

2022

Plaid Cymru Rhondda Cynon Taf Manifesto



Plaid Cymru
Party of Wales

Gweithredu dros Gymru
Making a Difference



Foreword

This election is taking place during one of the most challenging times in all our lives. We hope we are at last emerging from the Covid pandemic that has caused so much pain and misery to our communities over the last two years, but as we know, Covid nor its impact have not gone away.

We are now facing one of the greatest cost of living crisis in living memory. Best estimates are indicating that millions will be forced into absolute poverty as a consequence of rising household costs like gas, electricity and food because of inflation, fuel costs and food shortages. These are not luxuries we are talking about but basic day to day costs that any civilised society need for their very survival.

This manifesto outlines Plaid Cymru's commitments relating to specific areas of services that the Council has direct responsibility for and seeks to address some factors that will make a difference to people's lives.

We want to support children and young people whose lives have been turned upside down by the effects of the pandemic. Their education and wellbeing has been disrupted. This cannot continue. We want our young citizens to have a voice and influence the types of services they aspire to going forward. For the first time 16 and 17 year olds will be able to vote. We want their vote to count in determining what their generation aspire to.

Given the scale of the challenge, Plaid Cymru commits to working with all partners at a local and national level to support a recovery from Covid and address the cost of living crisis.

Plaid Cymru will work with residents to champion the things that improve the general wellbeing of communities. Residents have told us that a clean, green environment is a top priority We will be tough on those that allow their dogs to foul and those that fly tip by employing more staff to improve enforcement. We will also remove the charges for bulky waste collection in the expectation that the people will stop fly tipping.

Plaid Cymru's message to voters is simple. We are trustworthy and have a reputation of listening and acting on people's priorities. If you have any comments please get in touch with us via:

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Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council is responsible for delivering a number of services that matter to all of us, such as schools, social care, bin collections and leisure facilities including parks.

In total, 75 councillors represent you - the residents of RCT – and they are responsible for setting the budget and deciding how the money available to the council should be spent.

Over the past 5 years, your Plaid Cymru councillors have worked hard with the communities they represent, as well as fighting for the services we need and deserve.

Our achievements

Include:

- Working with local campaigners to successfully fight the closure of the A&E department at the Royal Glamorgan Hospital.
- Securing the provision of free menstrual products in schools in the county. It was then adopted by Welsh Government as a policy for the whole of Wales.
- Supporting communities devastated by the 2020 floods, and fighting for an independent inquiry.
- Fighting against the closure of residential care homes.
- Fighting against the plans to restructure schools, close some sixth form classes and close a Welsh-medium school in Pontypridd.
- Securing the support of the council for free school meals.
- We've worked with countless community groups and projects and helped people with many different issues such as housing, problems with litter and providing support whilst isolating during the pandemic.
- We always put our communities first and donate 5% of the salary we receive as Councillors back to the community.
- Being a Councillor is a huge honour, and we never take your support for granted.
- A Plaid Cymru-run council would listen to you and ensure the needs of our communities are put first
- We are asking the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf to place their faith in us, so we can continue to work with, and for our communities.

Nolan Principles

All those holding public office should comply with 7 core principles known as the Nolan Principles. We take these very seriously and aim to behave with selflessness and integrity.

We aim to be objective and accountable to you the voters; we believe in openness, honesty and will show leadership in our roles.

Making our community fair for everyone is core to our beliefs and we are committed to equality for all.

- RCT Council still has a gender pay gap between men and women.
- People who are disabled are further disadvantaged by lack of access to facilities in the community.

It's time to change this!



Priorities



Engagement, Openness and Transparency

People of all ages across RCT often complain to us that the Council does not listen to them. Consultations rarely change any decisions, no matter the strength of feeling locally. We believe that all voices matter, and that everyone should have the opportunity to help shape the future of our communities. A Plaid Cymru-run RCT would reform the consultation processes so that more people are involved, and the weight of those views are understood and heeded.

A Plaid Cymru Council would:



Establish a Petitions Committee so that communities can insist on a topic being raised within the Council.



Increase the use of citizen panels to discuss major developments and changes so that genuine feedback can be gained.



Reduce the Council Executive from the present nine Cabinet members.



Allow greater involvement of members of the public at scrutiny meetings, through actively increasing the use of expert witnesses and relevant people affected by decisions under discussion.

Climate Change and

Floods

In February 2020, residents and businesses across the county borough experienced devastating flooding. The storm was extreme and the rainfall was unprecedented. However, it is also the case that there had been years of underinvestment in the drainage infrastructure and land management by Natural Resources Wales, RCT council and Dŵr Cymru. At the point when the flooding occurred, the Local Authority's website featured an emergency plan that had not been reviewed since 2011. They were not prepared and the plans in place were insufficient.

Unfortunately, we are still not ready if we are faced with a similar situation again. As of March 2022, nine of the statutory Section 19 reports into the floods are yet to be published by RCT Council. Residents have told us they do not have confidence in these reports as they are not independently scrutinised. Many residents are still unclear about what exactly happened and, more importantly, what remedial work needs to be undertaken. This is not acceptable.

A Plaid Cymru Council would:



Cooperate with the national review of Section 19 reports. Consider the need for an independent local inquiry into the floods – something we have consistently campaigned for on a national level. This will inform how we will work to protect homes and businesses from floods in the future and better understand the ongoing needs of flooded communities.



Work with at risk communities, providing practical as well as emotional support, and supporting a network of Flood Action Groups.



Commit that, should further flooding occur, local residents will be involved in the compiling of the reports from the outset, not as an afterthought. We will aim to publish the reports within a maximum of 6 months.



Work collaboratively with communities at risk of flooding to involve them in the RCT Emergency Plan, utilising local skills and knowledge to improve responses in emergency.

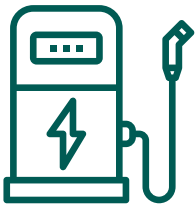
Responding to the Climate and Biodiversity Emergency

We support the commitment made by RCT Council to become a carbon neutral council by 2030. We are serious about the future of our planet and will place this issue at the forefront of our work.

A Plaid Cymru Council would:



Invest in green spaces, especially in our town centres and communities increase our monitoring of air pollution levels and act accordingly to reduce pollution levels where they are highest



Speed up the provision of electric vehicle charging points in line with demand and ensure a fair geographical spread throughout RCT. We will do this whilst being mindful of emerging technologies in batteries and charging systems, ensuring we are prepared for future technological advances.



Ensure through RCT's Pension Committee, that the pooled Local Government Pension Schemes in Wales, the Wales Pension Partnership, takes every opportunity to reduce their portfolios' impact on climate change and that any investment opportunities are taken in line with environmental, social and governance principles.



Seek investment opportunities in the green economy and create jobs to support this transformation. We will work with environmental groups in the voluntary and statutory sectors to reduce our carbon footprint.

Coal Tips

We have welcomed the establishment of the tip safety management team within front line services in RCT. We believe that local residents have the right to information about the status and safety of all sites in RCT, something that RCT Labour councillors have refused to share.

A Plaid Cymru Council would:



Publish all information relating to the safety of coal tips that blight our communities.



Continue to campaign for the urgent investment that is needed to make sure that no community is left at risk.



Ensure the work of all the partners involved is open to public scrutiny.

Waste Services

Waste management is one of the issues that residents contact the council most often about. Getting this right is essential in order to avoid fly tipping that pollutes our green spaces and damages the environment. The increase in dog ownership has also led to challenges with dog fouling and dog waste.

A Plaid Cymru Council would:



Review the newly introduced system for collecting green waste. We need a system that works for people and doesn't lead to the dumping of waste



Remove the charges for dealing with bulky waste.



Fund additional enforcement officers and surveillance methods to reduce dog fouling pollution.



Review the decision to withdraw free dog waste bags from RCT Council.

Transport

Plaid Cymru councillors have been actively calling for an investment in sustainable transport links to support climate change targets. Plaid Cymru councillors have consistently called for safe cycleways across the borough, e.g. Rhondda and across the Cynon and Taff valleys. Councillors have also called for consultation on the possibility of an extension of the Treherbert line to Tynewydd and extension of the Aberdare line.

A Plaid Cymru Council would:



Invest in better public transport, including bus accessibility, cycleways, and accessible walking routes.



Issue guidance and solutions to residents with and without off-street parking options on how to switch to Electric Vehicles and how to install suitable charging points close to home, in line with best practice on emerging technologies.



Make school transport and environmental considerations part of decision-making criteria in all new programmes.

Making Children's Rights a Reality in RCT

Children and young people have suffered much as a result of the Covid pandemic, missing out on education, social activities, sports and key markers in their development. We believe we can make improvements to the lives of children and young people. Plaid Cymru councillors have called on the Council to formally adopt the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as a basis for all its work. Rectifying the damage caused to the mental wellbeing of children and young people, as well as the educational impact they have suffered, will require new ways of working.

Education

We will encourage schools and organisations to work creatively to find new opportunities and solutions, investing in the resources to make this happen. Unfortunately, at present some children who have ALN or who wish to be educated in Welsh are disadvantaged by needing to travel long distances to their educational setting, such as those in the Ynysybwl area.

A Plaid Cymru Council would:



Review the current plans for educational provision across the Local Authority, with a focus on ALN facilities, sixth form provision and Welsh-medium provision in order to plan educational services that are suitable, accessible and successful for all children and young people across the County Borough.



Undertake a comprehensive review of the educational effectiveness of the Council's super schools programme (3-16 and 3-18) and the experiences of education for all members of the school community and the surrounding community.



Review how the Local Authority is complying with new legal duties under the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act to understand what more should be done to ensure children with ALN access their right to an education.



Increase the investment made in mental health services for children and young people, to make access to services easier and to develop new ways of reaching out to those in need.



Work towards the provision of free school meals for all primary children as agreed in the National Co-operation Agreement.

Work towards free childcare for 2-year-old children.



Work with all schools in the county to prioritise tackling bullying, hate and discrimination, and understanding human rights and children's rights.

Youth Services

A Plaid Cymru Council would:



Consult with young people and work with them to launch a programme of safe spaces for young people to socialise in town centres.



Improve outreach mental health services linked to youth services across the County Borough.

Housing

Everybody has a right to a safe and warm home. Quality of housing can have a huge impact on wellbeing. Inadequate housing increases the risk of severe ill health and disability; it can also lead to poor mental health, lower educational attainment, unemployment and poverty.

The principles that will guide Plaid Cymru's new approach are:

- Accessibility and suitability for all people regardless of age or ability or any protected characteristic.
- Affordability and the choice for extended families to live in communities of their choice together.
- Consultation and collaboration with citizens and housing providers.

A Plaid Cymru Council would:



Review the current supply and demand trends for social housing and work with housing providers to implement a programme to bring down the waiting times for social housing. The programme would address current inequalities of access to specific types of housing such as bungalows, supported living, adapted properties.



Work with the new national construction company 'Unnos' when established to support councils and social landlords to improve the supply of social and affordable housing.



Conduct research in RCT to fully understand the role a system of fair rents (rent control) could have in making the private rental market affordable for local people on local incomes and pursue new approaches to making homes affordable.



Ensure that every young person who has been a Child Looked After by the Authority has a secure home with a support programme when they leave foster care or a residential home.

Health and Social Care

Through the cooperation agreement between Plaid Cymru and Welsh Government, we are closer to achieving Plaid Cymru's policy of integrated health and social care.

A Plaid Cymru Council would:



Work on local implementation of the expert group recommendations on the establishment of a National Care Service, free at the point of need, continuing as a public service. This could involve:



- Co-location of multi-agency services to improve communication, information sharing and collaborative working.
- Integrated funding streams to break down the challenges of care provision outside health facilities.



Improved pay and working conditions for health and social care workers to reduce the recruitment and retention crises.

Street Care, Highways and Town Centres

Living in a clean, pleasant and safe environment is a crucial aspect of a healthy community. We know from our work with residents in RCT that they care deeply about the environment we live in.

A Plaid Cymru Council would:



Invest in more public toilets according to need in every town in the Borough.



Improve pavements and fund more adaptations such as dropped kerbs to improve accessibility throughout the community.



Work alongside South Wales Police and third sector partners to understand and address the reasons behind anti-social behaviour in order to reduce it.



Bring an increased number of private streets and rear lanes up to adoptable standards.



Increase investment in street care services to enable more resources for cleaning and clearing problematic areas in the Borough Council.

Business and Tourism

Covid undoubtedly had an impact on our high streets. Whilst some benefited from more people shopping locally, others continue to suffer and we need a strategy to support the reinvigoration of all our towns, not just the select few.

We are committed to supporting local businesses and also growing the tourism potential across the county. Our unique industrial heritage should be celebrated; we should maximise our beautiful surroundings to attract visitors to the areas as well as creating job opportunities at the same time.

A Plaid Cymru Council would:



Increase local procurement in council-awarded contracts.



Push the Welsh Government to expand the business rate relief scheme, ensuring rate relief for more small and medium size businesses.



Explore the development potential of our industrial heritage including tunnels, e.g. Rhondda and Abernant tunnels, to create unique heritage trails that could become tourism destinations.



Roll out town centre regeneration schemes to those towns that have not yet benefitted from previous schemes.



Improve regeneration support to businesses in smaller communities and villages to encourage local shopping and reduce our carbon footprint.

We are always interested and keen to know the views of residents. Your voices are central to our core values and aspirations for the communities in which we live.

**If you have any comments or questions please contact:
Plaid Cymru RCT, 2 High Street, Pontypridd, CF37 1QJ
PlaidCymruRCT@gmail.com**



