

ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL	
Committee:	Democratic Services Committee
Date:	29 July 2021
Title:	Diversity Declaration
Purpose of Report:	Recommendation to Council to adopt a Diversity Declaration
Author:	Head of Democratic Services

1. Background

The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) has been giving consideration to diversity in local government and to taking specific action before the 2022 elections. A working group was established to address this and collate evidence regarding under-representation in democracy.

A report on the findings of the Working Group was presented to a special meeting of the WLGA Council on 5 March this year. The report acknowledges that a number of steps have been taken over the years to encourage more people from various backgrounds to stand for elections. The report also notes that further steps will be taken on a national level, including a national campaign to encourage under-represented groups to vote and to stand as candidates. There will also be specific roles for relevant bodies, Welsh Government and political groups, as well as local authorities, as noted in the report. The report is available to read on the link below:

<https://www.wlga.wales/council-special-meeting-diversity-in-democracy>

The Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 includes a commitment to work towards making the Council more representative of the communities it serves – see the relevant extract from the Plan in Appendix 1.

2. Diversity Declaration

One of the specific steps agreed by the WLGA is to encourage every Council to adopt a diversity declaration as part of the commitment by local authorities to promote diversity.

The Council supports such a declaration, which is consistent with the Authority's strategic aims to reflect the local community. In this context, the ambition is to increase the numbers of women, young people, disabled people and people from ethnic minority groups who stand for election to become councillors.

It is proposed to ask the full Council to adopt the following draft declaration:

The Isle of Anglesey County Council commits to being a diverse Council by:

- providing a clear public commitment to improving diversity in democracy;
- demonstrating an open and welcoming culture to all, promoting the highest standards of behaviour and conduct;
- ¹working in line with the standards set out in the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development;
- demonstrating a commitment to a duty of care for Councillors;
- considering how to provide flexibility in council business by reviewing our practical arrangements for holding meetings;
- continuing to encourage all members to take up the allowances and salaries to which they are entitled, particularly any reimbursement of costs of care, so that all members receive fair remuneration for their work and that the role of member is not limited to those who can afford it;
- working towards ensuring that councillors from under-represented groups are represented whenever possible in high profile, high influence roles.

In addition, all Councils are asked to develop a local Diverse Council Action Plan ahead of the 2022 local elections. This is consistent with the action noted in the Council's Strategic Equality Plan. The intention is to report back to this Committee at the end of September on an action plan to support this declaration. No specific additional costs are anticipated at this stage with regard to supporting the declaration.

3. Recommendation

Subject to any observations by the Committee, to recommend to the Council that:

- it adopts the above diversity declaration
- delegated authority is given to the Democratic Services Committee to agree an action plan to support the declaration

Huw Jones
Head of Democratic Services
22/7/21

¹ The Council has already achieved charter status from WLGA in 2019.

Objective 6: We will increase access to participation to improve diversity of decision making

Priority 6.1: Decision-making bodies become more representative of the communities they serve

Why have we chosen this as a priority?

Women remain under-represented among local election candidates in Wales and in public appointments (*Is Wales Fairer? 2018*). A survey of local government election candidates in Wales for the May 2017 elections found that 34% were women. Following the election, 26% of **councillors** were women, with considerable variation across Wales' 22 local authorities (*Is Wales Fairer? 2018*). The percentage across the six North Wales local authorities was 22.9%, of which Anglesey, with 10%, had the lowest percentage (*Equality in North Wales: data and evidence report*).

The under-representation of women in local government is only part of a wider diversity issue. Younger people in particular are under-represented on this Council.

According to a report by the National Assembly for Wales' Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee, '*Diversity in Local Government*' (April 2019), that the accessibility of information on the role of councillors is clearly an area for improvement. The report makes 22 recommendations to the Welsh Government, including a recommendation that "*the Welsh Government and the Welsh Local Government Association start work on a positive campaign to increase diversity among candidates standing for local government elections by summer 2019.*"

Four of the Council's committees also include **co-opted members**. These representatives are recruited for fixed terms to represent a specific area of interest or issue of consideration. They are not elected members and are appointed because of their level of knowledge and experience. Currently, the gender profile is fairly balanced, with 45% (5) of the eleven co-opted members being women.

How we plan to do this?	By when?
Take all necessary steps locally to support the national campaign to widen participation in the 2022 local elections.	May 2022
Make use of positive action as part of the process of recruiting co-opted members.	As and when vacancies arise.

Which protected characteristics does this affect? All characteristics, but Age (young people) and Sex (women) in particular.

What should success look like?

An increase in diversity amongst individuals standing in the local government elections in 2022 and individuals who apply to become co-opted members as part of future recruitment processes.

Lead Service: Council Business