

ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL	
Committee:	Democratic Services Committee
Date of meeting:	18 June 2014
Title:	Diversifying Democracy in Local Government in Wales
Author:	Interim Head of Democratic Services

1.0 Background

1.1 In July 2013, Lesley Griffiths, Minister for Local Government and Government Business, announced the establishment of an Expert Group on Diversity in Local Government to:

- review the results of the Local Government Candidates Survey (a survey of successful and unsuccessful candidates at county and community elections in 2012)
- consider any ways in which the survey itself and response rates might be improved
- more generally examine the profile of local government with a view to making recommendations on improving diversity in local government at the 2017 local elections.

1.2 The Expert Group's report '*On Balance: Diversifying Democracy in Local Government in Wales*' was published on 5 March 2014. The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) Co-ordinating Committee considered the report at its meeting on 28 March 2014.

2.0 The Recommendations of the Expert Group

2.1 24 recommendations are made in the report – 9 relating to the Local Government Candidates Survey and 15 relating to widening participation in local government. The Expert Group's recommendations, including the Welsh Government's initial responses, are included as an appendix to this report.

2.2 The Isle of Anglesey County Council is already seeking to address a number of the issues raised by the Expert Group relating to widening participation in local government, as outlined below:

Recommendation 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...

'Llais Ni' is a project that gives young people on Anglesey, between the ages of 11 and 25, a chance to voice their opinions and make a difference in their communities. Llais Ni encourages young people to develop their skills and confidence to greater their influence on the decisions that affect them on the island. In April 2014, more than 30 young people from around Anglesey were given an opportunity to take part in a Question Time session about projects linked to the Energy Island Programme and how they could impact upon their lives and futures. The Question Time Panel consisted of Albert Owen MP, Rhun Iwan Iorwerth AM, Council Leader Ieuan Williams and the Council's Chief Executive, Richard Parry Jones.

Recommendation 17: "Member Champions" in each council should be encouraged to play an external role in encouraging greater participation in local government.

The Minister for Local Government and Business intends to establish a network of diversity champions across Wales and has asked each local authority to appoint a member diversity champion from an under-represented group. This matter is currently under consideration. Further information is awaited as to how this network will be developed.

Recommendation 19: The Welsh Government should coordinate a campaign, together with local government and relevant equalities and civic partners, to ensure that national and local promotions take place in the 18 months leading up to the next local elections ...

A number of different methods were used to raise the profile of the local elections in Anglesey in 2013, including:

- A series of adverts and press releases in the local press and published on the Council's website, as well as on Facebook
- A campaign through Twitter to target women's groups and young people's groups, asking them to spread the message

The campaign was successful, with 106 candidates for 30 seats on the County Council.

Recommendation 23: Local authorities which do not already broadcast their meetings should commence doing so at the earliest opportunity, as well as making full use of other social media outlets to engage with a wider public.

Anglesey commenced its webcasting of meetings on 9 June 2014 with a meeting of the Council's Executive.

3.0 Recommendations

- 3.1 The Committee is requested to consider the recommendations of the Expert Group as set out in appendix 1.

Huw Jones
Interim Head of Democratic Services

12 June 2014

Background papers:

'On Balance: Diversifying Democracy in Local Government in Wales' – The Report of the Expert Group on Diversity in Local Government -

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/localgovernment/publications/expert-group-report/?lang=en>

EXPERT GROUP'S ACTION PLAN AND TIMETABLE AND WELSH GOVERNMENT RESPONSES

Recommendation	Timing	Cost
<u>Improving response to the survey</u>		
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.	Administrative, distribution and authorship costs, likely to be contained within existing budgets.
Welsh Government response: Support. We will have discussions with the other parties proposed to take this forward in good time for the next local 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.	Minimal costs to be borne within agreed budgets
Welsh Government response: Agreed.		
3. The surveys of candidates at county and community levels should be separated and conducted as two distinct surveys.	As above	As above

Recommendation	Timing	Cost
Welsh Government response: Agreed with the proviso that the two surveys be conducted concurrently, assuming the elections to both levels of local government are held on the same day.		
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.	If Measure requires amendment, cost will be borne within existing budgets
Welsh Government response: Support in principle. We will review the provisions in the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and any other relevant legislation to see whether it is possible and practical to do so. We would then need to engage with local authorities on the issue.		
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.	No additional cost. Welsh Government already committed to meet costs of survey.
Welsh Government response: Support in principle. A joint decision with local government would be required, which will be pursued with the WLGA.		
<u>Improving the information from the Survey</u>		
6. The Welsh Government should compare the question list with those used for surveys of councillors in other parts of the UK and should	To be completed in 2015 in case of need to amend Measure.	Contained within existing budgets.

Recommendation	Timing	Cost
amend to bring about better comparability.		
Welsh Government response: We will examine the merits and practicality of this proposal. It must not compromise the central aim of the survey, to produce measurements of progress over time.		
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.	c£10-15,000
Welsh Government response: We will consider the merits of this proposal. The survey is intentionally longitudinal in nature.		
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 elections.	Would need to be contained within existing budgets.
Welsh Government response: This is a recommendation for local government, which we support in principle.		
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 2017.	No additional costs to existing budgets.

Recommendation	Timing	Cost
normal election.		
Welsh Government response: Recommendation for local government and the WLGA.		
<u>Action for political parties</u>		
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.	To be borne within existing budgets.
Welsh Government response: Although this is not a recommendation for WG, we support it and will liaise with local government and political parties to further it.		
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.	No obvious additional cost.
Welsh Government response: Support. Leaders of Political Parties represented in this Assembly have been asked to agree to endorse this recommendation in relation to their own Parties.		
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.	No cost.

Recommendation	Timing	Cost
Welsh Government response: Recommendation for each Leader.		
<u>Widening participation in local government</u>		
<p>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.</p>	<p>Programme would operate in 2015 and 2016. Preparatory work required in second half of 2014.</p>	<p>Cost of project coordinator, administrative costs and expenses. c£30,000 per year for 2.5 years. Sharing of costs possible between participating bodies.</p>
Welsh Government response: Support. We will liaise with the other bodies named in order to develop a shadowing scheme in Welsh local government in 2015/16.		
<p>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.</p>	<p>To be agreed at each local authority area but can proceed as soon as possible.</p>	<p>To be met within existing budgets.</p>

Recommendation	Timing	Cost
Welsh Government response: Recommendation for local government.		
<p>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.</p>	<p>Should be ongoing campaign following publication of Report.</p>	<p>To be agreed in funding negotiations between OVW and Welsh Government.</p>
Welsh Government response: Support. We will hold discussions with OVW and the WLGA to further it.		
<p>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.</p>	<p>To follow publication of evaluation by UK Government Equalities Office. Scheme would need to be put in place at least a year before elections.</p>	<p>Demand driven but likely to require reserve of c£10,000.</p>
Welsh Government response: Support. We will consider the results of the UK Government’s scheme and engage with groups representing disabled people before deciding whether to operate this scheme in Welsh elections.		
<p>17. “Member Champions” in each council should be</p>	<p>For each local authority to pursue following</p>	<p>To be borne within</p>

Recommendation	Timing	Cost
encouraged to play an external role in encouraging greater participation in local government.	publication of report.	existing budgets.
Welsh Government response: Support. We will liaise with the WLGA and it's Member Support and Champions networks to progress this.		
18. Every councillor should be encouraged to mentor a potential successor candidate for their seat.	As above	As above
Welsh Government response: Recommendation for local government and political parties.		
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.	Expertise to be procured by Welsh Government through inward secondment or fixed term contract .with potential cost of £30,000.Publicity costs to be agreed with WLGA and others but likely to be c£40k.
Welsh Government response: Support. This will form part of campaign by the WG and its partners to promote diversity. We will consider the best way of securing the resource to take this forward.		

Recommendation	Timing	Cost
<p>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.</p>	<p>To commence in second half 2014 and be ongoing.</p>	<p>Project coordination and administrative costs to be linked with 13 and 18 above. Steering group to be established to oversee work.</p>
<p>Welsh Government response: Agreed. Previous response applies.</p>		
<p>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.</p>	<p>Ongoing campaign to commence in second half of 2014.</p>	<p>As above.</p>
<p>Welsh Government response: Support. This issue will be raised with the Public Service Leadership Group and Local service Boards.</p>		
<p>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</p>	<p>As above.</p>	<p>As above.</p>

Recommendation	Timing	Cost
Responsibility programmes. The CBI should be asked to support this aim.		
Welsh Government response: Agree in principle. To be raised with the CBI and other employer groups.		
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 consider following publication of Report.	To be borne within existing budgets. (Welsh Government has already provided start-up funding for this).
Welsh Government response: Support but for individual authorities to decide upon.		
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.	c£25,000
Welsh Government response: Agreed. The WG will include this within its research and evaluation programme in the next two years.		

