



To the Senedd Cymru's Local Government and Housing Committee who is undertaking an inquiry into diversity in local government.

Race Council Cymru (RCC) is delighted to be invited to share our views on the terms of reference. Please see RCC 's contributions in response to the aims of the inquiry for your consideration.

- 1. To assess progress made to improve diversity in local government since passing the Local Government and Election (Wales) Act 2021 and any tangible impact on candidates standing for election.**

Since passing the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (the 2021 Act) there have been several provisions aimed at increasing diversity within councils and enabling greater participation in local democracy. They include:

A duty on principal councils to encourage local people to participate in decision making, and a duty to prepare and publish a public participation strategy, developed in conjunction with communities.

This is set out in section 39 of the 2021 Act and is specifically intended to Increase the capability of local people to have a greater say over decisions that affect their communities and their everyday lives.

Effective public participation relies on there being a range of information available to the public which includes information about the following: the role of the council; how the council is structured; who represents them on the council and what has their contribution been; How decisions are made; How decisions are scrutinised; Key contacts within the council for general and specific issues; Short, Medium and Long term plans; Financial aspects of the Council; Key contact points. More transparency would help encourage new relationships and build trust between citizens and local authorities.

In 2020, the UK parliament commissioned ClearView Research, a Black-led research organisation, to carry out qualitative and quantitative research into Black people's views on whether their human rights are equally protected in the UK. Some findings from the polling were:

Over 60% of Black people in the UK do not believe their health is as equally protected by the NHS compared to white people. Women (78%) are substantially more likely than men (47%) to not believe that their health is equally protected by the NHS compared to white people.

The vast majority (85%) of Black people in the UK are not confident that they would be treated the same as a white person by the police. Black women (91%) are more likely than Black men (77%) not to feel they would be treated the same as a white person by the police.

When asked what actions they think could have a positive impact on how the human rights of Black people are protected, the top three actions selected by Black people were:

- i) More Black leaders in decision-making roles.
- ii) More equal education [opportunities] for Black people; and
- iii) People from outside of the Black community challenging unacceptable violations of Black people's human rights.

**Source:** CVR Insights, *The Black Community and Human Rights, September 2020* - <https://www.nhsbmenetwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/The-Black-Community-Human-Rights-Report.pdf>

In assessing the progress made to improve diversity in local government since passing the Local Government and Election (Wales) Act 2021, it is essential to focus ever greater efforts on ensuring that we hear routinely from a diverse range of witnesses. These efforts should include a focus on ensuring that we hear directly from Black, Asian and minority ethnic people about their experiences in relation to the impact on candidates standing for election. This should include reflections on how to ensure issues of race and racism are tackled through action focussed work and have a regular focus on race equality through any inquiry work.

It is essential to use best endeavours to facilitate the recruitment of Black and minority ethnic staff into senior roles and report annually on progress. In a research briefing published on 30 September 2022, it was noted that three (5%) of the 60 Members of the Welsh Parliament are from minority ethnic backgrounds, including the first woman of colour elected since the start of the devolution. Minority ethnic representation in local government is lower than the corresponding population in all countries of the United Kingdom. A 2019 audit by Operation Black Vote found that while councils in some local authorities, especially in London, closely reflected the local ethnic make-up, many others had no ethnic minority councillors at all.

**Source:** *Research Briefing - Ethnic diversity in politics and public life* - Published Friday, 30 September 2022: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn01156/>

## **2. To consider the progress in implementing the recommendations in the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee's 2019 report on diversity in local government.**

There has been good progress in implementing the recommendations in the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committees' 2019 report on Diversity in local government however, there is still more that can be done to promote a culture of inclusion such as enacting Section 106 of the Equality Act 2010 which makes provision for political parties to collect data on diversity of candidates. The 2011 Measure requires local authorities to conduct a survey of councillors and unsuccessful candidates following each election. The Measure specifies that the questions asked by a local authority as part of the survey may include information relating to gender, sexual orientation, language, race, age, disability, religion or belief, health, education and qualifications, employment and their work as a councillor. As it stands, there is not a duty on councillors or unsuccessful candidates to provide any of the information requested. Currently it is very difficult to measure the diversity of candidates, and to address the situation because the extent of the issue is not known.

There is also a lack of post-election pastoral care and mentoring support from political parties to candidates after losing their seat or failing to be elected. This lack of pastoral care seems to constitute a missed opportunity by the parties. On 'Electoral system and quotas', while some progress has been made in recent years, particularly in parliamentary and Assembly elections with quotas, twinning or all-women shortlists introduced, the limited success at local council level is still a matter of concern.

It would be useful to review the impact of the Access to Elected Office fund in Wales since the pilot as this could provide essential assistance to individuals who wish to stand for office but are prohibited by the financial costs. This would benefit disabled people and those from poorer backgrounds. In addition, there has been some progress in raising political awareness among young people with the advent of schemes like the Equal Power Equal Voice (EPEV) which is a partnership between Women's Equality Network (WEN) Wales, Stonewall Cymru, Disability Wales, and Ethnic Minorities & Youth Support Team (EYST) which encourages young people to participate in public life through role modelling and lived experience sharing. We are concerned by the evidence we heard in relation to reductions in funding to youth services and the detrimental impact this has had on youth participation.

To encourage public participation in the Local government it is important to consider removal of the barriers for job sharing arrangements within the executive of principal councils. Cardiff, Swansea, Newport, and Powys have already taken the opportunity to use these provisions to increase diversity in their Cabinets.

Figures for local government revealed in Green Park's Local Government Leadership Report 2018, highlighted that in local authorities, levels of ethno-cultural diversity at the most senior levels are dismal. Black, Asian and minority ethnic CEOs represent just 3% of the heads of the UK's unitary authorities, county councils, district councils, metropolitan boroughs and London boroughs. Across the top 20 senior management positions in local government organisations, just 3.7% are held by Black, Asian and minority ethnic leaders, compared to 7% in the FTSE 100. In London, where 40% of

the population is non-white, only two out of 32 boroughs have a Black, Asian and minority ethnic CEO.

*Source: <https://www.green-park.co.uk/insights/local-government-leadership-2018/>*

### **3. To explore research and analysis being undertaken by the Welsh Government, partner bodies and others on the diversity of candidates and outcomes following the 2022 local elections.**

There have been ambitious efforts undertaken by the Welsh Government, partner bodies and others on the diversity of candidates and outcomes following the 2022 local elections. With a special focus on:

- workforce diversity and inclusion
- inclusive strategies and policies
- collecting, analysing and publishing workforce data
- learning, development and progression
- health and wellbeing

A Diversity in Democracy programme has been agreed by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) to ensure that council chambers in Wales are more representative of their communities following local elections in May 2022. WLGA's Council endorsed a series of significant recommendations from a cross-party working group, which included the use of voluntary quotas, local targets, and council declarations to become 'Diverse Councils'. They agreed to:

- Encourage all political parties, through the WLGA Political Groups, to commit to proactive and coordinated activities to improve diversity in local government democracy.
- Provide a clear, public commitment to improving diversity.

But despite best endeavours and Wales being home to a diverse mix of communities for over 200 years, racism and colonialism remain an ever-present part of Welsh life. And while 'diversity' has now become cool as organisations desperately reach for legitimacy in our multiracial and multicultural nation, there is still much that can be done.

Interaction with multiracial communities is currently treated as a tick box exercise. Too often all we see are disembodied Black, Asian or minority ethnic people in party political broadcasts and photo opportunities because of a desperate anxiety to appear "diverse" and interact with "diverse" populations. This is sadly particularly true about our Senedd which, despite celebrating 20 years of devolution, has never seen a Black, Asian or minority ethnic woman elected to sit in its parliament – despite being situated in one of the most diverse parts of Wales, Butetown, and near Riverside and Grangetown.

Participation is more than a photo opportunity, more than a tick box, it's a long-term institutional change that can't come from replicating the colonial-style engagement Black, Asian or minority ethnic people experience from political parties in Wales.

#### **4. To examine schemes established to promote and enable greater diversity among those standing for election, including the Access to Elected Office Fund.**

A key scheme established to promote and enable greater diversity among those standing for election was the delivery of the Access to Elected Office Fund for Wales. It was made available to assist disabled people standing for election in both the May 2021 Senedd and May 2022 local government elections. For the local government elections there were a series of short video clips developed, working with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), One Voice Wales (OVW) and councils. These provided the opportunity for people with disabilities to speak about the challenges they face standing for election and working as a councillor, how they can help their communities, and the benefits of the fund. Managed by Disability Wales, the Fund received a total of 21 applications from candidates standing in Senedd, principal council and town and community council elections.

It is therefore promising that six of the individuals in receipt of support were successfully elected, all to community councils; however, an evaluation of the long term effects of the Fund will need to take place soon to inform future arrangements and ensure that it is 'fit for purpose' and is positively impacting disabled people and those from poorer backgrounds with intersecting protected characteristics for e.g. disabled people from Black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds and young carers. There have also been recent schemes established to promote and enable greater diversity among those standing for election, including the Reverse mentoring scheme for the creative arts sector in Wales, where Black, Asian and ethnic minority mentees mentor senior leaders within the arts sector across Wales equipping them with the optics needed to enact real effective D&I changes in Recruitment, Marketing, community outreach etc.

#### **5. To explore areas of innovation and good practice that may help increase diversity in local government.**

Some areas of innovation and good practice that may help increase diversity in local government are around advocacy for pro-Black, Asian and ethnic minority legislation in the Senedd. Undoubtedly, the Senedd might be the jewel of Welsh democracy but to many, including many Black, Asian and ethnic minority people who feel forgotten by devolution, it is a sign of gentrification. We were promised a voice we have seldom received. Other key actions that would aid innovation is setting up grassroots discussion workshops where people can see elected representatives that they can relate to and represent their community.

Another example of innovative best practice is The Innovation in Democracy Programme – established by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG) – which supported three local authorities; Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council; Greater Cambridge Partnership; and Test Valley Borough Council to involve residents in local decision-making through piloting citizens' assemblies.

Citizens' assemblies are one method of public participation that has received a lot of interest over the past 18 months. A citizens' assembly brings together people from all walks of life – selected randomly, but to be demographically representative – to consider a public issue in depth over multiple days and meetings. The assembly members hear evidence, question witnesses, and deliberate with one another, before reaching recommendations on what they think should be done.

The programme focuses on supporting local councils to use participatory and deliberative democracy, including citizens' assemblies, to involve residents in decisions that affect their lives.

Through speakers, unconference sessions and facilitated discussions citizens shared what worked well, what the challenges have been, and discussed next steps in this field. It is also important to highlight other exciting projects from around the UK and international experts about their cutting-edge exemplars from across the world.



## References:

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**Race Council Cymru**