



FULL COUNCIL REPORT

Date Written	9 th August 2021
Report Author	Ann Taylor
Service Area	Democratic Services
Exempt/Non Exempt	Non Exempt
Committee Date	8 th September 2021

To: Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen

Diverse Council Declaration

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

1.1 To consider the request from the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) for all Councils in Wales to commit to becoming a Diverse Council in 2022 and take steps to promote the role of elected member to underrepresented groups.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that

- 2.1 Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council sign up to the Diverse Council Declaration as set out in Appendix 1, be approved.
- 2.2 An action plan be developed to support the declaration, be approved.
- 2.3 The action plan be presented to a Special Democratic Services Committee for consideration and sign off before coming back to Full Council for approval, be agreed.

3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In recognition of the lack of diversity in Welsh Councils, the WLGA agreed in September 2018 to take steps to advance gender equality and diversity in local government.
- 3.2 Through their own outreach, mentoring schemes and information days, Councils across Wales have worked hard to encourage underrepresented groups to stand for election and they have done a lot to improve the support provided to serving

Councillors through the provision of guidance, development and better working conditions.

3.3 Despite this work, it has been recognised that there continues to be a lack of diversity in local Councils.

4.0 DIVERSITY AT THE 2022 LOCAL ELECTIONS

4.1 In March 2021 a report was taken to a Special WLGA Council Meeting outlining a set of actions to address the lack of Diversity in Democracy.

4.2 As part of their response, WLGA Group Leaders and Spokespeople for Equalities shared a letter with local authorities confirming their unanimous agreement to the actions.

4.3 The letter recognises the need for Councillors to reflect the diversity of their communities and emphasises that there is a need for more women, more young people, more Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people, more disabled and LGBTQ+ candidates standing in 2022.

4.4 The WLGA therefore committed to making a change in local government diversity at the 2022 local elections and endorsed the Diversity in Democracy report which is the culmination of the work of a cross-party working group and builds on the action plans and ambitions of councils and partners.

4.5 Among a number of their own initiatives, the WLGA has called for local authorities to prioritise action locally and progress ‘Diverse Council’ declarations which would provide a clear, public commitment to improving diversity and demonstrate an open and welcoming culture to all.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no financial obligations to signing up to a Diverse Council Declaration.

6.0 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1

	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts	Neutral/Not Applicable
1. Merthyr Tydfil Well-being Objectives	3 of 4	0 of 4	1 of 4
2. Sustainable Development Principles - How have you considered the five ways of working? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long term • Prevention • Integration • Collaboration • Involvement 	1 of 5	0 of 5	4 of 5

3. Protected Characteristics (including Welsh Language)	10 of 10	0 of 10	0 of 10
4. Socio-economic Disadvantage	6 of 6	0 of 6	0 of 6
5. Consultation and Engagement	Undertaken	Due to be Undertaken	Not Required
	1 of 1	0 of 1	0 of 1
6. Data and Evidence to inform the proposal	Yes		No
	0 of 1		1 of 1
7. Biodiversity and the resilience of Ecosystems	Maintained	Enhanced	Reduced
	0 of 1	0 of 1	0 of 1
Summary			
The main positive impacts are:	WLGA Group Leaders and Spokespeople for Equalities recognise that when Councillors reflect the diversity of their communities, it encourages involvement and confidence in the authority from the public and promotes wide-ranging understanding across Council when they're making decisions.		
The main negative impacts are:	N/A		

ELLIS COOPER
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

COUNCILLOR ANDREW BARRY
CABINET MEMBER FOR GOVERNANCE
& CORPORATE SERVICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
WLGA Working Group on Diversity in Local Democracy Report	March 2021	WLGA Website / Democratic Services
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		No

Consultation has been undertaken with the Corporate Management Team in respect of each proposal(s) and recommendation(s) set out in this report.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council DIVERSE COUNCIL DECLARATION

This Council commits to being a Diverse Council. We agree to:

- Provide a clear public commitment to improving diversity in democracy.
- Demonstrate an open and welcoming culture to all, promoting the highest standards of behaviour and conduct.
- Set out a local Diverse Council Action Plan ahead of the 2022 local elections. Including:
 - Appoint diversity ambassadors for each political group on the council to work with each other and local party associations to encourage recruitment of candidates from underrepresented groups.
 - Encourage and enable people from underrepresented groups to stand for office through the provision of activities such as mentoring and shadowing programmes and information and learning events for people interested in standing and official candidates.
 - Proactive engagement and involvement with local community groups and partner organisations supporting and representing underrepresented groups.
 - Ensure that all members and candidates complete the Welsh Government candidates' and councillors' survey distributed at election time.
 - Set ambitious targets for candidates from underrepresented groups at the 2022 local elections.
- Work towards the standards for member support and development set out in the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development.
- Demonstrate a commitment to a duty of care for Councillors by:
 - Providing access to counselling services for all councillors.
 - Having regard for the safety and wellbeing of councillors whenever they are performing their role as councillors.
 - Taking a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and harassment by members including through social networks.

- Provide flexibility in council business by:
 - Regularly reviewing and staggering meeting times.
 - Encouraging and supporting remote attendance at meetings.
 - Agreeing recess periods to support councillors with caring or work commitments.
- Ensure that all members take up the allowances and salaries to which they are entitled, particularly any reimbursement for 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.
- Ensure that councillors from underrepresented groups are represented whenever possible in high profile, high influence roles.