

<b>Date of meeting:</b>	17 February 2022
<b>Subject</b>	Diversity in Democracy
<b>Recommendation</b>	To present an update of the actions to the Committee.
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Vera Jones, Democratic and Language Services Manager

## Update.

1. The Committee has led in the field of trying to encourage more diversity in Democracy for some years by now, and work is continually proceeding in this field. Gwynedd Council's Diversity Statement was published in October 2021, and the work programme was adopted by the Full Council in December 2021.
2. Several elements of the work programme deal with the election preparations. One element is to encourage more people from various backgrounds to stand in the election, and another element is to look at the arrangements that are in place for the induction and to welcome new Councillors following the election. Another report has been submitted to the committee to update you of these elements.
3. Other matters that are currently receiving attention is to draft a diversity/equality Questionnaire. The questionnaire will be distributed to all current Council Members to gather data (anonymously) about diversity in the existing Council. The questionnaire will be repeated at the start of next term to ensure a firm data base from now on. This will provide an evidence base to any further work that needs to be undertaken. Completing the questionnaire will be voluntary but we encourage everyone to do so.
4. In addition, there is a great deal to learn from Councillors who decide not to stand again. In order to learn more about what has been successful, the motivation to stand as a Councillor in the first place, and the barriers and reasons why a Member will not stand again, it is deemed that there is a benefit to conduct an exercise here in Gwynedd. It is likely that we will gather the information in the form of a questionnaire, reporting on the lessons for Gwynedd that will again assist us to prepare for future Councillors.
5. For approximately 18 months now we have been working to hold specific sessions for Women who are Councillors. These informal sessions (chat over a cuppa) have offered a safe space where Councillors have had an opportunity to
  - support each other and compare experiences and learn from each other
  - discuss barriers or issues that concern them and offer solutions.

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6. All discussion took place in a safe and non-political environment. We have already reported to the Committee on some of the general matters raised by the group, matters that are being considered to improve the Council's arrangements. The main themes from the latest chat were
- Additional responsibilities on women who are Councillors eg preparations for Christmas tend to fall heavier on the shoulders of women, at a time when trying to continue with their responsibilities as a Councillor
  - Lack of public understanding and perception about the role of Councillors and the financial remuneration received
  - Opportunities to make a difference within communities eg grants available to hold events for ageing population and work with food banks and food distribution in the community
7. It is a sensible time to now consider if any benefit has come from these sessions and if we should continue to hold such sessions in the term of the new Council to offer the same type of support to women who are Councillors from May onwards. The initial response indicates that there is support for this.

### **Recommendation**

8. The Committee is requested to
- submit any observations on the update presented
  - give support to establish informal arrangements for Women who are councillors, following the May 2022 election