

DLG 19

Ymchwiliad i amrywiaeth ym maes llywodraeth leol

Inquiry into diversity in local government

Ymateb gan: Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Port Talbot Castell-nedd

Response from: Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

Committee Clerk  
Equality, Local Government and  
Communities Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1NA

Dear Sir

### **Consultation on Diversity in Local Government**

I apologise for the delay in my response to the letter dated 4 June 2018 in which evidence was requested to inform the Local Government and Communities Committee inquiry into diversity in local government.

1. Through the various consultation exercises undertaken over recent months the Council now has a better understanding of the diversity of its elected members. With this information we are able to support members in their role within their communities, their role as cabinet/scrutiny members and ultimately the communities themselves. For example an elected member with a hearing impairment can be supported through additional aids at meetings, allowing full participation in debates, bring understanding and experience of that impairment to bear in decision making and will have an appreciation of the challenges faced by those within the community with similar impairments.
2. Such diversity among elected members as a reflection of the diverse nature of the communities they represent generates greater empathy and understanding of concerns and challenges as well as helping to illustrate that there are no barriers in local democracy.
3. By undertaking an annual review with elected members we are able not only to help support their individual needs and requirements but also help understand the wider issues for people entering local democracy.

4. While a recent survey of current elected members as to their training and development needs has been undertaken and the responses have been helpful in not only understanding the individual members support needs but also provides an insight into issues faced by future potential members. This provides an opportunity to review our practices and procedures to meet needs where appropriate and gives a strong message to current and potential elected members that local democracy is adaptive and open to all.
5. By having an insight into issues of personal circumstances, suitability of date/time and topic of training sessions, amongst others we are able to provide trailed support, more convenient/relevant training sessions as well as ensuring our practices are more accessible.
6. Local Democracy Week 2018 –  
This year we will be holding two events:
  - 15 October – to help celebrate the centenary since women were first granted the right to vote we are holding an event to engage with staff and partner organisations on Women in Politics. The event will hear from influential women, including;
    - Cllr Debbie Wilcox, Leader of the WLGA,
    - Cllr Doreen Jones, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Equality
    - Cllr Linet Purcell, whose grandmother was involved in the suffrage movement
  - 18 October – we are holding an event to engage with young people on the potential electoral reforms that the Welsh Assembly are planning on introducing for both Local Government and Welsh Assembly Elections. This will take the form of a question-time style session with a panel of elected representatives that represent different directly elected bodies (still to be confirmed) and from as broad a range of political parties as possible with an audience of Year 11 secondary school pupils representing all schools in the County Borough as well as college and sixth form pupils. It is anticipated that questions will be on issues such as votes for 16 year olds, proportional representation, electronic voting etc.
7. In addition we have held/ produced the following:
  - School elections held at primary schools where the whole election process, from candidates for school councils speaking on their manifestos to the declaration of results, was undertaken.
  - School, election pack - This pack, including 'A Young Persons' Guide to Voting', has been produced by the Electoral Services team as part of our ongoing commitment to make young people more aware about the principles of democracy and explain to them how to vote and why it is important to vote.

**Leader's Office**  
Swyddfa'r Arweinydd Y Cyngor

Rob Jones  
Leader of Council  
Civic Centre, Port Talbot. SA13 1PJ

**Rob Jones**  
Arweinydd y Cyngor  
Y Ganolfan Ddinesig, Port Talbot. SA13 1PJ

- The information and materials are designed to act as a guide to allow pupils and students to start to discuss, understand and participate in a school election process, which is based on a simplified core model used by the elections team to run all elections from Community Council By-Elections to Parliamentary General Elections.
- Referendum packs – produced for schools to hold their own referendum.
- ‘Be a Candidate’- booklet produced to encourage people to stand in local and community elections
- The local elections in 2012 saw more diversity in the return of members which appears to have increased at the 2017 local elections. Whether this was a result of or just coincidental with the availability of the various booklets and events held with schools is not something that we are able to ascertain at this time.
- The following information reflects the diversity of the elected members following the 2017 elections. Total number of elected members 64 of which:

<b>Sex</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	43	67%
Female	21	32%

51 responses were received in relation to the following:

<b>Age</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
75-85	1	2%
60-74	23	45%
50-59	9	18%
40-49	7	14%
30-39	5	10%
25-29	1	2%
17-24	2	4%
Prefer not to say	2	4%

<b>Welsh Language Ability</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Fluent speaker and writer	5	10%
Fairly fluent speaker and writer	4	8%
Fairly fluent speaker	2	4%
Learner	8	16%
Little or no knowledge	31	61%

<b>Disability</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	6	12%
No	41	80%

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<b>Ethnic Origin</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
White British	46	90%
White Irish	1	2%
Other ethnic group	1	2%

<b>Religion / Belief</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Christian	35	69%
Any other religion	2	4%
No religion	12	24%

<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Heterosexual	47	92%
Gay	1	2%
Prefer not to say	2	4%

<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Welsh	42	82%
English	2	4%
Scottish	1	2%
British	5	10%

Yours sincerely,



**Cllr R G Jones**  
**Leader of Council**

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