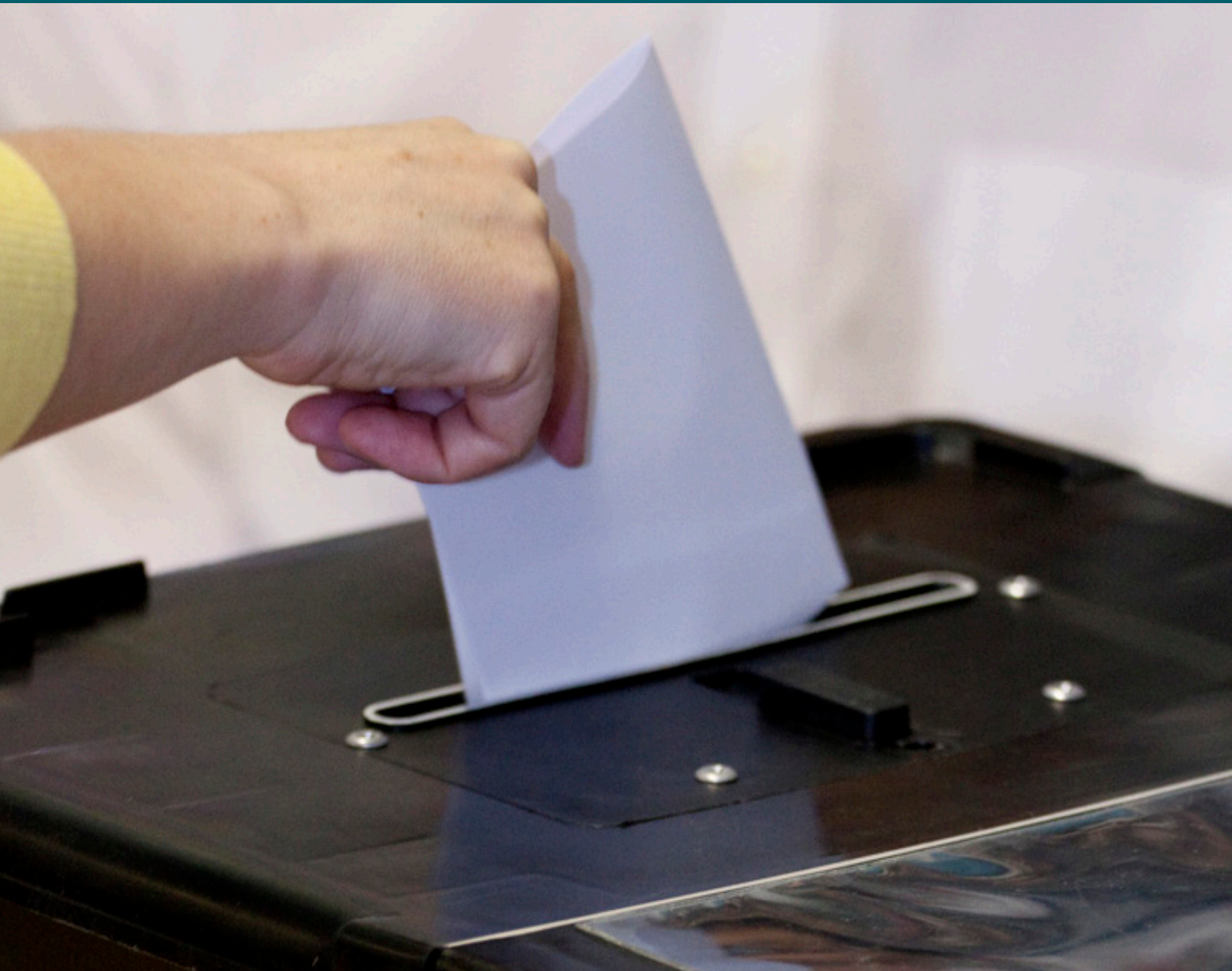


# Diversity in Local Government

October 2023



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# Diversity in Local Government

October 2023



# About the Committee

The Committee was established on 23 June 2021. Its remit can be found at:  
[www.senedd.wales/SeneddHousing](http://www.senedd.wales/SeneddHousing)

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Current Committee membership:



**Committee Chair:  
John Griffiths MS**  
Welsh Labour



**Luke Fletcher MS**  
Plaid Cymru



**Jayne Bryant MS**  
Welsh Labour



**Joel James MS**  
Welsh Conservatives



**Sam Rowlands MS**  
Welsh Conservatives



**Carolyn Thomas MS**  
Welsh Labour

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The following Member was also a member of the Committee during this inquiry.



**Mabon ap Gwynfor MS**  
Plaid Cymru

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## Chair's foreword

The under-representation of women, people from ethnic minority backgrounds, disabled people and others with protected characteristics in politics has long been identified as an issue that needs to be addressed, yet we remain in a position where progress has remained stubbornly slow. Despite a general recognition that all democratic institutions should reflect and be representative of the communities they serve, few actually do.

In 2019, I chaired the then Assembly's Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee's inquiry on this issue and I'm pleased to see that progress has been made in implementing some of that Committee's recommendations. It is particularly pleasing to see significant development on remote attendance for members of local government and the creation of an Access to Elected Office Fund. Whilst the move to remote attendance was spurred on by the need to work from home during the Covid-19 pandemic, hybrid meetings have now firmly been embedded as the norm within the administration of local government across Wales. This is very welcome given the opportunities it provides for people who may have previously found it difficult to commit to in-person meetings.

I also welcome the Welsh Government's commitment to implementing an Access to Elected Office Fund, which removes some of the physical barriers preventing disabled people from putting themselves forward for election. It is good that the Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Bill includes a provision to place such a fund on a statutory footing.

Despite these recent developments, continued momentum towards increasing diversity in local government remains a concern. Commitment requires strong leadership, and progress made by some local authorities is encouraging, demonstrating what can be achieved. It is important to recognise where progress has been made, identify good practice and facilitate ways of sharing those with peers across Wales. Many of our recommendations therefore call for good practice to be identified and shared by local government partners.

I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this inquiry.

**John Griffiths MS**

Chair, Local Government and Housing Committee

## Recommendations

**Recommendation 1.** The Welsh Government should work closely with the WLGA to improve the response rate to the Local Government Candidate Survey. This includes increasing awareness and promotion of the survey among candidates and councillors, and sharing best practice between local authorities. .... Page 24

**Recommendation 2.** The Welsh Government should work with all partners, including local authorities, to identify areas of good practice to improve diversity in local government and to share and learn from those experiences. .... Page 33

**Recommendation 3.** The Welsh Government should work with the WLGA to assess the efficacy of all initiatives to increase diversity in local government, including the implementation and impact of Diversity Declarations. .... Page 33

**Recommendation 4.** The Welsh Government should keep under review and evaluate the impact of duties placed upon local authorities under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 to promote democratic participation. This includes measuring the impact of local authority public participation strategies and sharing of good practice. .... Page 33

**Recommendation 5.** The Welsh Government should work with all relevant partners to identify opportunities to further promote the Access to Elected Office Fund and the benefits of the fund. .... Page 38

**Recommendation 6.** The Welsh Government should ensure that lessons learnt from the evaluation of the Access to Elected Office Fund are taken forward, ensuring there is sufficient and timely support for disabled candidates before future local government elections. .... Page 38

**Recommendation 7.** The Welsh Government should consider how initiatives such as the Access to Elected Office Fund could be expanded or developed in time for the next local government elections in order to support candidates from other under-represented groups. This work should be developed regardless of whether or not the provisions in the Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Bill become law. .... Page 38

**Recommendation 8.** The Welsh Government, along with local government partners, should work together to raise awareness and promote job-sharing for executive roles. .... Page 43



**Recommendation 9.** The Welsh Government should facilitate greater sharing of local authorities’ experiences of job-sharing in executive roles to understand the benefits and challenges associated with the provision. It should also ensure better collection of data on job-sharing to enable regular monitoring of the impact of job-sharing in contributing to improving diversity across authorities.  
..... Page 43

**Recommendation 10.** The Welsh Government should work closely with the town and community council sector to ensure sufficient support, training and resources are available to enable the use of multi-location meeting technology in all community councils in Wales.....Page 49

**Recommendation 11.** The Welsh Government should, in light of the closure of Chwarae Teg, assess the capacity across Wales to deliver mentoring schemes and quickly identify how any gaps in provision can be filled..... Page 52

**Recommendation 12.** The Welsh Government should provide an update to the Committee on the outcome of its work to bring key partners together to combat abuse in politics..... Page 54

**Recommendation 13.** The Welsh Government should continue to press the UK Government to take strong and robust action to tackle social media abuse.  
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## Introduction

- 1.** There are currently 22 local authorities in Wales with some 1,233 councillors. At the last election in 2022, a total of 72 seats were uncontested. Survey data on candidates standing for election in May 2022 was published in March 2023.
- 2.** During 2018-19, the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee (ELGC Committee) of the Fifth Senedd undertook an inquiry on diversity in local government.
- 3.** The Committee made a total of 22 recommendations for the Welsh Government, including promoting job-sharing opportunities between executive members of a council and establishing an Access to Elected Office Fund to assist disabled individuals to run for elected office.
- 4.** At our meeting on 29 March 2023, we agreed to assess progress on diversity in local government. We agreed the following terms of reference:
  - 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.
  - To consider the progress in implementing the recommendations in the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee's 2019 report on diversity in local government.
  - 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.
  - To examine schemes established to promote and enable greater diversity among those standing for election, including the Access to Elected Office Fund.
  - explore areas of innovation and good practice that may help increase diversity in local government.

## Evidence gathering

- 5.** We gathered written evidence and held oral evidence sessions with stakeholders. A public consultation was launched on 31 March and closed on 2 June 2023. We received 12 responses to the consultation.

- 6.** We heard oral evidence from stakeholders on 15 June and from Rebecca Evans MS, Minister for Finance and Local Government (“the Minister”), on 13 July.
- 7.** We also held two online focus groups on Thursday, 11 May to hear directly from elected councillors. We heard from eleven councillors from various local authorities. The political affiliation of contributors also varied. A [summary of our engagement work](#) can be found on our website.
- 8.** We are grateful to everyone who took part in the inquiry. Details of all evidence gathered can be found in the Annex to this report.

## Background

9. Since the ELGC Committee published its report, there have been several initiatives aimed at encouraging people from a broader range of background to participate in local democracy.

### **Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021**

10. The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act “the 2021 Act” was passed by the Senedd on 18 November 2020. The Welsh Government’s stated purpose for the Act was to:

- provide local government with new ways to support and serve their communities; and
- reinvigorate local democracy in Wales.

11. Provisions in the 2021 Act include:

- Enabling local authorities to change the voting system for local government elections to the Single Transferable Vote (“STV”) system;
- Enabling multi-location meetings;
- Enabling the appointment of assistants to executive;
- Enabling job-sharing for executive leaders and executive members and for non-executive roles such as chair or vice-chair; and
- Placed duties on leaders of political groups to ensure standards of conduct.

### **Diversity in Democracy update**

12. In July 2022, the Minister for Finance and Local Government provided [an update on ‘Phase-two’ of the Diversity in Democracy](#) programme. The programme was first launched in 2014 and sought to increase the number of local government candidates from diverse backgrounds through mentoring and engagement with political parties. The Minister noted that she hoped, in collaboration with key partners that they could build on what had been achieved by:

- exploring how we extend the provisions for job sharing to non-executive roles such as chairs of committees;
- consider further measures to support people from the range of protected groups to overcome barriers to participation, and how intersectionality is recognised within any future arrangements;
- exploring with voters and stakeholders additional approaches which could further improve diversity amongst our local elected members.

**13.** To inform its work programme, the Minister commissioned several pieces of research into the role of councillors, their remuneration, training and development, workload, and public attitudes and behaviours. Among its most recent publications are its research on *Removing barriers to elected office for people with protected characteristics: Theory of change* and its survey *Councillor remuneration and citizen engagement*. General assessment of progress.

**14.** We heard evidence that progress in increasing the diversity of candidates and elected local government members was mixed. The WLGA highlighted that only four of the 22 local authorities had appointed female leaders, and that only two authorities were gender-balanced. Councillor Lis Burnett told us:

*“It’s not accepted that there is an expectation of diversity in representation, and I think there’s still a way to go.”<sup>1</sup>*

**15.** However, the WLGA also noted that it could be argued that greater progress has been made in improving gender diversity, but is more difficult to assess diversity across other protected characteristics:

*“the evidence base is quite low, and we are reliant on a lot of anecdotal evidence and experiences, which could be improved.”<sup>2</sup>*

**16.** One Voice Wales stated there had been “very little impact” on diversity across the town and community council sector, adding:

*“anecdotally, we have seen more women in councils throughout Wales. But on the impact on numbers from ethnic minority backgrounds, I think there’s been little, if any, impact whatsoever.”<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 5

<sup>2</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 9

<sup>3</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 7

**17.** ERS Cymru told us that from its data, which it highly caveated, suggests that the number of female councillors had increased from 28 per cent in 2017 to 36 per cent in 2022. ERS Cymru described this as “a really slow rate of progress”.<sup>4</sup>

**18.** Race Council Cymru stated that the figures are “even worse for black, Asian and minority ethnic community members”. Race Council Cymru added:

*“I do think that the feeling, overall, from our grass-roots communities—and we surveyed over 300 ethnic minority grass-roots people, and many of them, I would say 94 per cent of them, reported not getting through upon showing an interest, getting involved in meetings, just feeling like they were being tick-boxed. So, there is huge work to do to improve diversity in our councils.”<sup>5</sup>*

**19.** Whilst most of those who contributed in our focus group sessions acknowledged that some progress had been made to improve diversity in local government over the past few years, several contributors did not feel that the make-up of councillors in their local authority reflected the diversity of the communities they serve:

*“Just having a gender balance is not enough we need a diversity of lived experiences. We don't have any Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic people on our county council. We have very few openly disabled councillors and only one openly LGBT councillor. I think that's really poor and I want to see us do an awful lot better. We need to do much more work to show that all these different people from different protected characteristics belong in the chamber.”*

**Focus group 1, Monmouthshire.**

*“it's really important that we as a council, as Carmarthenshire Council, or every council we have in Wales reflects the people we have in the community and I do feel that in the county, we do not, as a council, reflect our community properly. We don't have one person of colour on the council.[ ] We only have a small number of young people and that is something I think we need to discuss because we're not pulling our young people*

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<sup>4</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 131

<sup>5</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 269

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*into politics. Definitely not to the county council and we don't have anyone on the county council that's disabled either."*

**Focus group 2, Carmarthenshire.**

**20.** We heard from the Minister that there has been "an awful lot of progress in recent years", noting the diversity in democracy programme and the "significant changes" through the 2021 Act. The Minister commented that:

*"all of those things are very much working together to open up democracy to people."*<sup>6</sup>

**21.** However, the Minister also acknowledged that further progress is needed:

*"That's not to say there's not an awful lot more that we need to be doing as well, both as Government, but then I think there are roles for political parties and for wider partners as well.*

*So, we've made great strides. We've been the first in the UK to do lots of these things; I know there are lots of calls across the border in England now to take the approach that we have to hybrid meetings, for example. So, we are showing what can be done, but I'm absolutely not complacent, and there's definitely more to do."*<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 13 July 2023, paragraph 12

<sup>7</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 13 July 2023, paragraphs 12-13

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## 1. Voting system for local government elections

The 2021 Act gave councils in Wales the power to choose between two voting systems for local government elections - First Past the Post (FPTP) or Single Transferrable Vote (STV). Previously, the only option was FPTP.

**22.** ERS Cymru, a strong advocate for STV, called it a “fairer and more representative” electoral system. Whilst it welcomed the opportunity for councils to choose this option, it stated that:

*“the change in electoral system should have been applied across the board and not on a voluntary basis.”*

**23.** According to ERS Cymru, data from the 2022 local government elections demonstrates that:

*“the current First Past The Post voting system perpetuates a lack of diversity in local government through the dominance of single member wards and continued high levels of uncontested seats.”<sup>8</sup>*

**24.** ERS Cymru told us:

*“There were 74 uncontested seats in Wales in 2022, so that’s 6 per cent of the total elected councillors; 97 per cent of these were in single-member wards. So, there’s a real, heavy bias towards single-member wards there. There were no uncontested seats, in contrast, in wards with three members or higher. So, if you’re looking at bigger wards, you’re much, much less likely to have uncontested seats.”<sup>9</sup>*

**25.** Dr Stefanie Reher, University of Strathclyde, agreed that “multimember districts tend to increase diversity”<sup>10</sup>, adding that systems like STV are:

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<sup>8</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [DLG.03 ERS Cymru](#)

<sup>9</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 136

<sup>10</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 164

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*“generally thought to also be beneficial for under-represented groups, because they incentivise parties to present or nominate more of a range of different candidates that can appeal to different groups of voters.”<sup>11</sup>*

**26.** Stakeholders acknowledged that switching to STV in itself would not necessarily result in greater diversity of members. However, combining STV with positive action could bring about change. ERS Cymru told us:

*“with a combination of changing the electoral system and the positive action we’ve seen being extended you would see a massive difference.”<sup>12</sup>*

**27.** This view was shared by Chwarae Teg, who told us:

*“with a proportional system, it is far easier to apply positive action measures like quotas.... I think a switch to STV or something like that wouldn’t necessarily fix the diversity issues, but it does create a space where we can make better use of positive action measures, which would then support greater diversity.”<sup>13</sup>*

**28.** Women’s Equality Network (WEN) Wales concurred:

*“in those proportional systems, it’s much easier to put in place quotas, and I think quotas could really help us.”<sup>14</sup>*

**29.** Local government representatives accepted the benefits moving to STV could bring to diversity, with Councillor Nia Wyn Jeffreys suggesting:

*“Perhaps it’s time to have structural change, for example changing the voting system. [ ] if we really want to see a shift, then perhaps we need to be braver and introduce these most structural changes.”<sup>15</sup>*

**30.** Cllr Jeffreys went on to say:

*“if there are wards that are multimember, we could ensure that there’s one man and one woman being selected as candidates.”*

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<sup>11</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 165

<sup>12</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 143

<sup>13</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 273

<sup>14</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 275

<sup>15</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 25

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*So, I do think that the multimember ward issue makes that easier than just having a system that's first past the post.*<sup>16</sup>

**31.** Councillor Lis Burnett agreed that:

*“through proportional representation, there is a potential to put those sorts of mechanisms into place, which then would cover all representation.”*<sup>17</sup>

**32.** However, despite acknowledging the benefits, Cllr Jeffrey told us:

*“you would have to be very brave to be the only council in Wales to take this step forward to STV. I have to say that I am supportive of that system, but I would much prefer it that every council in the country move to that system. It is a problem that councils have to choose, and I think it would be confusing for the electorate.”*<sup>18</sup>

**33.** Stakeholders touched on the potential benefits and drawbacks of a proportional system such as STV, as it would create large electoral wards with multiple members for each ward. Some highlighted the potential advantage this could bring for candidates and elected representatives in engaging with a larger population and larger geographic area. ERS Cymru told us there is “significant learning from Scotland” where STV is the current system used in local government elections, ERS Cymru added:

*“it sounds like it's very rare in Scotland for someone to do the whole patch themselves, so in that sense you're not increasing the size in the same way as it looks like it is on paper for each individual candidate canvassing.”*<sup>19</sup>

**34.** However, Cllr Jeffrey accepted that larger multi-member wards could pose challenges for candidates in rural counties simply because they'd need to cover bigger geographical areas. Cllr Jeffrey stated that there wasn't a “golden bullet that is going to solve this” but that it could be “part of the solution”.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 30

<sup>17</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 33

<sup>18</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 27

<sup>19</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 162

<sup>20</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 52

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**35.** The Minister told us she sees the option of moving to STV as “a really exciting opportunity for councils”. The Minister said that the role of the Welsh Government is to ensure that councils:

*“have all of the information and advice that they need to have that discussion in the appropriate way, and also to ensure that we do have the proper rules in place should any council decide that this is something that they wanted to pursue.”<sup>21</sup>*

**36.** The Minister added that the Welsh Government had recently consulted on draft rules for STV and that the responses had been “largely positive of the rules”.<sup>22</sup> We heard that, to date, the Minister had not had discussions with any local authorities who may be considering a move to STV,<sup>23</sup> with a Welsh Government official adding that there had been “informal inquiries at official level from councils.” The official confirmed that, following the consultation, regulations will be made “when there’s an appropriate slot” later this year<sup>24</sup> and that the Electoral Commission will publish guidance on the regulations to support councils in their choices.<sup>25</sup>

## **Our view**

**37.** We recognise the potential benefits of proportional electoral systems such as STV as a means of increasing diversity among candidates standing for election. However, we also recognise that changing the voting system will not, in itself, necessarily result in significant changes to the make-up of elected members. Moving to a proportional system for local government elections will only result in greater diversity if the structures around it enable and support candidates from diverse backgrounds to stand. This includes the need for strong leadership from all political parties to take positive action when selecting candidates.

**38.** We support the principle that individual local authorities should choose whether to utilise FPTP or STV for local government elections. Whilst we realise that the ability to change the local voting system has only been available for a relatively short amount of time, there currently appears to be little appetite among councils to switch. Where councils decide in future to switch to STV, the Welsh Government and partner bodies should be prepared to provide support where required to enable effective elections.

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<sup>21</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 13 July 2023, paragraph 15

<sup>22</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 13 July 2023, paragraph 16

<sup>23</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 13 July 2023, paragraph 19

<sup>24</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 13 July 2023, paragraph 21

<sup>25</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 13 July 2023, paragraph 26

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**39.** We welcome the consultation undertaken by the Welsh Government on draft rules for STV and the commitment to produce guidance. We hope that the regulations and guidance will bring clarity and support to any councils considering changing their voting system.

## 2. Local Government Candidate Survey and Data

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 requires local authorities to undertake a standardised survey of unsuccessful candidates and elected councillors in their area. This includes both county and town and community councillors.

**40.** A total of 1,077 candidates and councillors completed the 2022 survey, a response rate of 12 per cent. This compares with 18 per cent in 2017 and 35 per cent in 2012. The response rate ranges from 1% to 40% across different authorities.

**41.** The WLGA noted in its written evidence that the low response rate “is a challenge”, and that “encouraging councils to collect comprehensive equalities monitoring information when councillors are onboarded” may provide a “more accurate understanding of diversity across local government”.<sup>26</sup>

**42.** The WLGA told us that it was difficult to evaluate the impact of the changes brought by the 2021 Act on candidate diversity “when the evidence base is a bit patchy.”<sup>27</sup>

**43.** Concerns were expressed by several stakeholders on the low response rate to the 2022 survey and the lack of data more generally to measure changes in representation. ERS Cymru told us they had “quite significant concerns” about the uptake of the survey and had collected their own data, but that this was heavily caveated as it made “assumptions in terms of people’s gender.”<sup>28</sup>

**44.** ERS Cymru emphasised the difficulties in assessing progress without being able to access accurate data and that there was a lack of “proper mechanisms for the collation and publication of diversity data” across the UK:

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<sup>26</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, DLG.06.WLGA

<sup>27</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 59

<sup>28</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 170

*“we’re talking today about whether diversity has improved, but how can we ever really measure if it’s improved if we don’t have the full data set to be able to match?”<sup>29</sup>*

**45.** Chwarae Teg also voiced its concern that:

*“there are no robust data sets that provide an accurate picture of the diversity of those standing and those elected to local government in Wales”.<sup>30</sup>*

**46.** Dr Stefanie Reher also underlined the importance of gathering data from candidates and potential candidates in order to understand barriers:

*“what’s really important as well is to get data on candidates, obviously, and then see where there are potential inequalities and biases in terms of who then gets elected, but also who actually stands for office and gets nominated as a candidate in the first place, right? So, it’s really important also to get data on people who stood for nomination, or who considered standing for office and then decided not to because of various barriers. [.]And I think that’s where parties need to be involved also to get data from the start of the process, potentially party member data, to the end of the process to see where the bottlenecks are, and where the points are where potentially certain groups are being left out and aren’t progressing into elected office.”<sup>31</sup>*

**47.** As a member of the stakeholder group which considers changes to the survey prior to the election, ERS Cymru noted certain challenges, particularly around timings. Changes, it noted, often leads to delays with distributing the survey, and that:

*“at the moment the requirement for the questions to be on the face of the Act takes a lot of time to actually change those questions, and that leads to delays in the survey going out, and that’s why I think the response rate was so low this time.”<sup>32</sup>*

**48.** ERS Cymru suggested:

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<sup>29</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 173

<sup>30</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [DLG.05.Chwarae.Teg](#)

<sup>31</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 182

<sup>32</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 171

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*“it probably is time now to look at a different way of collecting candidate surveys, probably through a compulsory method.”<sup>33</sup>*

**49.** This, it noted, could be done via nomination packs which are returned to the returning officer.<sup>34</sup> WEN Wales supported the idea of making the survey compulsory, and suggested linking it with equality training:

*“I would like to see the survey compulsory, and that linked with mandatory training, and one of the things that WEN Wales said in our response was that you could link having done the training and having done the survey to the first payment that you get as a councillor. So, unless you do that, you do not get your payment, and I think that would be a very strong message to send.”<sup>35</sup>*

**50.** Whilst Chwarae Teg agreed that a low response rate to the survey is “problematic”, it questioned how enforceable it would be to make the survey compulsory.<sup>36</sup> Chwarae Teg suggested that other ways of collecting the information could be considered:

*“I think there might be ways of requiring that from councils themselves, perhaps through the returning officer. I think there’s a role for political parties to be playing. In theory, there’s no reason why political parties couldn’t right now be collecting that data voluntarily, publishing that data and setting out what actions they would take to fix any identified issues.”<sup>37</sup>*

**51.** Diverse Cymru emphasised that, should the survey become compulsory, people would need to be reassured as to how their information would be used<sup>38</sup> as:

*“some people will be reluctant to give this information because it is deeply personal, unless they have the trust and faith that something is actually going to be done with it.”<sup>39</sup>*

<sup>33</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 171

<sup>34</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 171

<sup>35</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 285

<sup>36</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 280

<sup>37</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 281

<sup>38</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 283

<sup>39</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 288

**52.** Similarly, the WLGA stressed the importance that candidates understand why the data is being collected and how their information will be used, Cllr Burnett told us:

*“in any system where you’re trying to collect data, there has to be an element of trust, and so you won’t get effective responses unless people actually understand and believe in what you’re trying to achieve with collecting that data. So, I think there has to be an overall commitment to diversity, and, therefore, if people understand that we are collecting this data in order to measure our results going forward, rather than collecting data on you as a candidate.”<sup>40</sup>*

**53.** Disability Wales also highlighted the importance of trust, as some people may be hesitant to declare themselves as a disabled person in case of any pushback:

*“making sure that this is anonymised, and that candidates feel secure to be able to provide that data, is really important.”<sup>41</sup>*

**54.** The Minister acknowledged that the decrease in the response rate to the survey was disappointing, and set out her intention to bring forward changes with the aim of making the process of reviewing the survey easier:

*“I intend to make some changes to the way that the survey operates in future by removing the requirement for the format and the questions to be set out in regulations. So, that means that the survey can be reviewed more easily and changes made more quickly.”<sup>42</sup>*

**55.** The Minister went on to say:

*“I think that, in future, we can make the survey into two parts. So, we can have one national part, those national questions that will help us with diversity, but then, potentially, a local part of the survey as well that can help get local information of importance to the local authority. That, again, might give us a chance to refresh this.”<sup>43</sup>*

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<sup>40</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 61

<sup>41</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 287

<sup>42</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 13 July 2023, paragraph 55

<sup>43</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 13 July 2023, paragraph 57

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**56.** We heard from the Minister that, although setting targets for local authorities to complete the survey could be considered, her preference would be to “work positively” with returning officers and political parties to encourage completing the survey.<sup>44</sup> The Minister suggested that returning officers could encourage candidates to complete the survey through their candidate briefing meetings.

**57.** The Minister acknowledged however that improving the response rate is an issue that requires further consideration:

*“we should explore why people aren’t filling it in and what we can do to make it easier to fill it in, and also let candidates know you don’t have to fill in all of the questions.”<sup>45</sup>*

## **Our view**

**58.** We share the concerns voiced by stakeholders and the Minister at the low response rate to the 2022 survey of local government candidates. It is particularly concerning that the response rate has declined significantly since the first survey conducted in 2012. This data is vital to enable better understanding of how representative local authorities are of their electorate. We note that the response rate between authorities varies, some quite significantly, and believe there needs to be greater consistency. We believe this could be achieved through raising awareness and improved promotion of the survey across all councils.

**59.** We understand that some candidates and councillors might be reluctant to share some personal details, and that more information on how the data is used is needed. We believe there could be a role for Returning Officers to play in promoting the survey and explaining its purpose to candidates through their meetings with them.

**60.** The high response rate in some authorities is encouraging and demonstrates that it is possible to boost the level of completion. We see this as an example where sharing knowledge and experiences could help identify areas of good practice to be shared across authorities.

**61.** We note the provisions in the Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Bill laid before the Senedd recently which seeks to amend the procedures for developing the survey. The legislation would remove the need for the questions and form of the survey to be set out in regulations, and instead, provide the Welsh Ministers with powers to issue a direction to local authorities on the content and form of

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<sup>44</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 13 July 2023, paragraph 58

<sup>45</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 13 July 2023, paragraph 63

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the survey. In addition to core national questions, local authorities would also be able to add their own questions about local initiative. We will undertake closer scrutiny of the Bill and its provisions over the coming months, with a focus on understanding how the provisions will aide better response to the survey and data collection in the future.

**Recommendation 1.** The Welsh Government should work closely with the WLGA to improve the response rate to the Local Government Candidate Survey. This includes increasing awareness and promotion of the survey among candidates and councillors, and sharing best practice between local authorities.

### 3. Positive action to increase diversity

The implementation of gender quotas or all-women shortlists is seen by some as a way of taking positive action to increase the diversity of elected politicians.

**62.** Several witnesses supported the introduction of quotas as a means of increasing diversity in local government. The Fawcett Society noted that the increase in women’s participation in politics is “proceeding at a snail’s pace”, and called for Governments, political parties and local councils to act to increase women’s representation on local councils. Among its recommendations was a call for political parties to:

*“Introduce quotas for increasing women’s representation alongside representation of other protected characteristics. If this is not possible then parties must set out targets, alongside clear action plans to achieve them. This should include a review of candidate selection procedures to ensure there are no structural barriers hampering participation of under-represented groups.”<sup>46</sup>*

**63.** WEN Wales noted that women’s representation is still “highly dependent on the voluntary initiative of individual parties”. It is concerned that some political parties are reluctant to use all-women shortlists, and that the data shows voluntary initiatives have “failed to deliver”.<sup>47</sup> WEN Wales told us that it would like to see “some positive action and strong action, such as quotas” and noted that quotas are easier to implement through the STV voting system.<sup>48</sup> WEN Wales asserted that “quotas work” and that “over 100 countries around the world have “successfully used them to increase the number of women in their parliaments”.<sup>49</sup>

**64.** The Welsh Government, as part of its co-operation agreement with Plaid Cymru, recently announced proposals to include integrated statutory gender quotas and mandatory zipping for party candidate lists for the next Senedd election. WEN Wales welcomed the announcement, noting that gender quotas are the:

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<sup>46</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [DLG.02.The Fawcett Society](#)

<sup>47</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [DLG.04.WEN Wales](#)

<sup>48</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 275

<sup>49</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 294

*“most effective tool for increasing women’s representation, and we strongly encourage their consideration at the local government level.”<sup>50</sup>*

**65.** This was supported by ERS Cymru, and it called for consideration to be given to whether quotas could be included in Welsh local elections.<sup>51</sup>

**66.** Whilst voicing support for the introduction of quotas, many witnesses accepted that they are a ‘blunt tool’ that can support an increase of women standing for political office. ERS Cymru told us that in the “absence of other measures being effective, sometimes they are necessary”.<sup>52</sup> Diverse Cymru supported this, noting during oral evidence that:

*“I think quotas are an option, but all that does to me is highlight the fact that what’s happening now isn’t working, and that something is wrong.”<sup>53</sup>*

**67.** Similar views were expressed by others such as Chwarae Teg, who commented that quotas are:

*“potentially a necessary instrument because we’re not making enough progress quickly enough.”<sup>54</sup>*

**68.** We also discussed with witnesses how positive action should be taken to increase the number of elected representatives and candidates from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds. ERS Cymru told us

*“parties have a massive role in improving representation of people from a black, Asian or minority ethnic background. Candidate selection is key, and we’ve seen in Wales examples, particularly with Senedd elections, of parties being really pragmatic in their candidate selection, ensuring that there’s an increase in the number of women elected, for example. We believe that’s a really good road map to follow for increasing other areas of representation.”<sup>55</sup>*

**69.** Race Council Cymru told us that work is needed to explore:

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<sup>50</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [DLG 04 WEN Wales](#)

<sup>51</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [DLG 03 ERS Cymru](#)

<sup>52</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 202

<sup>53</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 300

<sup>54</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 302

<sup>55</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 193

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*“how can we use targets for black, Asian and minority ethnic communities to ensure [ ] that there is an agreed target for ethnic minority community members per region. So, I do believe that any system that improves the ability of minoritised groups—people from protected characteristics—coming forward and participating has to be the way forward, because we have to reflect the Wales that we serve and, at the moment, that is not the case for black, Asian and minority ethnic people.”<sup>56</sup>*

**70.** Race Council Cymru emphasised the need for positive action as:

*“It is clear that leaving political parties on their own to tackle these issues will achieve varying results, and many people just don’t care.”<sup>57</sup>*

**71.** Dr Reher offered a different view on quotas, based on her interviews with local and national election candidates across the UK:

*“Actually, most disabled candidates or interviewees were a bit sceptical about quotas. Now, that’s in no way representative at all, I wouldn’t claim that, but we did hear a lot of scepticism, and I think that’s mainly connected to the fact that disabled people are so stigmatised, and that their competence and ability to do the job is often questioned. There was a sense among some interviewees that they felt that, if they were elected through quotas that that might not necessarily fight the stigma as much as if they were elected outside of quotas.”<sup>58</sup>*

**72.** There was an acknowledgement from witnesses of the challenges around taking positive action to increase representation among independent candidates. ERS Cymru told us:

*“there’s a real difficulty in actually trying to improve gender representation, at the very least; not including other protected characteristics with them. And I do wonder if almost political parties have to overcompensate in local government elections for that, and that is a real challenge for political parties.”<sup>59</sup>*

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<sup>56</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 277

<sup>57</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 297

<sup>58</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 206

<sup>59</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 210

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**73.** Some focus group participants voiced support for gender quotas, however, this was not universal, with mixed views being expressed:

*“I think that one of the most important ways we can help get more diverse councils and Senedd is gender quotas. A hundred countries around the world use gender quotas and I’m a firm believer in them. All those countries are at the top level in terms of representation of women . . . I think all political parties should have really strong diversity strategies and those should be required to be laid down before an election. The reason I say this, and the reason I say about quotas is because some political parties are much better than others at promoting women and selecting women.”*

**Focus group 1, Monmouthshire.**

*“I personally don’t think quotas is the way . . . I didn’t want to be a tick box, I wanted to be there on my own merit and I didn’t want anyone to say that I only got there because of women on these shortlists. That wasn’t what I wanted to promote. It has to be the right people. You can’t be there just because you’re a woman or you’re of colour. . . Getting the wrong people holding positions doesn’t do anyone any favours. They don’t portray those positive images of those communities. So it’s important that we get the right people in but the main thing is encouraging people to stand.”*

**Focus group 1, Cardiff.**

**74.** A Welsh Government official told us that through its Diversity in Democracy programme:

*“there’s an ongoing commitment to consult about gender quotas for local government. So, what we’re working towards in this Senedd term is that consultation.”<sup>60</sup>*

**75.** The Minister referred to the importance of raising awareness of the role of a councillor and the benefits being involved in local politics can bring to individuals and their communities:

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<sup>60</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 13 July 2023, paragraph 98

*“We’ve been doing some social media work generally about councillors to highlight the role that councillors play and the good impact that it can have both for the community but also on the life of the person who stands as a councillor.”<sup>61</sup>*

**76.** The Minister added:

*“What we also have to remember and promote is, actually, the incredible amount of good that you can do when you have an elected role. I think we should remind people of that who are interested in politics. It’s not all bad. You get to do good in your communities. You get to make decisions based on your own values, and you can make change.”<sup>62</sup>*

## **Progress by local authorities**

**77.** In 2021, the WLGA Council agreed a suite of initiatives through its *Diversity in Democracy* programme to promote diversity in council chambers. This included endorsing the WLGA’s Working Group on Diversity in Local Democracy’s recommendations such as the ‘Be a Councillor. Be the Change’ campaign to support councillors and promote good practice, and a commitment to encourage all local authorities to make a declaration to becoming ‘Diverse Councils’. This would provide a “clear, public commitment to improving diversity” according to the WLGA.

**78.** The WLGA stated there has been no “formal assessment of how impactful those changes have been”. The WLGA noted however that:

*“the work that we do around how we encourage and how we engage with potential councillors, the stall that we set out for potential councillors, is an ongoing process. We haven’t conducted a full review of what that looks like yet, but it’s something that we’ll look to do at some point over the next cycle.”<sup>63</sup>*

**79.** Whilst progress overall in increasing diversity among locally elected representatives has been mixed, several witnesses referred to the progress made by Monmouthshire County Council and the Vale of Glamorgan Council in

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<sup>61</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 13 July 2023, paragraph 46

<sup>62</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 13 July 2023, paragraph 69

<sup>63</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 17

achieving equality in the number of male and female councillors. We heard that this was achieved as a result of decisions to take positive action.

**80.** ERS Cymru told us:

*“We look at Monmouthshire. In the last elections, that really good commitment that was cross-party, that worked really well. It was technically more of a voluntary quota, I guess, if you want to categorise it, but it worked much more like a legislative gender quota, because everyone was so committed to it, and they have 50:50; they’ve now gone beyond 50:50. So, you can see how that positive action does make a massive difference, and that is the key.”<sup>64</sup>*

**81.** ERS Cymru voiced its concern, that despite the progresses made

*“I don’t think there’s any guarantee that other council areas will necessarily follow suit. Some may look at their success and think, ‘This is a great thing to follow next time around.’ There’s no guarantee of that. So, I think it does take leadership, but also a formal target or quota might be necessary.”<sup>65</sup>*

## **Monmouthshire County Council**

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**82.** In June 2021, Monmouthshire County Council unanimously agreed a motion put forward by the then leader, Councillor Richard John, to aim for gender parity among elected representatives.<sup>66</sup>

**83.** We received evidence from Cllr John, now the Conservative Group Leader on Monmouthshire County Council.<sup>67</sup> Cllr John explained that, on being appointed Leader, “felt determined to try to make progress” and appointed a female Deputy Leader “as part of Monmouthshire’s first gender balanced cabinet”. He then brought forward a motion and asked opposition leaders for their support. Cllr John acknowledged that:

*“gender quotas or any form of positive discrimination were never a realistic option for my party.”*

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<sup>64</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 148

<sup>65</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 202

<sup>66</sup> [Monmouthshire first council in Wales to commit to gender parity - Monmouthshire](#)

<sup>67</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [DLG 13, Councillor Richard John](#)

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**84.** Cllr John set out that, instead, the approach he and his Deputy Leader, Sara Jones took was to headhunt potential candidates for the next election and adopted “an informal target of 50% female targets.” He explained that their roles:

*“focussed on headhunting, mentoring, supporting and advising female candidates to give them the best chance of being selected for a winnable seat.”*

**85.** Cllr John noted that the calibre of candidates was not sacrificed as this “would have completely undermined the argument for diversity”, and stated:

*“Each of my colleagues was selected on merit and I now have a very high calibre team, which is better equipped to undertake our roles because of the diversity of gender, age and background.”*

**86.** Cllr John concluded that from his experience:

*“quotas, all-women shortlists and other forms of positive discrimination are not the only way to create greater diversity in local democracy.”*

**87.** However, Cllr John acknowledged:

*“the pace of change in Wales over the past 25 years has been far too slow. [ ] While I still believe that positive discrimination can be patronising and can undermine politicians’ credibility, I would urge those in positions of influence to act with greater urgency.”*

### **Vale of Glamorgan Council**

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**88.** The gender balance achieved by the Vale of Glamorgan Council was also referred to by witnesses. ERS Cymru told us:

*“The Vale of Glamorgan obviously is slightly different. That was down to what we can largely see is positive action within the local Labour Party. So, in the Vale of Glamorgan, Welsh Labour hold 25 of the 54 seats, and 72 per cent of those are held by women, so that has brought the average up, essentially, to 50 per cent.”<sup>68</sup>*

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<sup>68</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 201

**89.** Cllr Burnett, as Leader of the Vale of Glamorgan Council, told us:

*"I have to tip my hat to Monmouthshire, because they are gender balanced right across all their groups. We're gender balanced because some groups have overachieved, so to speak, and we've still got a way to go in terms of all groups within the council."<sup>69</sup>*

## **Our view**

**90.** It is disappointing that progress in increasing diversity among local government candidates and elected representatives remains very slow, despite acknowledgement that this needs to change. We recognise that implementing forms of positive change, such as quotas or all-women shortlists are ways to achieve greater gender balance, however they do not provide a straightforward means of increasing diversity from other under-represented groups.

**91.** We recognise that some local authorities have committed to increasing gender diversity and we welcome the actions that have been taken and their impact. Witnesses referred to the progress made by Monmouthshire County Council and the Vale of Glamorgan Council as examples of good practice and we are grateful to them for sharing their experiences with us.

**92.** We acknowledge the difference in the approaches taken in Monmouthshire and the Vale of Glamorgan, both of which resulted in gender parity across those councils. Both approaches require commitment and leadership in order to be effective and we welcome the progress made.

**93.** It was encouraging to hear of the initiatives undertaken by the WLGA to promote diversity in council chambers, particularly in relation to 'Diversity Declarations'. We agree that it is important to understand the efficacy of such campaigns, and that all local authorities should be encouraged to make a declaration where that has yet to occur.

**94.** We agree that promoting awareness of the role of a councillor and how people can stand for election is key to increasing interest in local politics. While political parties have a significant role to play in this work, it is vital that the Welsh Government and the local government sector plays its part in promoting awareness across communities in Wales. We welcome the Minister's comments about using social media to highlight and promote the role of a councillor, and

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<sup>69</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 5

we would hope that this is reflected in local authority public participation strategies required under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

**Recommendation 2.** The Welsh Government should work with all partners, including local authorities, to identify areas of good practice to improve diversity in local government and to share and learn from those experiences.

**Recommendation 3.** The Welsh Government should work with the WLGA to assess the efficacy of all initiatives to increase diversity in local government, including the implementation and impact of Diversity Declarations.

**Recommendation 4.** The Welsh Government should keep under review and evaluate the impact of duties placed upon local authorities under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 to promote democratic participation. This includes measuring the impact of local authority public participation strategies and sharing of good practice.

## 4. Access to Elected Office Fund

In its 2019 report, the ELGC Committee recommended that the Welsh Government establish an Access to Elected Office fund in Wales to assist disabled individuals run for elected office.

**95.** In 2021, the Welsh Government launched a pilot scheme to fund reasonable adjustments and support for disabled candidates seeking election to Senedd Cymru 2021 election and 2022 local elections.

**96.** The fund was administered by Disability Wales and covered costs such as assistive aids, training, travel, personal assistance and communication support. Disability Wales told us the fund sought to provide:

*“financial support for any impairment-related expenses that a disabled candidate would have in their time in candidacy, and provided things such as personal assistance or travel expenses. So, in the last [local elections], there were 18 applicants and 17 awards were given out to them: 13 candidates had support delivered; one candidate was elected uncontested; two candidates rejected the support available; and one candidate was not able to find support in time.”<sup>70</sup>*

**97.** We heard that feedback from candidates who received support was “extremely positive”, with Disability Wales noting that the candidates:

*“felt significantly more supported during the election, and significantly more able to stand.”<sup>71</sup>*

**98.** The WLGA also provided positive feedback with Cllr Burnett referring to a candidate who, as a wheelchair user, had used the fund to pay for an assistant to help deliver leaflets:

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<sup>70</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 360

<sup>71</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 360

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*“That was brilliant, because, as a candidate, they were able to participate on an equal basis to all other candidates, and that worked really, really well.”<sup>72</sup>*

**99.** However, Disability Wales also outlined areas for improvement. This included raising awareness of the scheme among candidates and making the fund available at an earlier stage in the process. This would ensure candidates have sufficient time to arrange the support needed.<sup>73</sup>

**100.** Dr Stefanie Reher concurred and explained that, based on her research of the EnAble fund in England:

*“it is really important that that information is spread widely. And here, there might be an issue with independent candidates, or prospective candidates as well, because a lot of information is passed through parties [ ]but we have found that it can be a little bit more difficult to reach independents.*

*Another issue could be the timing of the planning around the fund. So, it’s really important to start planning early on, to give people enough time to actually consider standing for office.”<sup>74</sup>*

**101.** Professor Elizabeth Evans of Goldsmiths, University of London referred to research undertaken by herself and Dr Reher through interviews with over 80 disabled politicians and party activists:

*“nearly all of whom mentioned the importance of having centrally allocated funding schemes to enable disabled people to put themselves forward for elected office. In order for funding schemes to be effective they should be established on a permanent basis and advertised well in advance of elections. It is also important that political parties understand how the funding works and to promote it to their members in order to reach as many people as possible. Similarly, it is important to ensure that disabled people who wish to be elected as Independents are also made aware of the funding schemes.”<sup>75</sup>*

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<sup>72</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 114

<sup>73</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraphs 360 and 362

<sup>74</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraphs 241-242

<sup>75</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [DLG 10 Professor Elizabeth Evans](#)

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**102.** The importance of raising awareness of the fund was also emphasised by focus group participants:

*“There is a piece of work to do in the county council so that people know that these programmes are available for people to use, because I didn’t know about them.”*

*Focus group 2, Carmarthenshire.*

*“I’m not actually aware of anyone that’s applied to it. I don’t know if it’s ignorance on my part, but I’m not aware of anyone who accessed it.”*

*Focus group 2, Conwy.*

**103.** The Welsh Government published its [review of the Access to Elected Office Fund for Wales pilot](#) on 11 July 2023. The Minister told us that the evaluation concluded that the arrangements which had been put in place “were very much welcomed” and also highlighted lessons to learn for the future. In particular, the Minister referred to the time period for which support is provided and that some people would have preferred the support earlier in the process.<sup>76</sup>

**104.** The Minister also acknowledged that awareness of the fund could be improved, noting that as a new fund, “people didn’t know that it existed” and added “there’s definitely more we can do next time.”<sup>77</sup>

**105.** The Minister confirmed the Welsh Government’s intention to legislate to ensure the continuation of the fund.<sup>78</sup>

## **Extending the fund**

**106.** The ELGC Committee recommended that in addition to establishing an Access to Elected Office fund in Wales, the Welsh Government should also explore the possibility of extending such a fund to support other under-represented groups. Support for extending the fund in this way was expressed by stakeholders. ERS Cymru told us:

*“we would like to see it expanded as well to serve other under-represented groups and assist towards costs for the specific barriers that each of those groups face. So, including, but not*

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<sup>76</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 13 July 2023, paragraph 30

<sup>77</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 13 July 2023, paragraph 45

<sup>78</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 13 July 2023, paragraph 36

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*limited to perhaps people from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, people from the LGBTQ+ community, people who have caring responsibilities, people who are on low incomes.”<sup>79</sup>*

**107.** Race Council Cymru concurred:

*“we know that black, Asian and minority ethnic people suffer and live in poverty predominantly, so opening up this access to all would be really, really powerful to enable them to get onto a level playing field.”<sup>80</sup>*

**108.** Professor Elizabeth Evans noted:

*“Funding schemes could also be particularly useful for those from low income backgrounds or those with caring responsibilities, given the gendered and racialised nature of income inequality it is also likely that women in particular would benefit from additional funding schemes.”<sup>81</sup>*

**109.** The Minister told us that the Welsh Government is considering how the fund could be extended to support other under-represented groups, but acknowledged that the practical support it provided to disabled people might be different to the support needed by other groups.<sup>82</sup>

## Our view

**110.** We welcome the piloting of the Access to Elected Office Fund at the 2022 local government elections and are pleased that candidates were able to benefit from it. It is clear that the availability of the fund was useful in supporting disabled candidates to access the practical assistance needed to stand for election. We therefore welcome the Welsh Government’s proposals to legislate to ensure the fund continues to be available for future elections. We look forward to undertaking closer scrutiny of the Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Bill provisions that seek to place the Access to Elected Office Fund on a statutory footing.

**111.** We note however that, despite the positive feedback, the evaluation of the pilot identified areas where the fund could be improved, particularly in relation to

<sup>79</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 248

<sup>80</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 358

<sup>81</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [DLG 10 Professor Elizabeth Evans](#)

<sup>82</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 13 July 2023, paragraph 31

its timeliness and raising awareness. This was acknowledged by the Minister and we are encouraged by her willingness to build upon the findings of the pilot and make changes ahead of future elections.

**112.** We believe that increasing awareness of the Access to Elected Office Fund should be a priority for the Welsh Government and political parties in preparation for future elections. We realise that not all candidates will be affiliated to political parties, and although raising awareness among independent candidates may be more challenging, it is vital that all potential candidates are aware of the fund.

**Recommendation 5.** The Welsh Government should work with all relevant partners to identify opportunities to further promote the Access to Elected Office Fund and the benefits of the fund.

**Recommendation 6.** The Welsh Government should ensure that lessons learnt from the evaluation of the Access to Elected Office Fund are taken forward, ensuring there is sufficient and timely support for disabled candidates before future local government elections.

**113.** We sympathise with calls from stakeholders to expand the Access to Elected Office Fund to support other under-represented groups of people. We agree that other groups require additional support packages to enable them to stand for election, but acknowledge that the financial assistance provided for the purposes of acquiring practical support may not be right for everyone. There will be other groups who would benefit from financial support, such as people on low incomes or people with caring responsibilities, but for others, support such as mentoring and dealing with harassment and abuse would be more appropriate.

**114.** We welcome the Minister's commitment to give further consideration to how the Access to Elected Office Fund could be extended to provide practical support to a wider range of candidates. This includes identifying how other types of support packages could be provided to other under-represented groups. We note the provisions in the Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Bill to create an overarching statutory duty on the Welsh Ministers to put in place arrangements aimed at improving diversity in local government. Arrangements could take the form of services or financial assistance, and seek to be transparent and politically neutral. Further scrutiny of the provisions will be undertaken in the coming months.

**Recommendation 7.** The Welsh Government should consider how initiatives such as the Access to Elected Office Fund could be expanded or developed in time for the next local government elections in order to support candidates from



other under-represented groups. This work should be developed regardless of whether or not the provisions in the Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Bill become law.

## 5. Job sharing

The 2021 Act formalised arrangements for job sharing among members of council executives and enabled an increase in the maximum number of members of an executive where roles are shared.

**115.** Witnesses agreed that there are real benefits to job-sharing for those in Executive roles, and encouraged greater opportunities for it across Wales. Dr Reher told us that it:

*“seems to be one of the things that could really help disabled people get into elected office, especially, of course, people with energy-limiting conditions. But also, disabled people are likely to also be a carer, for instance, for other disabled people.”<sup>83</sup>*

**116.** Disability Wales concurred and referred to conversations with disabled people, where some expressed that:

*“if job sharing was widely available or was more commonly talked about, they would feel more comfortable standing or feel more able to.”<sup>84</sup>*

**117.** Diverse Cymru shared this view, and referred to the benefits of job sharing for many groups, including unpaid carers, people with children and disabled people.<sup>85</sup>

**118.** Nevertheless, despite provisions in the 2021 Act to enable job-sharing in Executive roles, stakeholders expressed concern that promotion and awareness of it is low. The representative from WEN Wales referred to her personal experience as an executive member who shared a role:

*“Although it’s been made possible by the Act, it wasn’t promoted at all; it was just that I knew about it, having known a councillor in Swansea who did it, that I could propose it when I got my role. So, that’s why it was very much coming from the*

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<sup>83</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 223

<sup>84</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 344

<sup>85</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 345

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*individual. It's not something that I see promoted at local government level.*

*I think also it's really difficult because I don't think people understand enough—other councillors—that only one of you, as a job share, should be at every cabinet meeting. It's supposed to be a job share so you shouldn't both have to go to everything, but, often, you do both have to go to everything.”<sup>86</sup>*

**119.** ERS Cymru concurred, stating:

*“I think it needs lots of promotion, because it's definitely not the status quo.”<sup>87</sup>*

**120.** We also heard concerns at the lack of data on the number of council or executive members taking up job-sharing opportunities. Chwarae Teg noted that it was unclear the extent job-sharing is being utilised across Wales, and that information is not easily found. It called for a “central database” to share best practice and:

*“further encourage the use of job-share as a way of opening up leadership opportunities in local government”.<sup>88</sup>*

**121.** ERS Cymru called for more data collection, noting that:

*“It's really hard to get the data [ ] we need to collect this data so that we can make sure that we're learning from it.”<sup>89</sup>*

**122.** The WLGA stated it wasn't “aware of any information collected around job sharing”<sup>90</sup>, but provided additional evidence that confirmed that as of July 2023:

*“The following authorities are using job shares within the council's executive.*

*- Cardiff Council (2 Shared portfolios; Social Services and Tackling Poverty, Equality and Public Health)*

*- Newport City Council (1 Shared Portfolio; Social Services)*

<sup>86</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraphs 340 - 341

<sup>87</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 221

<sup>88</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [DLG 05 Chwarae Teg](#)

<sup>89</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 219

<sup>90</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 91

- Swansea Council (1 Shared Portfolio; Community)

- Powys (1 Shared Portfolio; Future Generations)

- Flintshire (1 Shared Portfolio: Deputy Leader).<sup>91</sup>

**123.** While there was general support for job sharing provisions, there was also acknowledgement that there are practical issues around job-sharing to overcome too. The WLGA noted:

*“some issues have been raised, such as the need to ensure job-sharing members of the executive are aligned when voting within Cabinet.*

*It has also noted that for smaller councils, job sharing can place an increased burden on scrutiny committees, given that members of the executive cannot also be members of scrutiny committees. This has been highlighted as a particular challenge given the enhanced role of scrutiny following the commencement of the Local Government and Elections Act.”<sup>92</sup>*

**124.** The Minister acknowledged that it is still “early days” with the provisions having only been in place since 2021, but told where job sharing had been used:

*“we’ve known that there are people who’ve taken on those executive roles who say that they couldn’t have done it otherwise, which I think is positive.”<sup>93</sup>*

**125.** The Minister added:

*“It won’t be the case that every local authority will do this. It will happen in certain places, depending on the team that the leader has to choose his or her cabinet from. So, I think it’s a good start, it’s a good tool, and we’ve had positive feedback from those that have used it.”<sup>94</sup>*

**126.** A Welsh Government official told us that [statutory guidance](#) published recently includes:

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<sup>91</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 13 July 2023, [paper.6](#)

<sup>92</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 13 July 2023, [paper.6](#)

<sup>93</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 13 July 2023, paragraph 101

<sup>94</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 13 July 2023, paragraph 101

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*“guidance for leaders and cabinets around consideration of diversity in terms of cabinet membership and the leadership of the organisation.”<sup>95</sup>*

**127.** The Minister told us that the Welsh Government would give further consideration to:

*“potentially extend job sharing to non-executive roles, for example committee chairs.”<sup>96</sup>*

## **Our view**

**128.** We note that witnesses supported the ability of local authority executive members to share roles between more than one person. We also recognise that sharing an executive role may facilitate opportunities for individuals to undertake roles that may otherwise be inaccessible. We therefore agree that it is important that this option is available to local authority leaders. It is encouraging that some council leaders have chosen to utilise job-sharing for executive roles, and while the numbers are currently quite low, we recognise that the formal provision has not been in place very long.

**129.** We heard there could be some practical challenges for some local authorities where job-sharing is utilised within executive roles. An increase in the number of cabinet members will reduce the number of backbench members available to undertake scrutiny functions, or hold non-executive roles such as committee chairs. Such issues will need to be considered by council leaders as they weigh up the approach that best suits the council’s needs.

**130.** It is clear, however, that greater awareness of the potential benefits and challenges of job-sharing is needed. We therefore welcome the guidance recently published by the Welsh Government, which explains the overall principles of job sharing and provides practical advice on managing its implementation.

**Recommendation 8.** The Welsh Government, along with local government partners, should work together to raise awareness and promote job-sharing for executive roles.

**Recommendation 9.** The Welsh Government should facilitate greater sharing of local authorities’ experiences of job-sharing in executive roles to understand the benefits and challenges associated with the provision. It should also ensure better

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<sup>95</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 13 July 2023, paragraph 108

<sup>96</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 13 July 2023, paragraph 112

collection of data on job-sharing to enable regular monitoring of the impact of job-sharing in contributing to improving diversity across authorities.

## 6. Hybrid working

The 2021 Act enabled local authorities to hold multi-location meetings, which the Welsh Government described as a potentially important reform, particularly in the encouragement of diversity.

**131.** Remote working was expected to be an area of development for local authorities to facilitate more flexible working. However, the pandemic accelerated progress almost overnight. As the WLGA states, the “speed of adoption would likely not have been possible without the unique and immediate circumstances created by the pandemic”.<sup>97</sup>

**132.** Sitting alongside the core requirements of the meeting arrangements in the Act, local authorities can also establish wider arrangements for multi-location meetings. These may include practical procedures for ensuring effective and efficient meetings, as well as ensuring robust accountability measures. The Welsh Government has recently published statutory and non-statutory guidance for local authorities, which includes guidance on multi-location meetings.

**133.** Hybrid working was broadly welcomed by all witnesses, enabling those with conflicting priorities, such as work or caring responsibilities, or councillors with disabilities to attend meetings where they might otherwise not been able to. WEN Wales noted that the “permanent enshrinement” of remote working in the 2021 Act “is another positive step that provides better access for women with caring responsibilities and disabled people”.<sup>98</sup>

**134.** Local government representatives were supportive of being able to attend meetings remotely, Cllr Jeffreys told us it was “a positive development,”<sup>99</sup> and that:

*“I don’t see us ever going back, I don’t think, to how we were before. Multilocation meetings, I know, are working very well in Gwynedd [ ] being able to join in a hybrid format is of great benefit in a county as rural as Gwynedd.”<sup>100</sup>*

<sup>97</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [DLG.06.WLGA](#)

<sup>98</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [DLG.04.WEN.Wales](#)

<sup>99</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 106

<sup>100</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 104

**135.** Cllr Burnett added:

*“it’s been a huge boost to some of our members who’ve got disabilities, particularly those with hearing impairment, who find a noisy council chamber quite difficult.”<sup>101</sup>*

**136.** Cllr Burnett also referred to the positive impact hybrid working has had on conduct during meetings, noting that:

*“it is much easier to call out poor behaviour in multilocation meetings”<sup>102</sup>*

**137.** Cllr Burnett added that the option of being able to join meetings virtually had been a factor in some candidates’ decision to stand for election, particularly people with caring responsibilities or other work commitments.<sup>103</sup> Chwarae Teg voiced its support for hybrid meetings, but stressed the importance of doing hybrid working well, noting that:

*“it can be a great way of opening stuff up, but it’s got to be done in a way that is inclusive... you can, kind of, become a bit of a spectator if it’s not being run with the right tech and with the right skill sets.”<sup>104</sup>*

**138.** Disability Wales concurred that “hybrid working is extremely important to creating an inclusive and accessible environment to stand and be part of your local council,” but raised concerns about a return to in-person meetings:

*“we’ve also seen more of a return to in-person meetings, or hybrid meetings being seen more as an afterthought, and we believe that hybrid meetings are something that’s extremely important.”<sup>105</sup>*

**139.** Dr. Reher also noted her concerns that there’s been a “step back, back to ‘normal’ in a lot of spaces.” This she notes, causes:

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<sup>101</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 108

<sup>102</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 109

<sup>103</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 109

<sup>104</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 350

<sup>105</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 352

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*“a lot of frustration with the tendency to not really see the benefits that [hybrid working] brought for a lot of people who have difficulty getting out of the house”.*<sup>106</sup>

**140.** Dr Reher added that there is:

*“really big demand for thinking about maintaining some of the remote working possibilities and obviously developing that further as well, because it’s important as well that that doesn’t create any inequality between people who are there in person and those who are there remotely on a more permanent basis.”*<sup>107</sup>

**141.** The community council sector noted that younger councillors and those with caring responsibilities have benefited from hybrid working. However, some rural and small community councils struggle with infrastructure to support hybrid working. One Voice Wales told us:

*“The problem we have in Wales is that there are many small, rural-based councils that don’t have many meeting places to choose from—some of them at the back of village halls or church halls—and they find it very difficult to be able to install the equipment needed to have hybrid meetings... the cost is disproportionate to the size of the precept in many of these councils... Many of the smaller councils are saying, ‘Look, if Welsh Government want us to do this, is there some way that we can have some grants to help us with the costs involved?’.”*<sup>108</sup>

**142.** However, One Voice Wales welcomed funding from the Welsh Government for a digital support officer for the sector of which:

*“part of their role will be to provide cost-effective guidance as to how multilocations can be set up properly.”*<sup>109</sup>

**143.** The Minister acknowledged the challenges faced by some town and community councils in implementing multi-location meetings and referred to work undertaken by the office of the local government chief digital officer on the digital health of that sector. The Minister confirmed that £150,000 had been

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<sup>106</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 235

<sup>107</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 235

<sup>108</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 101

<sup>109</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 101

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provided by the Welsh Government to deliver the action plan developed as a result of that work. The Minister added:

*“we have provided some funding and we’ve done the work through the digital officer’s office to understand the challenges in the sector, so we are aware of them and trying to support the sector now to develop.”<sup>110</sup>*

## **Our view**

**144.** We note that stakeholders overwhelmingly supported the provisions for multi-location meetings, enabling councillors to attend either virtually or in person. It is clear that the ability to attend virtually is very beneficial to councillors and an important factor for some potential candidates in considering whether to stand for election. We support the continuation of this provision as a means of empowering elected representatives to attend meetings alongside other commitments. The ability to attend meetings remotely is a significant tool in attracting a wider range of candidates to stand for election and, although it has been identified as a particular benefit to certain groups, such as disabled people or those with work or caring responsibilities, the universality of the provision means that everyone can benefit.

**145.** Despite the clear successes, we heard of the importance of ensuring that hybrid meetings are run correctly, to ensure that all participants can follow and take part in proceedings. Those chairing hybrid meetings should ensure that virtual participants have the same opportunity to contribute as those attending in-person.

**146.** Whilst we support the ability to hold multi-location meetings, we also believe that participants should continue to have the option of attending meetings in-person, if that is their preference. However, the ability to participate virtually should not substitute requirements on local authorities to ensure their buildings are fully accessible to all.

**147.** We acknowledge the challenges experienced by some town and community councils that lack the infrastructure to run multi-location meetings effectively, and recognise the financial pressure of upgrading facilities may be burdensome to those in receipt of lower precepts. We therefore welcome the Minister’s commitment to assisting the sector, including the funding made available through One Voice Wales. Nevertheless, if the diversity of candidates and

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<sup>110</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 13 July 2023, paragraph 118

councillors across the town and community council sector is to improve, facilitating multi-location meetings must be part of that mix.

**Recommendation 10.** The Welsh Government should work closely with the town and community council sector to ensure sufficient support, training and resources are available to enable the use of multi-location meeting technology in all community councils in Wales.

## 7. Mentoring, training and social media

There are several schemes and initiatives to encourage under-represented groups with opportunities to develop their skills and confidence to lead in public life.

### Mentoring and training schemes

**148.** In its 2019 report, the ELGC Committee heard evidence on various schemes to offer under-represented groups opportunities to develop their skills and confidence with the aim of encouraging their participation in public life. Whilst noting the importance of such schemes, the Committee acknowledged that some of the evidence it heard questioned their effectiveness in advancing diversity among local government representatives.

**149.** The Welsh Government noted that the evaluation of its Diversity in Democracy Programme in 2019, which ran between 2014 and 2017, highlighted:

*“a lack of understanding among the public about the role of councillors and the important contribution they make on behalf of communities.”*

**150.** The Welsh Government added that it had since undertaken various evidence reviews and research, the outcomes of which are:

*“informing the next steps in our agenda to increase diversity in local government.”<sup>111</sup>*

**151.** We heard of schemes which are being delivered by individual organisations. WEN Wales told us of the Equal Power Equal Voice programme, which it delivers in partnership Stonewall Cymru, Disability Wales, and Ethnic Minorities & Youth Support Team (EYST) Wales.

**152.** The programme is delivered through three primary strands: personalised one to-one mentoring, training sessions and workshops, and peer-to-peer support.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 13 July 2023, [paper.1](#).

<sup>112</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [DLG.04.WEN Wales](#)

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We heard that in 2022, nine mentees stood for election and five were elected, with Disability Wales adding:

*“four of the people who got elected were also disabled people, and we’re seeing some really great feedback from the mentees within Equal Power Equal Voice.”*<sup>113</sup>

**153.** WEN Wales stated:

*“To attract and support candidates from diverse backgrounds, it is essential to expand and adequately resource schemes for mentoring, coaching & shadowing, both in the third sector and within political parties.”*<sup>114</sup>

**154.** ERS Cymru told us it is “massively supportive of mentoring schemes”, but called for more data in terms of understanding the impact of mentoring schemes on the numbers who stood for election and in increasing representation.<sup>115</sup>

**155.** The Minister acknowledged that mentoring schemes “have the potential” to increase diversity in local government, adding that the various schemes focused at different protected characteristics “are pretty successful in terms of supporting people”.<sup>116</sup>

## **Our view**

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**156.** We believe that mentoring schemes provide opportunities for people from under-represented groups to gain confidence, receive training and connect with role models. We realise that not all mentees will wish to stand for election, but such schemes will help inform, support and hopefully inspire many to participate in public life more generally.

**157.** It is positive that nine mentees who participated in the Equal Power Equal Voice programme stood for election, and five were elected. It was also encouraging to hear that four were disabled candidates, which shows the potential benefit of such schemes. However, we recognise that the impact of such schemes are limited by the capacity to host mentees and the level of funding available. Nevertheless, we would encourage organisations to work collaboratively,

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<sup>113</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 373

<sup>114</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [DLG 04 WEN Wales](#)

<sup>115</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 254

<sup>116</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 13 July 2023, paragraph 125

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as with the Equal Power Equal Voice programme, to enable greater diversity in our political institutions for the future.

**158.** Whilst it is encouraging that five mentees were elected, we believe that mentoring schemes should also play a role in supporting unsuccessful candidates. We appreciate that not winning an election can be demoralising, therefore supporting unsuccessful candidates is crucial so that they do not lose confidence and are encouraged to stand again.

**159.** We recognise the significant contribution made by Chwarae Teg over many years in developing and running mentoring and training schemes, and as a Committee we are saddened to hear of the charity's closure. We thank them for their important work in this area and are concerned by the impact this is likely to have on the development and implementation of future schemes. We believe that the Welsh Government should now assess the capacity across sectors to deliver mentoring schemes and take steps to ensure gaps resulting from Chwarae Teg's closure are filled quickly.

**Recommendation 11.** The Welsh Government should, in light of the closure of Chwarae Teg, assess the capacity across Wales to deliver mentoring schemes and quickly identify how any gaps in provision can be filled.

## Online abuse and harassment

**160.** We heard that online abuse and harassment remains a persistent barrier to women from entering public life. A number of stakeholders and councillors during the focus groups highlighted this as a continuous issue. Focus groups contributors commented:

*"One of the things I think is a particular barrier for women is online abuse and you know if you put yourself up for this role or any role, you are opening yourself up to at best, some very negative tweets and at worst, death threats. I think until that issue is grasped and dealt with, you're still going to get people questioning, really thinking hard, women especially, and worse for disabled women and women of colour. And you're going to get your family questioning you – are you sure you want to do this? That's a significant barrier that I don't think anyone has managed to grasp yet."*

*Focus group 1, Monmouthshire.*

*“The risk of having social media trolling is probably quite off putting but I’m afraid I think it is something that’s always going to happen and will happen as long as you have social media that people can access.”*

**Focus group 2, Conwy**

**161.** Chwarae Teg noted that online abuse is a particular barrier for “disabled women and women from an ethnic minority background” and called for “more innovative and active ways to shield candidates from the levels of abuse” received via social media.<sup>117</sup> Chwarae Teg called for online platforms to take greater responsibility in “cracking down” on abuse, but also added that:

*“there is a role for political parties to be playing around the code of conduct that’s expected of Members and of elected representatives.”<sup>118</sup>*

**162.** The WLGAs noted that it has been working with Local Government partners across the UK on [Civility in Public Life](#). A coordinated programme to support local representatives and local authorities address intimidation and abuse, and improving political discourse. It has co-produced a handbook to help councillors deal with online abuse and harassment along with e-learning modules such as social media awareness. However, the WLGAs noted that:

*“the efficacy of this campaign remains unclear, and candidates would benefit from clearer practical guidance.”<sup>119</sup>*

**163.** The Minister’s paper noted the Welsh Government’s intention to:

*“bring together key partners to explore what else we might do together to combat abuse in politics, because this requires a whole system approach building on existing ideas whilst developing new approaches. We all need to call out bullying and harassment, which has no place in society or indeed council chambers.”*

**164.** The Minister added that part of the Welsh Government’s work will:

*“look to equip individuals with skills and support to manage difficult situations should they arise. This will include*

<sup>117</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [DLG 05 Chwarae Teg](#)

<sup>118</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 15 June 2023, paragraph 385

<sup>119</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, [DLG 06 WLGAs](#)

*considering resilience training, lone working guidance and managing digital relationships.”<sup>120</sup>*

## **Our view**

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**165.** It is very concerning that online abuse and intimidation is clearly still a significant barrier for many from putting their names forward for election. We were pleased to hear of increased support and guidance for councillors on dealing with online abuse and harassment, as well as e-learning modules such as social media awareness. We are unclear as to whether such support and guidance is provided to candidates as well as to elected councillors.

**166.** We welcome initiatives such as the [Fair Campaign Pledge](#), which sought to ensure all councillors and candidates commit to a fair and respectful election campaign. However, it is unclear what impact such initiatives are having, and the extent this is monitored on the ground. There is also a limit to such initiatives, with responsibility on political parties, political leaders, individual candidates and councillors standing for election to ensure the highest level of conduct online, whether during campaigning or otherwise.

**167.** We welcome the Minister’s commitment to bring key partners together to combat abuse in politics and we ask that we are kept informed of the outcome of that work.

**Recommendation 12.** The Welsh Government should provide an update to the Committee on the outcome of its work to bring key partners together to combat abuse in politics.

**Recommendation 13.** The Welsh Government should continue to press the UK Government to take strong and robust action to tackle social media abuse.

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<sup>120</sup> Local Government and Housing Committee, 13 July 2023, [paper.1](#)



## List of oral evidence sessions

The following witnesses provided oral evidence to the committee on the dates noted below. Transcripts of all oral evidence sessions can be viewed on the Committee's website.

Date	Name and Organisation
<p><b>15 June 2023</b></p>	<p><b>Councillor Lis Burnett, Leader,</b> Vale of Glamorgan Council</p> <p><b>Councillor Nia Wyn Jeffreys, Deputy Leader,</b> Gwynedd Council</p> <p><b>Joseph Lewis, Improvement Officer,</b> Welsh Local Government Association</p> <p><b>Paul Egan, Deputy Chief Officer,</b> One Voice Wales</p> <p><b>Jess Blair, Director,</b> ERS Cymru</p> <p><b>Dr Nia Thomas, Research and Campaigns Officer,</b> ERS Cymru</p> <p><b>Dr Stefanie Reher,</b> University of Strathclyde</p> <p><b>Catherine Fookes, Director,</b> Women's Equality Network Wales</p> <p><b>Natasha Davies, Head of Policy, Public Affairs and Research,</b> Chwarae Teg</p> <p><b>Chris Dunn, Chief Executive Officer,</b> Diverse Cymru</p> <p><b>Professor Uzo Iwobi, Founder and Chief Executive Officer,</b> Race Council Cymru</p> <p><b>Megan Thomas, Policy and Research Officer,</b> Disability Wales</p>
<p><b>13 July 2023</b></p>	<p><b>Rebecca Evans MS,</b> Minister for Finance and Local Government</p> <p><b>Elaina Chamberlain, Head, Democracy, Diversity &amp; Remuneration,</b> Welsh Government</p>

	<p><b>Lisa James, Deputy Director, Local Government and Policy Division,</b> Welsh Government</p>
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## List of written evidence

The following people and organisations provided written evidence to the Committee. All Consultation responses and additional written information can be viewed on the Committee's website.

Reference	Organisation
<b>DLG 01</b>	Jayne Garland
<b>DLG 02</b>	The Fawcett Society
<b>DLG 03</b>	ERS Cymru
<b>DLG 04</b>	Women's Equality Network Wales
<b>DLG 05</b>	Chwarae Teg
<b>DLG 06</b>	Welsh Local Government Association
<b>DLG 07</b>	The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales
<b>DLG 08</b>	Race Council Cymru
<b>DLG 09</b>	Electoral Commission Wales
<b>DLG 10</b>	Professor Elizabeth Evans, Goldsmiths, University of London
<b>DLG 11</b>	Equality and Human Rights Commission
<b>DLG 12</b>	Stonewall Cymru
<b>DLG 13</b>	Councillor Richard John, Monmouthshire County Council

### Additional Information

Title	Date
Welsh Local Government Association	13 July 2023