

MEETING	DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
DATE	17 NOVEMBER 2020
SUBJECT	DIVERSITY IN DEMOCRACY
PURPOSE	To submit an update on the work that has been underway thus far and the future plans.
RECOMMENDATION	Members of the Committee are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept the report and support the direction of the work programme
AUTHOR	Vera Jones, Democratic Services and Language Manager

BACKGROUND

1. Members of the Committee will remember that the Diversity in Democracy sub-group has been meeting regularly since before the elections in 2017 in order to attempt to encourage more people from different backgrounds to stand as a Councillor. The group's terms of reference is noted in **Appendix 1**, for information. The group is examining three specific fields, namely Young People, Women and People with Disabilities.

Young People.

2. The change in legislation means that young people aged 16 and 17 years old can vote in Senedd Cymru elections from 2021 onwards, and in Local Government elections from 2022 onwards. The change in legislation has brought opportunities with it.
3. The Legal service is leading the work of the Electoral Team and the project, which has been funded by the Government, has been included in the Council's Plan. An operational group has been established to bring together a work programme which aims to increase registration among groups who are new to the voting franchise and also look at issues with regards to access to vote and promoting groups which are currently under-represented on the electoral roll to take part.
4. By working with the Council's elections team and the youth service, it is intended to tie in the work of promoting young people to take an interest in democracy with the practical work of aiding them to register to vote. The Electoral Team will use the grant money to employ a temporary officer who will proceed with this important work.
5. In light of the Covid-19 situation, there will be a need to work in different ways to the original intention of holding events (some sort of fairs) in schools and holding sessions in the Council's chamber. However, the work will build upon what has already taken place from engaging with young people in various schools.

Women.

6. There are common factors between the work of promoting and encouraging women in democracy and the corporate project to promote women in leadership in Council jobs. The aim of the corporate Women in Leadership project is to boost the number of women who apply for and attain senior positions within the Council by reviewing the employment conditions, the work environment and encouraging women to undertake the work in future. Running alongside this is the diversity in democracy sub-group project, which attempts to promote people from different backgrounds to undertake a leading role as Councillor - and one of the target groups is women.
7. During the past year, workshops were held for women and men who work for the Council in order to present the project to the workforce and ascertain views on the subject. During the workshop, it was noted that opportunities for women to come together to discuss and mix in an informal environment would be useful. Consequently, we have arranged sessions for staff, and have also extended the sessions to you as Councillors.
8. A virtual 'cuppa and a chat' session will be held for female Councillors on 10 and 11 November, in order to learn from the past experiences of the Councillors, and to also provide an opportunity to consider whether the changes in light of the pandemic will provide additional opportunities to think about how to attract more women to stand in local elections.
9. In addition to this, a training session will be held at the end of November for all Council members on 'imposter syndrome'. This phenomenon or syndrome is a psychological pattern in which an individual doubts their skills, talents or accomplishments. This is the latest activity that has stemmed from the Women in Leadership project and it follows the success of the workshops held last year and the 'chat and cuppa' sessions in September this year.

Work Programme

10. There are probably two main elements in the Diversity Sub-group's work programme. The first element is continuing with the work of encouraging more people to stand in the 2022 local government election. The emphasis of the work programme which is being developed is on coherent and frequent communication with the target groups and generally.
11. Secondly, with a little over 18 months until the Local Government elections in May 2022, it is timely to start planning and working on the necessary preparations. One of the lessons learned from 2017 was the need to start preparing early enough.
12. The main elements of the work programme are noted below:

Encouraging people to stand in the 2022 Local Government elections

- Communicating simple, frequent messages - to the target groups (women, disabled people, young people) and generally to the people of Gwynedd
- Contacting Political Group Leaders to raise their awareness of the work that's happening and the need for the political groups to play their role
- Updating the website with information
- Holding "question and answer" sessions for prospective candidates

Preparing for the 2022 Elections - practical arrangements

- Learning lessons from the 2017 and 2012 elections (speaking with Members and officers)
- Developing election day arrangements
- Developing the arrangements for new member induction - short and medium term, and identify and prioritise the necessary information, training, technical support and practical arrangements.

13. The committee is asked to support the direction of the work programme

APPENDIX 1

Terms of Reference

Diversity in Democracy (Sub-group of the Democratic Services Committee)

1. **Project group name:** Diversity in Democracy

2. **Purpose:**

The Council's Democratic Services Committee has recognised for some time that the Membership of Gwynedd Council's Elected Members does not reflect the society it represents. Specifically, there is an inconsistency between the proportion of elected members and the proportion of the population in the following fields:

- Women
- Young People
- Disabled People

In addition, Gwynedd Council's Equality Plan 2016-2020 has identified a specific Objective (Objective 3) which aims to "Create circumstances for people from different backgrounds to represent the people of Gwynedd by standing for election as an elected member". It is likely that this objective will also be prioritised for the 2020-2024 plan.

The Group was originally established to review arrangements when considering the 2017 elections. The purpose of the Group is to try to create the right conditions for people from different backgrounds to represent the people of Gwynedd by standing for election as an elected member.

The original work focused on:

- Identifying existing obstacles that prevented individuals from standing for local government elections
- Sharing information on a wider scale on how to stand and what this entails (a specific section was created on the website to answer questions in a clear and simple manner, and a video was created to explain the role of a Councillor and the work of the Council).
- Posting a series of messages via social media to raise the awareness of elections among Gwynedd residents and the need for more people from diverse backgrounds to stand
- Holding a series of open evenings to answer questions from prospective candidates as they consider standing

Furthermore, the group (under the guidance of the Democratic Services Committee) has:

- held a series of training sessions "to raise awareness of unconscious bias" among Elected Members
- piloted arrangements to hold sessions for primary school pupils to get a taste of democracy by visiting the Council Chamber

3. The Group's Objectives:

The Group will continue to contribute to the endeavours to promote greater diversity from diverse backgrounds to stand in Local Government elections. Therefore, to this end, there will be a need to

- Draw up an action plan in an attempt to respond to the three priority fields

4. The Group's Constitution

The Group consists of members from the Democratic Services Committee as follows:

Councillors:

Anne Lloyd Jones

Dewi Owen (Chair of the sub-group)

Cai Larsen

Annwen Daniels

Eryl Jones-Williams

Dewi Wyn Roberts

Mair Rowlands

Officers:

Sion Gwynfryn Williams (or member of the team)

Vera Jones

5. Operational arrangements of the Group

- The project Group will be chaired by Councillor Dewi Owen, Chair of the Group;
- Group meetings will be held as required, by means of the video conferencing provision
- Group members are given an opportunity to add items for discussion on the agenda prior to each meeting
- Actions are noted and circulated following each meeting.