

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

19 FEBRUARY 2015

**REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE LEGAL & REGULATORY
SERVICES**

DEMOCRATIC DIVERSITY

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Democratic Services Committee of the action plan being developed to take forward the diversification of democracy initiated by the Welsh Government's Expert Group on Local Government and Diversity and set out in *On Balance: Diversifying Democracy in Local Government in Wales*.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 Working with the Head of Democratic Services and the Equalities and Engagement Officers will assist the Diversity Champion in the achievement of all priorities identified within the Corporate Plan and Strategic Equality Plan and enhance the representation of under-represented groups within the County Borough.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 introduced the requirement for a survey of candidates to be undertaken. The survey was carried out by Local Authorities following the Local Government Elections in 2012. The results were circulated to the Welsh Government for consideration by the Expert Group on Local Government Diversity.
- 3.2 The Expert Group analysed a survey of local councillors in Wales and set out a plan of action to encourage a greater diversity of candidates to stand for local office in 2017. On 5th March 2014 the group published its report entitled "On Balance: Diversifying Democracy in Local Government in Wales". The report outlined the actions required to increase the diversity of local councillors in Wales in respect of age, gender, disability and ethnicity.
- 3.3 On 27 May 2014 Cabinet appointed Councillor H J Townsend as the Diversity Champion. Councillor Townsend has met with Welsh Government representatives and other Diversity Champions to discuss plans for progressing the aims of the "On Balance" report.
- 3.4 On 16 October 2014 the Cabinet Committee – Equalities received a report providing an outline of the action plan developed in order to meet the intention to improve the diversity of local councillors in Wales.

4. Current situation / proposal.

- 4.1 The “On Balance” report identified a number of recommendations for a variety of bodies including the Welsh Government, political parties, One Voice Wales and Local Authorities. The intention is to ensure that the people who make decisions on our behalf are in tune with their local communities and reasonably reflect the diversity of the people that they represent. A full list of the Expert Panel recommendations can be seen at **Appendix 1**.
- 4.2 There are several recommendations that are likely to require involvement of local Authorities and Elected Members in particular. These include:
- The Welsh Government, local government, the WLGA and One Voice Wales to explain the purpose of the survey and its importance. This should include a highlight report from the first survey so that recipients of the questionnaire can better appreciate its purpose.
 - Local Authorities should be required to examine the data for their own area and develop strategies aimed at improving diversity at future elections.
 - Every councillor should be encouraged to mentor a potential successor candidate for their seat.
 - Local Authorities should conduct exit interviews with councillors standing down at an election, to assess the reasons for doing so. The WLGA should collect anonymised data and publish a report after each.
 - Local Authorities should encourage secondary schools, as part of the “Active Citizenship” goal in the Personal and Social Education Framework, to arrange for local councillors to speak to school students about their role. Councillors from under-represented groups should be encouraged to participate in this.
 - Local Authorities which do not already broadcast their meetings should commence doing so, as well as making full use of other social media outlets to engage with a wider public.
- 4.3 Discussions have been held with the Head of Democratic Services and the Equalities and Engagement Officer to determine possible courses of action which could facilitate these aims.
- 4.4 An initial action plan has been developed and is shown at **Appendix 2**. Key actions will include:
- the collection and analysis of current diversity information
 - the recruitment of suitable Elected Member mentors
 - identifying appropriate mentees to shadow elected members
 - identifying members to participate in secondary school briefings
- 4.5 Further work will be undertaken to develop the action plan and the Diversity Strategy to meet the requirements of the “On Balance” report and improve the Democratic Diversity within the County Borough.

4.7 It is anticipated that a Democratic Diversity event will be held in October 2015 as part of Local Democracy Week to showcase the work that has been undertaken and promote the Diversity Strategy.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules

5.1 The report has no direct effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 No Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out as this report provides the Committee with information that will positively assist in delivering equality across the County Borough.

7. Financial Implications.

7.1 The Authority has not received any funding from the Welsh Government to progress the recommendations of the "On Balance" report, and is currently doing so within existing budgets. Following consideration of this report and confirmation of the proposed plans, more detailed costings will be drawn up and a request for additional funding will be made to the Welsh Government. Should no additional funding be forthcoming from Welsh Government, the action plan will be reviewed in order to progress the aims of the "On Balance" report within available funding.

8. Recommendation.

8.1 That the Democratic Services Committee notes the content of this report.

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Background documents

None were used in the production of this report

EXPERT GROUP'S ACTION PLAN AND TIMETABLE

Recommendation	Timing
1. The Welsh Government, local government, the WLGA and One Voice Wales to explain the purpose of the survey and its importance. This should include a highlight report from the first survey so that recipients of the questionnaire can better appreciate its purpose.	Material to be produced in time for distribution with the survey for candidates at the 2017 elections.
2. The Welsh Government should ensure that the next survey questionnaire can be completed and returned on-line.	Design and administrative work will need to be completed before 2017 elections.
3. The surveys of candidates at county and community levels should be separated and conducted as two distinct surveys.	As above
4. The Welsh Government should establish a methodology which allows the survey questionnaires to be distributed at the time of handling nomination papers.	Will need to be addressed during 2015/16 to give time for agreement with electoral administrators and possibly amend Measure provisions.
5. The Welsh Government should agree with local government that a single research provider be employed to conduct the survey on behalf of local authorities at the next elections.	To be agreed at least one year before the next elections.
6. The Welsh Government should compare the question list with those used for surveys of councillors in other parts of the UK and should amend to bring about better comparability.	To be completed in 2015 in case of need to amend Measure.
7. The Welsh Government should commission research to enhance the next survey aimed at obtaining qualitative data from a sample of respondents as well as interviewing a sample of potential candidates who had subsequently decided not to stand.	Decision required by May 2016 in order for procurement exercise to take place.
8. Local authorities should be required to examine the data for their own area and develop strategies aimed at improving diversity at future elections.	Can proceed immediately and again after each election
9. Local authorities should conduct exit interviews with councillors standing down at an election, to assess the reasons for doing so. The WLGA should collect anonymised data and publish a report after each	To be conducted in 2016/17 once decisions on candidacy had been made. Report produced in

Recommendation	Timing
	2017
10. Political parties and local government itself should encourage successful female councillors to act as mentors, engaging with appropriate local networks.	Can be implemented immediately.
11. Each of the major political parties should be encouraged to develop strategies which will result at the next local elections in female members being nominated as candidates in at least 40% of those seats considered winnable by the party concerned.	To be implemented in good time for the commencement of candidate selection for 2017.
12. Leaders of the main political parties should make a public commitment in favour of this target.	To be considered within their responses to the Report.
13. The Welsh Government should collaborate with the WLGA, equalities groups and, if appropriate, the Assembly's Presiding Officer, to establish a shadowing/mentoring scheme in the period two years prior to the next local elections. This could be widened to include town and community councils, in cooperation with One Voice Wales.	Programme would operate in 2015 and 2016. Preparatory
14. Local authorities should encourage secondary schools, as part of the "Active Citizenship" goal in the Personal and Social Education Framework, to arrange for local councillors to speak to school students about their role. Councillors from under-represented groups should be encouraged to participate in this.	To be agreed at each local authority area
15. Community councils should take advantage of the provisions in the Measure to co-opt youth "councillors" in a non-voting role and county councils should consider the merits of adopting similar procedures, including the creation of "shadow" Youth Cabinets. There should be a campaign involving One Voice Wales and other interested parties to promote town and community councils to increase public awareness of their role and as a potential entry road into political life for under-represented groups.	Should be ongoing campaign following publication of Report.
16. Welsh Government should consider the evaluation of the Access to Elected Office project operated in English elections and consider operating a similar scheme for the next local elections.	To follow publication of evaluation by UK Government Equalities Office. Scheme would need to be put in place at least a year before elections.

Recommendation	Timing
17. “Member Champions” in each council should be encouraged to play an external role in encouraging greater participation in local government.	For each local authority to pursue following publication of report.
18. Every councillor should be encouraged to mentor a potential successor candidate for their seat.	For each local authority to pursue following publication of report.
19. Publicity and educational campaign, involving Welsh Government, local government and relevant equalities and civic partners, to ensure that information is received by the public about local government and that the idea of becoming active in local government is carried into the community	Campaign to focus on 2015/16, in order to arouse interest for 2017 elections.
20. On-going campaign, linked to 18 above, to ensure that the need to improve diversity in local government remains in the public eye and to maintain contact with networks of under-represented groups. This should include publicity for role models, targeted to reach appropriate audiences.	To commence in second half 2014 and be ongoing.
21. This campaign should also include approaches to employers to facilitate council membership by their employees. Public sector employers, including the Welsh Government, should become exemplars in facilitating their employees becoming and serving as councillors.	Ongoing campaign to commence in second half of 2014.
22. Private sector organisations, particularly those benefitting from Welsh Government procurement, should be encouraged to support staff wishing to serve as councillors, as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility programmes. The CBI should be asked to support this aim.	As above.
23. Local authorities which do not already broadcast their meetings should commence doing so, as well as making full use of other social media outlets to engage with a wider public.	For each local authority to to consider following publication of Report.
24. Welsh Government should evaluate the effectiveness of reforms introduced through the Measure to see how effective they have been in achieving the aims of the Expert Panel.	Evaluation of Measure to be conducted during 2014/15

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL DEMOCRATIC DIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

	<i>Action</i>	<i>Target Date</i>	<i>HDS</i>	<i>CC-E</i>	<i>DC</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Notes</i>
	Diversity Report to Cabinet Committee Equalities covering						
	Initial Plans for recruiting/training Diversity Member Mentors Initial Plans for the recruitment of Diversity Mentees “Be a councillor event(s)” delivered in the community Initial Plans for to encourage TCC’s to co-opt young people with non-voting rights Initial plans for Democracy briefings by 3 councillors to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen • Porthcawl Comprehensive School • Pencoed Comprehensive School • Brynteg Comprehensive School • Bryntirion Comprehensive School • Cynffig Comprehensive School • Maesteg Comprehensive School • YGG Llangynwyd • Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School • Bridgend College Initial Plans for Local Democracy Week Event (12-16 October 2015 tbc)	16 Oct 14					Completed 16 Oct 2014
1.0	Gather appropriate Local Diversity Data						
1.1	Gather/Collate Democratic Diversity data from	31 Mar 15					Bridgend data is available on

	Action	Target Date	HDS	CC-E	DC	Status	Notes
	BCBC/TCC/Population in respect of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age • Gender • Ethnicity • Disability • Sexuality • Other 						the Bridgend Local Service Board website (http://www.bridgendlsb.org.uk/bridgend-data-bank/ward-profiles.aspx) Further work needs to be undertaken to determine how this data compares with the make-up of all Councils within the Bridgend County Borough area. TCC Champions to assist
1.2	Liaison with Political groups regarding plans and to gain support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour • Independent Alliance • Independent Annibynwr • Plaid Cymru 	30 Jan 15					Ongoing discussions
1.3	Identify Member Champions for diversity from each Town and Community Council	14 Mar 15					Recommendation 17
1.4	Analyse survey data and develop appropriate strategies	01 May 15					Recommendation 8
1.5	Develop the process for Exit interviews at BCBC/TCC levels	01 May 15					Recommendation 9 HDS to contact WLGA for sample Exit interview
1.6	Develop a Diversity Strategy	30 Jun 15					Consult with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CMB

	Action	Target Date	HDS	CC-E	DC	Status	Notes
							<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minority Groups • Political Parties/Groups • Feedback to Diversity Champions/WG/WLGA • Report to Council Sep 2015 • Launch at Local Democracy Week 2015
2.0	Assist in developing the WG Diversity Survey						
2.1	Assist in the promotion for the County Borough Councillor Survey						Recommendation 1 As directed by WG/WLGA
2.2	Assist in the promotion for the Town & Community Councillor survey						Recommendation 1 As directed by WG/WLGA
2.3	Assist in the procurement of a single source survey provider						Recommendation 1 As directed by WG/WLGA
3.0	Every councillor should be encouraged to mentor a potential successor candidate for their seat.						Recommendation 18
3.1	Recruit Diversity Member Mentors	30 Jan 15					
3.2	Consider existing Member Mentors	30 Jan 15					
3.3	WLGA to provide training	31 Mar 15					
3.4	Recruit Diversity Mentees						
3.41	Visit to key minority groups including Muslim Community Deaf Pact Group Women's Groups CF/BLG Diversity Champions re Youth Council;s						

	Action	Target Date	HDS	CC-E	DC	Status	Notes
3.42	Facebook campaign						
3.43	Twitter campaign						
3.5	“Be a Councillor” event in the community						
3.5.1	Identify dates and Venues						Subject to confirmation of Budget and resources
3.5.2	Develop relevant content/materials						
3.5.3	Develop outline training plans for mentees						
3.5.4	Deliver events and suitable information / materiel						
4.0	Active Democracy briefings to schools						Recommendation 14
4.1	Identify 3 Members to deliver briefings						
4.2	WG/WLGA to provide briefing materiel						
4.3	WG/WLGA to deliver training to Members						
4.4	Deliver plans to visit schools	01 Apr 15					
4.5	Rehearse Briefings for schools						
4.6	Deliver briefing to secondary schools	01 Apr 15					
5.0	Initial Plans for to encourage TCC’s to co-opt young people with non-voting rights						Recommendation 15
5.1	Liaise with Youth Council	31 Jan 15					
5.2	Draft Report to TCC Forum	30 Mar 15					
5.3	Letters to each TCC requesting support	20 Feb 15					
5.4	Confirm process for appointment of young people co-optees	20 Mar 15					
5.5	Provide briefings to TCCs	30 Mar 15					

	<i>Action</i>	<i>Target Date</i>	<i>HDS</i>	<i>CC-E</i>	<i>DC</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Notes</i>
6.0	Webcasting of Council meetings						Recommendation 15
	Upgrade Council Chamber	31 Dec 14					Completed 11 Nov 2014
	Procure webcasting facilities	01 Mar 15					
	Implement webcasting	31 Mar 15					
7.0	Local Democracy Week event 2015	12-16 Oct15					