



Report of the Head of Democratic Services

Council – 2 December 2021

Diversity in Democracy – Action Plan

Purpose:	To set out an Action Plan setting out how the Council can support the Diversity in Democracy Programme. The Diversity in Democracy - Action Plan was considered by the Democratic Services Committee on 8 November 2021 and recommended to Council for adoption.
Policy Framework:	Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024. Equality Act 2010. Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.
Consultation:	Access to Services, Finance, Legal, Democratic Services Committee.
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that: 1) The Diversity in Democracy Action Plan be adopted.
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) supported a Welsh Government led Diversity in Democracy programme ahead of the 2017 elections. However although the Diversity in Democracy Programme was the biggest and most resourced programme of its kind data shows that there remains a significant lack of diversity in Welsh Councils.
- 1.2 The WLGA Council agreed in September 2018 to take steps to advance gender equality and diversity in Councils before the 2022 elections. This was in recognition of the lack of diversity in Welsh Councils. A cross party working group was set up to explore broader under-representation in

democracy. Part of the remit of the working group was to consider what activities councils and the WLGA could do to improve diversity in democracy and the role of the Welsh Government and political parties.

1.3 In addition to the Working Group the Minister for Housing and Local Government convened a stakeholder roundtable of regional stakeholder events. Key messages were:

- There was a general lack of awareness of the role and contribution made by councillors.
- Social media abuse directed at councillors is getting worse and is predominately directed at female / family members.
- Training and development for councillors was fundamental
- Time commitment was a barrier for many.
- A recurring theme was the provision of costs to those standing for election particularly disabled candidates or those with a protected characteristic.
- There was confusion about whether and what councillors are paid and on what basis and whether remuneration paid covers the costs associated with the role.

1.4 The findings of the working group and the stakeholder engagements was reported to the WLGA Committee on 5 March 2021 where it was widely acknowledged that representational equality results in better decision making and policy development when people with lived experience of issues are making the decisions.

1.5 It also identified that the 'right person for the job' of councillor needs to be a member of the community they serve in order to fully and consistently understand the lives and needs of that community. Councils also need to demonstrate to under-represented communities that they are valued and included in local democracy.

2. Council Resolution – 29 July 2021

2.1 Council at its meeting on 29 July 2021 considered its initial report on Diversity in Democracy. The resolution of Council being:

- "1) *This Council commits to becoming a Diverse Council to:*
- i. Provide a clear, public commitment to improving diversity;*
 - ii. Demonstrate an open and welcoming culture to all;*
 - iii. Consider staggering council meeting times and agreeing recess periods to support councillors with other commitments; and*
 - iv. Set out an action plan of activity ahead of the 2022 local elections.*
- 2) *The Democratic Services Committee be tasked with undertaking a review of the Diversity in Democracy Programme.*
- 3) *A report be brought back to Council with an Action Plan setting out how the Council can support the Diversity in Democracy Programme."*

3. Diversity in Democracy Action Plan

- 3.1 A Draft Diversity in Democracy Action Plan is set out in **Appendix A**. The objectives within the Action Plan are based on those suggested by the Welsh Government. However, others can be added if so desired.
- 3.2 The Democratic Services Committee held on 8 November 2021 considered the report and recommended its adoption by Council.

4. Equality Act 2021 – The 9 Protected Characteristics

- 4.1 There are 9 Protected Characteristics within the Equality Act 2010. They are:

Age	Race
Disability	Religion or Belief
Gender Reassignment	Sex
Marriage & Civil Partnership	Sexual Orientation
Pregnancy & Maternity	-

5. Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

- 5.1 The above legislation includes a number of provisions promoting diversity in local government including:
- An entitlement to Job sharing for executive members and committee chairs.
 - A duty on principal councils to produce a Public Participation Strategy encouraging people to participate in decision making and promoting awareness of how to become a member of the council.
 - A duty on political group leaders to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members of their group.
 - Electronic broadcasting of full Council meetings.
 - The ability to have multi-location attendance at council meetings including physical, hybrid and remote attendance.
 - Provisions enabling the maximum period of absence for each type of family absence for members of local authorities to be specified within regulations and for adoptive leave to reflect that which is available to employees.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report at this stage. The WLGA Diversity in Democracy Programme does include considerations around resettlement grants for senior salary holders which will have financial implications.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report at this stage.

8. Integrated Assessment Implications

- 8.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
 - Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
 - Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
 - Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- 8.2 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2005 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.
- 8.3 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.
- 8.4 An IIA screening has been undertaken and no adverse implications have been noted. This report sets out a Diversity in Democracy Action Plan. The Committee / Council is being asked to support this work which will have a positive impact on the community as a whole in ensuring that Councillors represent the diverse electorate and work towards the wider agenda of achieving diversity in democracy.

Background Papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix A – Diversity in Democracy Action Plan.

**Swansea Council
Diversity In Democracy Action Plan**

	Objective	Actions / Ways Forward	Time Frame	Responsible
1	Increase understanding of different tiers of government in Wales, the role each plays in society and how they operate.	1 Distribution of Welsh Government educational resources to accompany the extension of the franchise to 16 and 17 year olds in Wales. Liaise with Children's Rights Forum.	Resources have been developed by WG and have been distributed to schools	Head of Democratic Services / Electoral Services Team Leader / Director of Education
2 Promote Welsh Government's Guidance / materials for 16 and 17 year olds regarding Democracy in Wales. Explore Web-based platforms.		Autumn 2021	Head of Democratic Services / Electoral Services Team Leader	
3 Overview of the Council website page www.swansea.gov.uk/councillors that includes the 'Becoming a Councillor' page to be reviewed and promoted.		Autumn 2021	Head of Democratic Services	
4 Communication. Undertake a comprehensive communications campaign with general and targeted messaging. Explore potential avenues such as school forums / youth councils / career fairs / Outside Organisations, etc. Continue to engage with schools (subject to pandemic), including links with school councils and youth councils.		Autumn 2021	Head of Communications, Equalities Team, Partnership & Involvement Team, Education	

		We will specifically target Women, BAME, Disabled, LGBTQ+ & Young People.		
		5 Work with key stakeholders and representative organisations to ensure qualifying citizens are aware of their right to vote in certain elections and their right to stand as a Candidate in certain elections.	Autumn 2021	Electoral Services Team Leader
2	Increase engagement with the public to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness of the role and activities of the Council provide clarity about how the public can better inform local decision making. • Build greater community cohesion through a greater presence at community events. 	1 Publication of the Council Constitution and Council Constitution Guide as per the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. The Council Constitution is available at www.swansea.gov.uk/constitution	January – February 2022	Monitoring Officer / Head of Democratic Services
		2 Develop Public Participation Strategy Scheme for compliance with duty under the 2021 Act.	January 2022	Deputy Chief Executive
		3 To continue to webcast meetings as specified under the 2021 Act. Promote the www.swansea.gov.uk/meetingsonline page and www.swansea.gov.uk/democracy page to improve public awareness.	January 2022	Head of Democratic Services

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating and building upon community networks. 	<p>4 Encourage each Political Group to create a Diversity Spokesperson / Lead.</p> <p>These Diversity Leads would seek to ensure that Councillors from under-represented groups are represented whenever possible in high profile, high influence roles.</p> <p>The Diversity Leads would also demonstrate an open and welcoming culture to all, promoting the highest standards of behaviour and conduct within their Political Groups.</p> <p>These Diversity Leads to be named on the www.swansea.gov.uk/councillors page.</p>	December 2021	Political Group Leader / Head of Democratic Services
3	Increase awareness of the role of Councillors, the contribution they make to society and how to become a Councillor	<p>1 Overview of the Council website page www.swansea.gov.uk/councillors that includes the 'Becoming a Councillor' page to be reviewed and promoted.</p>	Autumn 2021	Head of Democratic Services / Head of Communications
		<p>2 Work with Community / Town Councils to ensure they link with Swansea Council's 'Becoming a Councillor page' or create their own and that the page is promoted. https://www.swansea.gov.uk/becomeacouncillor</p>	November 2021 – January 2022	Head of Democratic Services
		<p>3 Encouraging people to participate in decision-making and promoting awareness of how to become a Councillor. This could be a video presented by Councillors to include:</p>	January 2022	Head of Communications / Head of Democratic Services

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What being a Councillor entails. • Salary & Allowances • Promoting / facilitating processes. • The Training available to Councillors. <p>Link to any training / informative materials available with the WLGA, WG etc.</p>		
		4 Work with the WLGA to raise awareness among public sector organisations of the benefits of employees undertaking civic duties.	Ongoing	Leader of the Council / Political Group Leaders / Corporate Management Team
		5 Seek the participation of Political Group Leaders to champion the diversity expectations within the selection processes of their Political Parties. To encourage Political Group Leaders to promote the advice available to future candidates or individuals considering standing for office at the earliest opportunity.	October 2021	Chief Executive / Head of Democratic Services
		6 Encourage Councillors to utilise their own Social Media platforms to promote the role of a Councillor through Councillor blogs / 'day in the life of'.	December 2021	Head of Democratic Services
4	Greater respect & support for those standing for and	1 Promote duty on Political Group Leaders to promote high standards of conduct.	December 2021	Political Group Leaders / Monitoring Officer

	securing elected office in Wales	<p>2 All Councillors & Co-opted Members required to have mandatory Code of Conduct Training. Refresher at least once during a term of office and also if the Code is amended.</p> <p>Standards Committee to monitor compliance in relation to standards of conduct and provide training.</p>	Summer 2022	Monitoring Officer / Head of Democratic Services
		<p>3 Support the Welsh Government's plans to introduce an Access to Elected Office fund to assist disabled people to stand for elected office at the 2022 Local Elections.</p>	Once available	Political Group Leaders / Head of Democratic Services
5	Comprehensive training and awareness programme available through a variety of routes available for Councillors to support them in their role as Councillors.	<p>1 Review the Councillor Training & Development Programme. The programme must use e-Learning and recorded training events placed online. Make use of the All Wales Training Materials for Councillors led by the WLGA.</p>	December 2022	Head of Democratic Services / Democratic Services Committee HR Training Officer
		<p>2 Working closely with other Local Authorities to run joint Councillor Training Events.</p>	Ongoing	Head of Democratic Services
		<p>3 Review areas of staff training and development courses, which can be made available for Councillors.</p>	Ongoing	HR Manager
		<p>4 Councillor Induction & Training Programme 2022.</p>	November – December 2021	Head of Democratic Services / Democratic Services Committee

		<p>5 Encourage returning Councillors to provide mentoring / shadowing for first time Councillors and those that request it.</p> <p>This is in addition to the Signposting and Support provided by the Head of Democratic Services and the Democratic Services Team.</p>	May 2022 onwards for the 5 year term of office	Head of Democratic Services / Political Group Leaders
		<p>6 Encourage Political Group Leaders to undertake Personal Development Reviews for Councillors. The Head of Democratic Services will assist as required.</p>	May 2022 onwards for the 5 year term of office	Political Group Leaders
		<p>7 Promoting the WLGA's online "Councillor Guide" for the 2022 elections and the suite of National e-Learning modules specifically developed for Councillors which are available via the NHS Learning Wales website. https://learning.wales.nhs.uk</p>	April 2022. Include in the Candidates Pack	Head of Democratic Services
6	Improve the safety of Councillors and their families when undertaking their Council duties	<p>1 Comply with the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 by ensuring that personal addresses are not used on Ballot Papers.</p>	March 2022	Electoral Services Team Leader
		<p>2 Comply with the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 by ensuring that official addresses are published on Council website and in the Register of Interest rather</p>	March 2022	Monitoring Officer / Head of Democratic Services

		than the personal addresses of Councillors. (Where requested).		
		3 Encourage Councillors to undertake Health & Safety training, Lone Working training to ensure their safety during elections and when they are elected. Promote the Lone Working Policy and guidance.	December 2021	HR Manager
		4 All Councillors to have identity cards to allow secure access to Council buildings (Guildhall & Civic Centre).	In place.	Facilities Management
		5 Social Media Safety training to be delivered to members through the Councillor Induction & Training Programme and built upon during their term of office.	May-September 2022	Head of Communications
		6 Promote the WLGA's advice and support service to individual Councillors who receive online abuse.	December 2022	Head of Democratic Services
7	Maximise opportunities for individuals to work in ways that enable them to achieve a work / life balance which protects their welfare and wellbeing and allows them to manage any caring / dependency relationships.	1 Introduction of a Multi-Location Meetings Policy encouraging remote and physical attendance at meetings.	January 2022	Chief Legal Officer / Head of Democratic Services
		2 Comply with all WG Legislation / Guidance in relation to the promote job-sharing by Executive Leaders and other Office holders.	May 2022	Chief Legal Officer / Head of Democratic Services

		3 Promote Family Absence provisions for Councillors.	January 2022	Chief Legal Officer / Head of Democratic Services
		4 Promote the Allowances & other remunerations that are available to Councillors and inform candidates standing for Election by linking with the www.swansea.gov.uk/councillors page.	January 2022	Head of Democratic Services
		5 Promote the IRPW “Contribution Towards Costs of Care and Personal Assistance”.	January 2022	Head of Democratic Services
		6 Encourage all Councillors to claim any necessary allowances or expenses incurred. Failure to claim by Councillors often leads to those in need of the allowances not claiming. It is essential that Councillors receive fair remuneration for their work and that the role of Councillor is not limited to those that can afford it.	January 2022	Head of Democratic Services

		7 Review Council, Cabinet & Committee meeting times to ensure flexibility to suit Committee Members.	Completed. In accordance with the 2011 Measure this must be undertaken at least once per term of office.	Head of Democratic Services.
8	Assess the effectiveness of the provisions in 2011 Measure in relation to data collection, and in relation to other candidate data that could be collected in order for Political Parties to support diverse candidates at elections	1 Provide all relevant data to the Welsh Government or relevant requesting bodies post-election, to enable them to produce their survey report on diversity and lessons learned.	Summer 2022	Electoral Services Team Leader
		2 Undertake a post-election Councillors Diversity & Inclusion survey. The survey aiming to understand any barriers or additional support required for candidates. The survey feedback will help to deliver a positive and diverse environment for future Councillors.	Summer 2022	Equalities Team / Head of Democratic Services