

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

COUNCIL: 26TH JULY, 2021

REFERENCE FROM CABINET: 19TH JULY, 2021

“C635 DIVERSITY IN DEMOCRACY (L/PR) (SCRUTINY – ALL) –

The Welsh Government (WG) had been focusing heavily on the diversity agenda and following the evaluation of phase one of the WG’s Diversity in Democracy work, a number of key recommendations and actions were derived, with such actions being addressed through the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. Further work by the WLGA Council had also strengthened the impetus for diversity actions to be considered and implemented, to allow any improvement in diversity within democracy for the Local Government Elections in 2022 and beyond.

The WLGA Council’s report on Diversity in Local Democracy highlighted three key areas for further action by Councils and Political Parties.

In addition to the above, the meeting of the WLGA Council subsequently agreed the following to ensure that Councils were more representative of their communities following the next Local Government Elections:

- a) to encourage all political parties, through the WLGA Political Groups, to commit to proactive and co-ordinated 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;
- d) to encourage a declaration by July 2021 from Councils in Wales, on becoming ‘Diverse Councils’; 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.
- 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.

The report sought Cabinet and Council approval to make a Diverse Council Declaration by the end of July 2021 and the establishment a Diversity in Democracy Working Group of the Democratic Services Committee to progress the WLGA Council recommendations and any other actions identified to compliment the work of Welsh Government's proposed Race Equality Action Plan (REAP) for an Anti-Racist Wales and associated goals for local government.

Councillor McCaffer stated it was important that everyone in the community should feel able to stand and represent the community in which they live and was in support of increasing diversity amongst the Council as a positive move forward.

Councillor Williams felt the declaration from Councils in Wales on becoming 'Diverse Councils' was hugely positive in order to acknowledge people for who they were and what skills they could offer.

The Deputy Leader referred to an interesting conversation with the Pupil Voice Network who had discussed diversity in representation, and they felt it was so important to have people available who represent them that they could identify with. She said that it had been positive to see gender balance within the Cabinet and stressed the importance of being able to recognise everyone's individual skills.

This was a matter for Executive decision.

Cabinet, having considered the report and all the issues and implications contained therein

RESOLVED –

(1) T H A T the making of the following Vale of Glamorgan "Diverse Council" Declaration be endorsed and referred to Council for ratification:

"The Vale of Glamorgan Council will:

- (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 Government Elections."

(2) T H A T the actions outlined within the WLGA Council report be noted.

(3) T H A T the establishment and the Terms of Reference of a Diversity in Democracy Working Group of the Democratic Services Committee to promote the diversity agenda within the Council be approved and referred to Council. The Working Group be established based on a membership of 5 (one Member from each

of the political groups which are represented on the Democratic Services Committee) be agreed.

(4) T H A T Group Leaders be requested to nominate their respective group representative to sit on the Working Group where they have more than one Group Member on the Democratic Services Committee.

(5) T H A T as part of supporting the Council to develop an inclusive culture and one that is respectful of gender identity across the spectrum, the principle of amending the Council's Constitution to reflect the use of gender-neutral terminology and refer the same to Council for approval be endorsed.

(6) T H A T the use of the Urgent Decision Procedure as set out in Section 14:14 of the Council's Constitution in order to refer the matter to Council before the call-in period ends be approved.

Reasons for decisions

(1) To support the WLGA Council recommendation to make the Declaration by the end of July 2021.

(2) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

(3&4) To allow the work needed to be undertaken by the Council to progress the recommendations set out within the WLGA Council report and including any other action identified by the Working Group and to receive updates on its ongoing work as and when appropriate and reported to the Democratic Services Committee / Cabinet.

(5) The Diversity in Democracy programme aims to advance gender equality and diversity in Councils before the 2022 elections. Amending the Council's Constitution is a Council matter.

(6) The reporting of the use of the Urgent Decision Procedure is a requirement of the Council's Constitution."