

**Council:**

**27 January 2022**

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## **REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

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### **DIVERSE COUNCIL DECLARATION**

#### **Reason for this Report**

1. To consider the request from the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) Council for all Councils in Wales to commit to become a Diverse Council in 2022.

#### **Background**

2. Achieving a more representative Council is essential for ensuring quality policy development and decision making. Improving the representation of minority groups and those with protected characteristics, in particular, will help the Council to deliver responsive public services and shape our place-making to better reflect the needs of our diverse communities now, and for future generations.
3. As Wales' capital city, Cardiff has a particular responsibility to deliver on this important issue. In recent years, Cardiff Council has completed outreach and engagement through activities such as mentoring schemes and information days which seek to reach new audiences and encourage wider participation within underrepresented groups, such as Cardiff's ethnic minority communities.
4. This work has been supplemented by a programme of internal support for serving councillors, to ensure that they receive appropriate guidance, development opportunities and better working conditions, recognising that many councillors will balance their elected role alongside other employment or study. The Council has also worked to implement best practice in supporting elected members who experience abuse and harassment, following the guidelines and principles set by the Welsh Local Government Association.
5. At a special meeting of the Welsh Local Government Association Council in April 2021, a report entitled Diversity in Democracy was considered and has been attached as **Appendix A**. This was a culmination of the work of a WLGA cross-party working group which built on the action plans and ambitions of councils and partners.
6. A report relating to the Diverse Councils was considered by the Democratic Services Committee at its meeting on 19 July 2021. The Committee report identified that the

Council already has the ability to meet some of the proposed requirements of the Welsh Local Government Association draft declaration including:

- a. **Demonstrate a commitment to a duty of care for Councillors by providing access to counselling services for all councillors**
- b. **Demonstrate a commitment to a duty of care for Councillors by having regard for the safety and wellbeing of councillors whenever they are performing their role as councillors.**

7. Some of the intentions of the Welsh Local Government Association Council in its letter and report fell within the remit of the Democratic Services Committee and the support provided by the Democratic Services Team. Some of the activities that the Committee is developing could be mapped to support these intentions and could include:

- a. Assisting in **“Providing a clear public commitment to improving diversity in democracy”** by:
  - Working in partnership with Carmarthenshire Council, Welsh Government and Welsh Local Government Association to provide a series of awareness videos to promote Local Democracy across Wales
- b. Working with councillors and candidates to **“Ensure that all members and candidates complete the Welsh Government candidates’ and councillors’ survey distributed at election time”** by the promotion of these important surveys by Electoral and Democratic Services.
- c. Supporting the opportunity to **“Set ambitious targets for candidates from under-represented groups at the 2022 local elections”** by identifying the demographic profile of existing Councillors. This data could then be used as a benchmark for any target setting.
- d. **“Work towards the standards for member support and Development set out in the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development”**

8. Many of the intentions contained within the Welsh Local Government Association Council letter and report are not within the remit of the Democratic Services Committee and therefore it would be for Council and the political groups who are currently or hoping to be represented on the Council in the future, to consider how they could support Cardiff to become a Diverse Council. Initial consideration of the WLGA report the Committee identified some of the individuals, committees and political bodies which may have a role within their scope of responsibility to undertake activities and actions to support any commitment made by Cardiff Council:

- a. Political Group Leaders and Whips
- b. Chair of the Constitution Committee
- c. Chair of the Standards and Ethics Committee
- d. Chair of the Race Equalities Task Group
- e. Chief Executive / Returning Officer

- f. Monitoring Officer
- g. Head of Democratic Services
- h. Cohesion and Community Engagement Manager

## Issues

9. The Welsh Local Government Association has committed to making a step change in local government diversity from 2022. The Welsh Local Government Association Council endorsed the Diversity in Democracy report considered at a special meeting of the Welsh Local Government Association Council meeting in April 2021.
10. The Welsh Local Government Association Council unanimously agreed that all Councils should commit to a declaration on becoming 'Diverse Councils' in 2022, to provide a clear, public commitment to improving diversity.
11. The report included an 'outline' Declaration 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.
12. A letter attached at **Appendix B** was sent from the Welsh Local Government Association to all Group Leaders, Chairs of Councils, Chairs of Democratic Services Committees, Chief Executives and Heads of Democratic Services. The letter requests that all Councils in Wales should commit to a declaration by July 2021 to become a 'Diverse Council' in 2022, to provide a clear, public commitment to improving diversity. The letter refers to the outline Declaration included within the Welsh Local Government Association report. However, it notes that Councils may wish to undertake further action or commitments within their Declarations according to local priorities.
13. In preparation for future Local Government elections, it is proposed that Cardiff Council develops a comprehensive action plan to build upon our progress to date and set an ambitious standard for future years. This will include making visible a Wales-wide communications campaign to encourage people from underrepresented groups to vote, engage with local democracy and stand for office. The Council will also partner with an all-Wales national mentoring programme, collaborating with the Womens' Equality Network Wales, Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team (EYST) Wales, Stonewall Cymru and Disability Wales, to provide a pipeline of mentors and mentees.
14. Our programme of work would also include working with the Welsh Government and Senedd Commission to encourage youth participation and political engagement. A range of resources will be developed and made available to schools and relevant youth settings, to encourage 16 and 17 year olds to get involved in politics, take action on issues in their community and use their right to vote.
15. In addition, further information will be publicly available for those interested in becoming a councillor via a new Welsh Local Government Association website: "[Be a](#)

Councillor". Work will also be completed to implement the pan-UK [Civility in public life](#) campaign in Cardiff and across Wales via the Welsh Local Government Association. This will enable Councils to continue to improve the range of support and development provided to members, particularly those from minority groups who are vulnerable to harassment and unacceptable behaviour online.

16. It is recognised that the Council is not currently representative of our diverse community and further action is required to widen political participation in our city. Cardiff Council has delivered some effective work to improve diversity, which is a source of learning to inform future evidence-based action. As a new phase to this work, developing a comprehensive action plan will provide an opportunity to strengthen our practice in this area and deliver meaningful action on representation for Cardiff residents.
  17. Councils' local diversity work will be supported by a national awareness raising, publicity and support through the Welsh Local Government Association and Welsh Government. Welsh Local Government Association officials will be meeting with Heads of Democratic Services to share ideas and approaches to develop local Diverse Council Declarations.
  18. Additional partners, colleagues or organisations may be subsequently identified who may be able to further enhance the opportunities for Cardiff Council to develop a comprehensive action plan to support a Diverse Council Declaration.
  19. Any action plan is unlikely to have a significant impact on the 2022 Local Government Elections therefore it is anticipated that the timescale for any actions will extend until the Local Government Elections in 2027.
  20. Suitable consultation activities will be undertaken to engage with minority and underrepresented groups particularly those with protected characteristics to ensure that the action plan reflects their experiences and echoes the voices of our communities. This will assist the creation of an action plan which recognises the strengths of our communities and responds effectively to the barriers which reduce participation and political disengagement.
  21. To progress the request of the Welsh Local Government Association it is proposed that Cardiff Council make a Diverse Council Declaration with a commitment to:
    - a. Broaden Local Democratic Representation,
    - b. Support involvement with local decision-making
    - c. Support Councillors to discharge their responsibilities effectively.
    - d. Develop a Diverse Council Action Plan 2022-27 in consultation with representative and community groups, to be submitted for consideration by the Council following the Local Elections in 2022.
- A full version of the Diverse Council Declaration is shown at **Appendix C**.
22. Following Council consideration of the proposed action plan, the initial Diverse Council Declaration could be enhanced to reflect its actual intentions and the Council's ongoing

commitment to support its diverse communities and be seen at the forefront of improving the diversity of Cardiff Council and as an exemplar for the whole of Wales.

## **Legal Implications**

23. In considering this matter, the Council must have regard to its public sector equality duties under the Equality Act 2010 (including specific Welsh public sector duties). This means the Council must give due regard to the need to (1) eliminate unlawful discrimination, (2) advance equality of opportunity and (3) foster good relations on the basis of protected characteristics. The protected characteristics are: age, gender reassignment, sex, race – including ethnic or national origin, colour or nationality, disability, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, sexual orientation, religion or belief – including lack of belief.
24. The Council also has a statutory duty to have due regard to the need to reduce inequalities of outcome resulting from socio-economic disadvantage ('the Socio-Economic Duty' imposed under section 1 of the Equality Act 2010). In considering this, the Council must take into account the statutory guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers (WG42004 A More Equal Wales The Socio-economic Duty Equality Act 2010 (gov.wales) and must be able to demonstrate how it has discharged its duty.
25. There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of the report. Legal advice will be provided, as necessary, in respect of any specific actions to be taken to support the Council's commitment to become a Diverse Council.

## **Financial Implications**

26. There are no direct financial implications from this report. The development of an action plan will require consideration and identification of all resources including any financial provision, necessary to deliver the outcomes.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

27. Council is recommended to:
  - a. Note the content of the report and appendices.
  - b. Make a Diverse Council Declaration, as set out in full in **Appendix C**, with a commitment to:
    - Broaden Local Democratic Representation,
    - Support involvement with local decision-making
    - Support Councillors to discharge their responsibilities effectively.
    - Develop a Diverse Council Action Plan 2022-27, in consultation with representative and community groups, to be submitted for consideration by the Council following the Local Elections in 2022.

**GP JONES**  
**HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**  
**21 January 2022**

The following appendices are attached to this report:

Appendix A - Diversity in Local Government Democracy Report for WLGA

Appendix B - Diversity in Democracy WLGA Letter

Appendix C – Diverse Council Declaration

**Background Papers:**

[Diverse Council Report](#) - Democratic Services Committee dated [19 July 2021](#)