in Appendix 2 to Section 18 may be followed.