

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Date of Meeting	Thursday, 22 July 2021
Report Subject	Declaration of Diversity in Democracy
Report Author	Chief Officer (Governance)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) is planning for next year's Council elections. In so doing, they have committed to making a step change in local government diversity. The WLGA Council endorsed their Diversity in Democracy report at a special meeting in April.

Each of the twenty two principal council in Wales is now being asked to make a Diversity in Democracy Declaration.

Recognising the importance of this issue, it is appropriate to make a Flintshire Diversity in Democracy Declaration. Thereafter, the detailed work in producing the action plan would be undertaken by the Constitution & Democratic Services Committee.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Council recognises the importance of diversity in democracy, and commits to developing an action plan to improve diversity
2	That the detailed work creating the Flintshire Diversity in Democracy Action Plan be undertaken by the Constitution & Democratic Services Committee.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE NEED FOR THE DIVERSITY IN DEMOCRACY DECLARATION.
1.01	<p>The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) is planning for next year's local government elections. One of the key messages of the WLGA's Leadership Academy is that 'you need to be ordinary enough to be a councillor, but also extraordinary enough to be a councillor'. In the attached letter, the WLGA's political group leaders have all recognised that: <i>There is no doubt that councillors have been extraordinary during the past twelve months of the coronavirus pandemic. But to be 'ordinary', councillors also need to be like the people they represent and reflect the diversity of the communities they serve. Despite previous action and campaigns, progress has been slow and we all recognise there remains a lack of diversity in our councils.</i></p>
1.02	<p>We know that Councillors are drawn from a wide range of groups within Welsh society, but there is a need for that representation to be wider. The WLGA recognises that there is a need to widen representation so that there are more women, young people, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people, disabled and LGBTQ+ candidates standing in 2022. Using our own Council as an example, we currently have 18 female councillors out of 70. We are not unique in having such an imbalance of representation.</p>
1.03	<p>The WLGA has committed to making a step change in local government diversity. The WLGA Council endorsed their Diversity in Democracy report at a special meeting in April. The report is the culmination of the work of a cross-party working group and builds on the action plans and ambitions of councils and partners.</p>
1.04	<p>The WLGA's political group leaders have given an undertaking to make representations to their respective political parties to 'take action and make progresses. They are also making the case to the Welsh Government and the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales that councillors should be entitled to 'resettlement grants' (effectively redundancy payments) should they lose their seat at an election.</p>
1.05	<p>Members' salaries can and should play a critical role in encouraging greater diversity; some councillors can be disproportionately affected if they are on low incomes or have caring responsibilities. There is anecdotal evidence that some councillors are reluctant to claim their full entitlements to allowances, such as reimbursements of costs of care or travel, due to peer or public pressure, or their own perceptions thereof. The WLGA Council therefore unanimously agreed the need to foster a culture where all councillors are encouraged and supported to claim any necessary allowances or expenses to which they are entitled.</p>

1.06	<p>Each council is being invited to make their own Diversity in Democracy Declaration ahead of next year's elections. It is suggested by WLGA that this should include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
1.07	<p>Recognising the importance of this issue, it is appropriate to make a Flintshire Diversity in Democracy Declaration. Thereafter, the detailed work in producing an action plan would be carried out by the Constitution & Democratic Services Committee</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
-------------	------------------------------

2.01	None at this stage
------	--------------------

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
-------------	---

3.01	None
------	------

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
-------------	------------------------

4.01	As this will be a strategic issue, it will be necessary to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment in due course
------	--

5.00	APPENDICES
-------------	-------------------

5.01	Letter from WLGA attached
------	---------------------------

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
-------------	--

6.01	<p>None, other than the attached.</p> <p>Contact Officer: Robert Robins, Head of Democratic Services Telephone: 01352 702320 E-mail: robert.robins@flintshire.gov.uk</p>
------	--

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
-------------	--------------------------

7.01	None
------	------