

MEETING	Democratic Services Committee
DATE	20th September, 2016
SUBJECT	Diversity sub-group
PURPOSE	Update the members on the work of the diversity sub-group.
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1. Members of the committee are aware that the Diversity sub-group was established in February 2015 to respond to a National report and the guidance provided in the Local Government Act (2012) to try and increase diversity in Local Government, especially with regards to young people, ethnic minorities and women.

Work of the Diversity sub-group

2. The group has previously reported on the inconsistency between the Council and the county's profile, noting a substantial difference in the number of women and young people in the County compared with the profile of the elected members. A work programme has been presented to the committee previously.
3. In addition, the Council has shown its support to the project as it has been included in the Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2016-2020, with the aim of increasing the number of people from less represented backgrounds (young people and women) standing in the Local Government Elections in 2017.
4. The work undertaken by the sub-group goes hand in hand with the work of the 2017 Elections focus group. In addition, the work is complemented by the work of the Corporate Engagement Group who is moving to arrange a focus group for young people to discuss important matters. This is seen as a possible way to draw young people into being interested in matters which are the responsibility of the Council.
5. Members of the committee will remember that the work programme was based on findings from national research into barriers preventing individuals standing for election, along with comments received from current and past elected members.
6. The table below outlines the different strands of work undertaken by the sub-group over the last few months.

The work has been undertaken in two parts.

- First priority – encourage and motivate individuals who are interested in becoming an elected member to stand in local elections (raise awareness of the work of Councillors and try and understand what barriers exist preventing individuals from standing).
- Second priority – this work is of a longer term, raising awareness and motivating interest in democracy in general, trying to encourage individuals to stand in the future. (Raise awareness of the Council’s work whilst trying to remove some of the barriers).

7. The work completed so far is outlined in the table below.

Part 1	
1.	Raise awareness of the opportunity to stand as a local Councillor
	<p>The sub-group decided that it was time to try something different and be innovative in the way they went ahead with raising awareness of the role of a Local Councillor and of the opportunities to stand in local elections. As a pilot, it was decided to create a video to explain the role of a Councillor. It was of upmost importance that the video was concise, simple and clear, with no jargon. The purpose of the video is to explain the different elements of a Councillor’s role. In addition, it was stressed that the work be interesting, enjoyable and easy to understand.</p> <p>The video was launched in June 2016, with a series of press releases and regular messages on the Council’s Twitter and Facebook accounts (See Appendix A).</p> <p>The response to the fideo has been successful, with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 1,000 people viewing the video through the Council’s facebook site • Nearly a further 500 viewing the video from the Council’s Twitter account <p>The video has also been placed on the Council’s website with a friendly URL, www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/BeACouncillor (further information to be seen below).</p> <p>It should also be noted that the video has received much attention from other Councils. Conwy Council have seen the benefit of having such a clear and simple to understand video and have requested to purchase the video and adapt it to their local needs.</p>
	<p>A simple, but very effective development from the sub-group is raising awareness of a by-election when such circumstances arise. In the past, a short announcement was posted on the Council’s website (but not very easy to find), and the political groups would raise awareness of the opportunities within their groups</p> <p>In order to try and reach more Gwynedd residents with the news that an opportunity has arisen, the Council now releases information via the Twitter and Facebook accounts, raising awareness of the opportunities and what interested parties need to do. It is an easy way to spread the message further to more of the population. It should be noted that there are 12,254 followers of the Council’s Twitter account, and 5,499 followers on Facebook.</p>
2.	Questionnaire – how can the Council help?
	At the end of the video people are asked to fill in a questionnaire to note how the Council

	<p>could help individuals to stand in local elections, and what are the barriers stopping them. As noted above, a friendly URL address was created to encourage interested individuals. The sub-group have been aware throughout the work that the level of response was likely to be low as the topic is not of interest to everybody, however the initial response is encouraging.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So far fifty people have responded to the questionnaire, which is encouraging. • From the data received, more men than women have shown an interest • The 26 – 49 age group showed the most interest, followed by the 50 – 64 group • No interest has been shown (throughout the questionnaire) by the under 25 age group <p>The main messages from the responses show that the main obstacles are time, lack of time away from work, and no knowledge of what steps need to be taken in order to stand. Note - lack of information, and a lack of understanding if financial assistance was available was also a barrier that was noted.</p> <p>The messages about the way in which the Council can assist individuals to stand are noted as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an information package and information to be provided on line • Arrange presentations to potential candidates • And an opportunity to be mentored should they be successful in an election. <p>The messages from the questionnaires answered so far have the same messages as the original research work undertaken, and the sub-group have already formed a work programme to respond to a number of the issues.</p> <p>We are continuing to promote the video and questionnaire.</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Update information on the web site.</p>
	<p>When individuals decide to stand in a local election, they often look at the council's website for information and a clear guidance of the steps to be taken before finally deciding if they will stand or not. Previously so little information was available on the Council's website, and it was hard to find.</p> <p>The sub group have worked on developing a page on the Council's website, and the first step was ensuring a friendly URL, www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/BeACouncillor as noted in 1 above.</p> <p>The sub-group was clear that the information provided needed to be presented in a clear concise way. Four fields were developed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Councillor's role • Am I eligible? • How to stand for election • After being elected <p>You can follow the link above to view the page on the website. The sub-group is continuing to add to the information presented, including links to other useful sites. So far, approximately 200 visitors have used the page.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Raising awareness of elected members of the work undertaken.</p>
	<p>It has previously been noted that the political groups have a role to play in encouraging individuals from various backgrounds to stand in local government elections. A number of presentations have been held to raise awareness of the sub-groups work with their co-</p>

	<p>members through the area forums. Individual members are then able to use the information or refer to their work eg the website, by talking with individuals that have made enquiries with them on how to go about standing as an elected Member .</p> <p>In addition, the Welsh Government document was distributed: diversity in democracy for all members.</p>
Part 2	
5.	Longer term
	<p>Individuals who are already interested in politics and/or the Council's work are probably aware of the Council's work already. In order to encourage more people from different backgrounds to stand in the future so that the Council's profile reflects the County's profile better, the group felt that it was important to remind the people of Gwynedd of the range of services under the Council's responsibility. This would be a first step to raise their interest in the Council's work, progressing then to the individual considering a role with the Council, perhaps as an elected Councillor. It is an easy way of providing information about the Council's work to any person considering a role in politics in the future.</p> <p>The video will be launched during the Autumn term to coincide with the National Democratic Day (September 15th).</p>

APPENDIX A



Cyngor Gwynedd Council

28 June · 🌐

Promoting diversity in Gwynedd public life:

A new initiative launched by Gwynedd Council aims to encourage more women, young people, ethnic minorities and member of other under-represented groups to consider standing to become councillors.

The campaign that is being launched this week includes a short animated video which explains the 'how', 'what', 'when' and 'where' of the work of Gwynedd councillors.

The video, which the Council will be promoting through its Twitter and Facebook feeds, urges anyone with an interest in getting involved in local democracy to access an online information pack and short questionnaire on the Council website: http://socsi.in/be-a-councillor_qiEpR

http://socsi.in/be-a-councillor_2xuWd



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