



COUNCIL – 13TH JULY 2021

SUBJECT: DIVERSITY IN DEMOCRACY

**REPORT BY: HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND DEPUTY
MONITORING OFFICER**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Council of the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) Diversity in Democracy Report a copy of which is attached at Appendix 1.
- 1.2 To seek endorsement by Council of the “Diverse Council” declaration in support of the WLGA’s Diversity in Democracy programme.
- 1.3 To note that the Democratic Services Committee will develop and progress an Action plan of activity ahead of the 2022 elections.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 To ask Council to endorse the Diverse Council declaration as set out in paragraph 5.7 of this report and to establish a working group to develop an Action Plan ahead of the 2022 elections.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To note the progress and actions outlined in the WLGA Council report as attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.2 To endorse the Diverse Council declaration and to formally declare that Council will

Provide a clear, public commitment to improving diversity, demonstrate an open and welcoming culture to all, consider staggering council meeting times and agreeing recess periods to support councillors with other commitments and set out an action plan of activity ahead of the 2022 local elections.
- 3.3 To note and agree that the Democratic Services Committee will build on the Council’s commitment and set out an action plan with progress updates being brought back to Council.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To support the WLGA Diversity in Democracy programme.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 By way of background, in 2018 the WLGA agreed to take steps to advance gender equality and diversity in Councils before the 2022 Elections and set up a Cross Party Working Group to explore broader under representation in democracy.
- 5.2 At its meeting on 5th March 2021 the WLGA considered a report on the work of the Cross-Party Working Group and endorsed a number of proposals to achieve a step change at the 2022 Elections. The aim of the ambitious Diversity in Democracy programme is to ensure Council chambers across Wales are more representative of their communities. A copy of the report is attached at Appendix 1.
- 5.3 The report built on the action plans and ambitions of councils and partners and there was unanimous support for concerted and collective action across the family of local government and within political parties, and the WLGA endorsed the following
- (a) To encourage all political parties through the WLGA Political Groups, to commit to proactive and coordinated activities to improve diversity in local government democracy
 - (b) A formal position calling for the introduction of resettlement grants for all councillors and senior salary holders.
 - (c) To encourage all councillors to claim any necessary allowances or expenses incurred.
 - (d) To encourage a declaration by July 2021 from councils in Wales, on becoming Diverse Councils'; to:
Provide a clear, public commitment to improving diversity
Demonstrate an open and welcoming culture to all
Consider staggering council meeting times and agreeing recess periods to support councillors with other commitments and
Set out an action plan of activity ahead of the 2022 local elections.
 - (e) That Councils should set targets to be representative of the communities they serve at the next elections.
 - (f) To support the use of voluntary quotas for Welsh local elections and
 - (g) The WLGA reviews the impact of voluntary quotas following the next local elections.
- 5.6 Members may be aware that the WLGA is already working with Welsh Government and partners on promoting and supporting greater diversity including Be a Councillor website, mentoring programme, a commitment to Civility in Public Life campaign and a wide package of training, development and support for Councillors when elected. The Welsh Government has also recently launched the Access to Elected Office Fund to support disabled people to stand for elected office.
- 5.7 In light of paragraph 5.3 (d) above Council is asked to formally declare that it will

Provide a clear, public commitment to improving diversity, demonstrate an open and welcoming culture to all, consider staggering council meeting times and agreeing recess periods to support councillors with other commitments and set out an action plan of activity ahead of the 2022 local elections.

- 5.8 In order to develop the commitment and to set out an Action plan it is proposed that Democratic Services Committee would be the most appropriate vehicle to develop this piece of work and to report its progress back to Council.

5.9 **Conclusion**

Council is asked to consider the background information contained in the report to the WLGA and to endorse the recommendations set out in paragraph 3 of this report

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 There are no assumptions contained in this report as the content is based on the report to the Welsh Local Government Association and the recommendation relating to Diverse Councils.

7. **SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 There is no requirement for an integrated impact assessment at this time as Council is being asked to support a commitment to be a Diverse Council. Where appropriate an Integrated Impact Assessment will be developed. However, the support of diversity in democracy will assist the Council in discharging its duties and responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are currently no financial implications but should there be any workstreams identified going forward any financial implications will be identified in subsequent reports.

9. **PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The work to develop the action plan and any ancillary work will be supported by the Head of Democratic Services and any other officers with relevant expertise.

10. **CONSULTATIONS**

- 10.1 The views of the consultees listed below have been sought and the responses received incorporated within the report.

11. **STATUTORY POWER**

- 11.1 Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011
Local Government and Elections Wales Act 2021

Author: Lisa Lane Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer

Consultees: Cllr Philippa Marsden Leader
Cllr Colin Mann Leader Plaid Cymru
Cllr Kevin Etheridge Leader Independent Group
Cllr Martyn James Chair Democratic Services Committee
Dave Street Corporate Director Social Services and Housing
Richard (Ed) Edmunds Corporate Director Education & Corporate Services
Mark S Williams Corporate Director Economy and Environment
Robert Tranter Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Stephen Harris Head of Financial Services/Section 151 Officer
Dave Roberts Interim Finance Manager
Emma Sullivan Senior Committee Services Officer
Cath Forbes Thompson Scrutiny Manager
Anwen Cullinane Senior Equalities Officer (Equalities, Welsh Language Policy and Central Services)

Appendices:

Appendix 1 WLGA report Diversity in Democracy 5th March 2021