National Assembly for Wales
Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee

Diversity in Local Government:
Summary of survey – general public

November 2018

The **Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee** launched an inquiry into Diversity in Local Government in May 2018. As part of its inquiry, the Committee conducted two surveys – one aimed at the general public and the other aimed at local councillors who are currently in post. The following analysis deals with the survey aimed at the general public only.

Survey promotion and analysis

The aim of the survey was to hear from as diverse a range of Welsh citizens as possible. The survey was promoted extensively through a variety of channels:-

- Through the networks of key stakeholders;

- On social media, including focused advertisements which enabled us to target audiences in areas where we tend to get less survey responses;

- People visiting the Senedd during the National Eisteddfod for Wales and those who visited our stand at the Royal Welsh Show, Pride Cymru and during Senedd@Delyn; and

- People taking part in Assembly Education and Youth Engagement school visits, outreach sessions and visits to the Senedd and Pierhead, which ensured that a section of those who responded to the survey were not self-selecting.

To compile this summary an in-depth analysis of a complete data set was conducted; all data can be sourced to individual responses and further analysis can be undertaken upon request. Each question in the survey is addressed in turn.

Results are calculated from the number of respondents who answered the specific question and not the overall number of respondents of the survey, of which there were **872 responses** in total.

1. Do you know who your local councillor(s) is/are?

53.8% of respondents to this question do know who their local councillor(s) is/are.

34.8% do not know who their local councillor(s) is/are, whilst **11.3%** are not sure.

2. Thinking about your community, do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

"I'm able to influence the decisions made about my community, such as decisions on roads, schools, public transport and social care."

22.5% agreed or strongly agreed with the above statement.

18.9% neither agreed nor disagreed with the above statement.

54.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the above statement.

4.3% did not know whether they agreed or disagreed with the above statement.

3. In your view, who makes the key decisions about your community?

33.7% of respondents to this question believed that local councillor(s) made the key decisions about their community. **17.6%** chose Assembly Member(s), with **15.8%** choosing Community/ Town Councillor(s).

11.3% chose Member of Parliament and **3.2%** chose Mayor.

10.7% of respondents to this question selected '*Don't know*'. For those who selected '*Other (please specify)*', **(7.7%)** these were some of the more common answers given:-

- Council officers

- Business

- Council Cabinet

- Those with money

4. What do you think is/are the main role(s) of a local councillor? (Tick all that apply)

14.5% of survey respondents believed the main role of a local councillor was to engage with members on matters of importance to them.

13.9% chose representing the views of residents at council meetings, whilst **13.7%** chose responding to the queries and concerns of residents..

13.2% believed that keeping the community informed of issues that affect them was the main role of a local councillor, whist **12.6%** believed that developing policies and strategies to benefits the community was their main role.

10.4% of respondents to this question chose putting residents in touch with the relevant people within the council, with **10.1%** selecting scrutinising decisions made by the council as the main role of a local councillor. **9.3%** chose leading campaigns on behalf of residents.

1.2% of respondents selected '*Don't know*' with **1.0%** selecting '*Other (please specify)*'. For those who selected *'Other (please specify)'*, the following responses were some of the answers given (please note that the following are a sample of the responses received. All responses are available on request):-

"Community leadership"

"Develop and manage relationships with key stakeholders such as local police etc"

"Put their constituents priorities above those of their political allegencies and/or private gain"

"Hold regular, informal street surgeries"

"Having a spine to realise that sometimes doing the right thing for the greater good and not bend to the will of a few to keep themselves in position!"

"Make sure they regularly attend meetings and don't fall asleep. Councillors need to be very fit and well to carry out their dutites and responsibilities."

5. Please select the statement that best applies to you

67.5% of respondents to this question said that they had never considered standing as a local councillor for a local government election.

19.2% of respondents to this question said they had considered standing as a local councillor for a local government election but decided not to pursue it, whilst **0.9%** said they had considered standing as a local councillor for a local government election and pursued it.

8.8% of respondents to this question said they have stood for election and were elected, whilst **3.6%** said they have stood for election but were not elected.

6. Following on from your answer to the previous question, what are the factors that influenced your decision? (For example, time commitment, salary, to influence policies and strategies and make a change in your community).

Qualitative data analysis revealed the following overarching themes.

Theme	Quotes
Time commitment	*"Time commitment. Jobs to do in evenings and throughout morning and afternoon"* *"Time, what is spare time? 3 jobs. Work, sleep, repeat."* *"time commitment with a young family and the thought of it being dominated by the older generation and mainly men"*
Lack of interest	*"No interest in politics or similar due to next to no education on the subject throughout school etc"* *"I wouldn't like a public role and would hate campaigning to get elected"* *"I'd rather not work in politics thanks - too political!"*
Age	*"I'm 18 and female, therefore people would not take me seriously."* *"Seems to be a job for old people??"* *"I wouldn't know how I would stand as a councillor and as I'm fairly young (25) I'm still deciding what I'd like to do as a career."*
Lack of information	*"No idea what it entails, or even how to"* *"Not knowing where to start. Whom to speak to or get advice on standing from."* *"Unaware of what the job entails, how to run for the role, the impact of the role, etc."*
Political allegiance	*"Not sure which party to join. So appointment as a councillor is out of the question"* *"Do not want to be aligned to a particular political party"* *"I am not a member of a political party and feel it would be a massive challenge to get elected as an independent. I am also a woman and most of the councillors in my community are men which makes it a huge challenge."*

7. If you have previously been elected as a councillor but stood down during your term, or decided not to stand at the following election, what were your reasons for doing this? (Tick all boxes which apply)

22.9% of respondents to this question chose '*time commitment'* as their reason for choosing to stand down during their term, or not to stand at the following election. 12.4% selected the '*pressure of the role',* with 11.1% selecting '*support within the role'.*

10.5% of respondents chose '*work pattern',* with 9.2% choosing '*abuse or harassment'* and 7.8% choosing *'salary.'*

26.1% of respondents to this question selected '*Other (please specify)'*. Some of the answers given were as follows (please note that the following is a sample of the responses received. All responses are available on request):-

> *"The impact on personal life both in time and privacy is way beyond expectations. Social media and the new climate of abuse and hate has made things different ad more personal"*

> *"Frustration, role limitations, bureaucracy"*

> *"Inner political manovering"*

8. What are the factors that would make standing at local council elections more appealing to you? (Tick all that apply)

A '*better understanding of the role and responsibilities'* (28.5%) was chosen by respondents to this question as the leading factor that would make standing at local council elections more appealing. This was followed by '*Flexible working pattern'* (19.0%) and '*Greater support for local councillors'* (17.3%).

14.0% of respondents to this question chose '*Better salary/ allowances'* with 11.5% choosing '*The support of my existing employer'.*

For the 9.7% of respondents who chose '*Other (please specify)'*, these were some of the answers submitted, which have been categorised by theme (please note that the following are a sample of the responses received. All responses received are available on request).

Theme	Description
Improved processes/ system	*"A restructured system in which the councilors are in fact capable of serving the community"*
	"A reduction in powers of councillors: all too often they are ill-informed and incapable of making responsible decisions, and overly beholden to a variety of interests."
	"Adjustments to overcome barriers to my participation as disabled person. Political parties being more disabled aware. More accessible public transport. More disability awareness amongst local government staff"
Making a difference	*"If there was a genuine opportunity to make a difference"*
	"The belief that I would be able to make positive change"
	"Honesty transparency and a willingness by all levels to actually serve the community that employs them all"
Support	*"Mentoring from someone I trust, to help me work with people I don't like and to help me get resilient"*
	"Better information on how to conduct a campaign for those who don't have the support of parties - official or otherwise."
	"Support for independent candidates"
Greater diversity	*"A likelihood to see people like myself"*
	"Colleagues that were like me - not 60+ white, male."
	"More diverse role models and more transpacrency/ fairness for party selectors."

9. Do you undertake any community or voluntary work locally?

56.0% of respondents to this question said they did undertake community or voluntary work locally.

42.0% said they did not undertake any community or voluntary work locally, whilst a further **1.9%** said they were not sure.

Demographic of respondents

Location

67.6% of survey respondents came from South Wales, with **17.3%** coming from Mid and West Wales and **15.2%** from North Wales.

Age

32.8% of survey respondents were aged 25 and under, **50.4%** were aged between 26 – 64, with **16.9%** aged 65 and over.

Gender

56.8% of survey respondents identified as female, with **38.7%** identifying as male. **2.1%** preferred not say with a further **2.4%** preferring to use their own term. For those who preferred to use their own term, the following were some of the answers given:-

"Bigender"
"Gender fluid"
"Non binary"

1.7% of survey respondents considered themselves to be transgender, with **2.5%** preferring not to say. **95.9%** did not consider themselves transgender.

Sexuality

73.0% considered themselves to be heterosexual, **7.2%** as bisexual, **6.0%** and as gay/lesbian (or homosexual). **9.8%** of respondents preferred not to answer, whilst a further **4.0%** chose '*Other (please specify)*'. For those who selected the latter, these were some of the answers given (please note that this is a sample of the answers received. All responses are available on request):-

"Pansexual"
"Helisexual"

Ethnicity

90.0% of survey respondents identified as White. **4.3%** identified as Asian, **2.3%** as Mixed/Multiple Ethnic, **1.2%** as Black/African/Caribbean and **2.3%** identifying as an other ethnic origin.

Disability

75.6% of respondents to this question said they did not have a long-standing physical or mental health condition or disability (anything that has lasted at least 12 months or that is likely to last at least 12 months). **18.6%** did have a long-standing physical or mental health condition or disability and **5.9%** preferred not to say.

For those who did have a disability, **25%** were physical, **36.8%** were mental heath related, **5.9%** learning related, **9.9%** sensory, **18.4%** related to a medical condition (e.g. Cancer) and **3.9%** preferred not to say.

Diversity in Local Government:
Summary of survey – councillors

November 2018

The **Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee** launched an inquiry into Diversity in Local Government in May 2018. As part of its inquiry, the Committee conducted two surveys – one aimed at the general public and the other aimed at local councillors who are currently in post. The following analysis deals with the survey aimed at serving councillors only.

Survey promotion and analysis

The survey was sent directly to serving councillors as well as to the Head of Democratic Services (or equivalent) at each local authority in Wales, who in turn encouraged the local councillors in their area to respond.

To compile this summary an in-depth analysis of a complete data set was conducted; all data can be sourced to individual responses and further analysis can be undertaken upon request. Each question in the survey is addressed in turn.

Results are calculated from the number of respondents who answered the specific question and not the overall number of respondents of the survey, of which there were **528 responses** in total.

1. How long have you been a local councillor?

44.1% of respondents to this question had been serving as a local councillor for 1 – 5 years. **25.3%** of respondents had been a local councillor for 6 – 10 years, with **12.7%** of respondents serving between 11 – 15 years. **7.2%** had been a local councillor for 16 – 20 years and **10.7%** for 21 years and over.

2. What motivated you to stand as a local councillor?*

40.2% of respondents to this question, chose '*to serve the community*' as their reason for standing as a local councillor. This was followed by '*to change things*' (**23.7%**) and '*for political beliefs and values*' (**18.6%**).

8.6% of respondents chose '*because I was asked to*', with **6.0%** selecting '*to resolve an issue*' and **0.4%** choosing '*member allowances*'. **2.4%** of respondents chose '*Other (please specify)*'. The following are some of the answers given (please note that the following are a sample of the responses received. All responses are available on request.):-

> "*to help those who couldn't help themselves*"

> "*Because the other candidates were poor quality*"

> "*my father was a councillor for 40 years*"

> "*To represent people who feel they have no voice, those with less resources, those with disabilities*"

> "*To try and change the insular outlook that has pervaded my area for far to long*"

*respondents were able to select more than one option.

3. What barriers or challenges, if any, did you encounter while standing for election?

The following themes emerged from the answers submitted to this question. Please note that the following are a sample of the responses received. All responses are available upon request.

Theme	Quotes
Time commitment	"*Trying to campaign while still in full time employment*" "*Time. Campaigning and holding down a full-time job. As a man of working age, finding the time to campaign and subsequently be a councillor is difficult.*" "*Being able to take time off work to canvass for votes/knock doors/deliver leaflets*"
No barriers	"*None really, perhaps a couple of eyebrows raised at my (perceived!) youth*" "*No barriers but the main challenge was to get the non political voter to get involved in the election*" "*None, as my party has a system helping all*"

Personal attacks/ bullying	"Personal attacks from opposing party members and supporters that affected my family and my business"
	"Hostility from previous Councillors who felt I deselected them. Mostly barriers from within own party. Social Media ferocity and increasing hate tactics. Fear for family"
	"Social Media became a barrier and a challenge for it was used for personnel attacks and distracted voters from the main issues of my manifesto"
Age	"People thought I was too young"
	"A lot of voters could and would not vote for me because I was young and not experienced. I think there is an expectance that Cllr's are old & white but I do believe it is changing"
	"Vested interest and internal politics. Existing members considering others wards as their hinterlands. Timings of meetings and expectations of workload more suited to retirees or cabinet members and not to younger candidates"
Cost	"As an Independent, cost of campaign literature. Access to electoral register"
	"The biggest challenge was that I was an independent standing against two party candidates who had the full party machine behind them. Plus financially I didn't have a large budget"
	"I stood in a by election a few years before and learnt quite a bit, the biggest barrier was paying for the promotional material"
Lack of information	"Lack of information once elected"
	"Knowing how to organise a campaign. Finding a 'public' voice"
	"As an independent candidate, there was no one to learn from or support network, simply had to work things out from first principles"

4. How easy is it to progress in local government? Please share any relevant experiences with us below:

Theme	Quotes
Easy with hard work	"If you are willing to put the work in and are hardworking I think the opportunity is there for progression"
	"Very easy if you are prepared to commit time and effort"
	"With hard work and patience fairly easy"
Difficult	"as I work full time, very hard"

	"It is not easy to progress because there are internal politics that influence progression" *"It's difficult. I have support from other members but it's still not easy to make progress"*
Gender	*"Male usually preferred to lead, advance. Cabinet system inappropriate for local gov. decision making by a few, scrutiny seen as a " dog without teeth"* *"Difficult if female. No child care facilities / support. Difficult to be employed and a councillor more so in a big rural authority with no direct bus link to County Hall or train links"* *"Women are always short changed in government because there are always more male candidates"*
Dependent on political party	*"This depends on what party you are with, if you are with the ruling party and are sensible and approachable you can go a long way"* *"Ease of progress is mainly down to political set up of authority and how you fit into this set up"* *"To a large extent it depends on whether or not you are a member of the ruling group"*

5. Do you intend to stand for re-election at the end of your term in office?

47.3% of respondents to this question said they do intend on standing for re-election at the end of their term. **13.2%** said they do not, whilst **39.5%** said they don't know.

6. If you do not intend to stand for re-election, what are your reasons for this decision? (Tick all that apply)

25.7% of respondents to this question chose *'retirement'* as the reason they do not intend on standing for re-election. This was followed by 'pressure of the role' **(20.7%)** and *'no support within the role'* **(8.1%).**

7.2% of respondents selected 'inflexible working pattern' whilst **5.0%** selected *'salary/ allowance.'*

33.3% of respondents to this question selected '*Other (please specify)*'. Please note that the following are a sample of the responses received. All responses are available upon request.

Theme	Quotes
Bullying	*"Bullying and attitude of cabinet members"* *"Social media abuse, lack of a national system of support for Councillors and the continuous public attitude that we are all unscrupulous and untrustworthy"* *"Bullies and not enough openness. No way to move further with the role if your face doesn't fit its a lonely place to be with your fellow Cllrs. Public are great and appreciate what you do"*
Other opportunities	*"To pursue other interests"* *"To seek other opportunities"* *"Other things to achieve in life, causes to fight outside the council chamber, age at which I would continue to be a councillor untill, duty to party and electorate, the job is never fully done, its all in the balance hence don't know"*
Austerity	*"because of Austerity it is increasingly difficult to serve the community. Less staff, more work and no money for anything other than essential services"* *"Not convinced that being a Councillor is worthwhile, especially given the financial constraints of current austerity"* *"massive budget restaints, severe cuts"*
Time	*"The amount of time required to fulfil the role"* *"I work full time and sometimes might have to attend many hours of meetings after work. In addition we do need to drag local government into the 21st century and enable ICT to be utilised so councillors can participate via email, text etc rather than have to attend meetings in person. On occasion we drag people from all parts of our area for a meeting which might last 10 mins or less"* *"The hours of work are 24/7with other councillors working very little the pressure of some wards compared to others are extremely challenging the pay works out on average at £1phr with no work family life balance the officers seem to put themselves on a pedestal often giving the Councillors on the ground the run around it is extremely frustrating for any councillor today and this only adds to the general publics frustration"*
Age	*"I will be 70 years old perhaps the councillors should have a retirement age?"* *"I don't think retirement is the issue. It is more likely that with a rapidly changing landscape - economically, socially and politically, younger people should be encouraged to stand. In the absence of contenders, I would continue"*

> *"I would hope that there will be younger people coming forward, as I will be 64 at the end of this term"*

7. How could the candidate selection processes be improved to encourage a greater diversity of candidates to stand at local council elections?

Please note that the following are a sample of the responses received. All responses are available upon request.

Theme	Quotes
No need for improvement	*"The selection process I underwent was very open and enabled candidates from all walks of life to submit their application"* *"I think it works as it is know"* *"I don't see anything wrong with what we have"*
More information	*"More information. But this would not address the apathy amongst the electorate"* *"Provide more information on a councillors role but be more honest too about the pressures councillors face in particular budget cuts"* *"More information circulated throughout the authority in different ways to advertise the opportunity and process"*
Education	*"Education and information to the younger generation"* *"More education in schools regarding the role of Councillors"* *"Learning about Local Politics during education. Encouraging 6th Form placements attached to Councillors. Open Meetings/discussions to include young people in their communities - perhaps without a political bias"*
Promotion	*"Wider direct promotion of process to local organisations supporting diversity - young people, disabled, ethnic groups"* *"I think there needs to be more promotion around that anyone can be a Cllr if they so wish"* *"Raise awareness locally and nationally via social media"*
Flexible working	*"Details of part time, flexible work needs to be highlighted and groups of people from these diverse groups need to be encouraged to stand"*

	"Work with employers to allow good young candidates to stand for election by allowing them time away from work to attend meetings" *"I think it would be good to have younger members. However the difficulty would be that it is not realistic to be an effective councillor and work full time. It might be possible to work part time and be a councillor"*
Gender	*"All women shortlists in all parties and groups"* *"positive discrimination I.e. all women's shortlist's"* *"Equal opportunity for men and women. No all women shortlists"*
Financial remuneration	*"Either the allowance has to be appropriate for a young person with family responsibilities or in this financial climate I would not encourage anyone we will continue to attract political obsessives and elderly retired people"* *"The allowance needs to be greater"* *"Regrettably it comes down to remuneration for younger people. The role is insecure and other employment takes priority. Councillors are subject to unnecessary criticism when priorities need funding at the expense of residents wish list"*

8. Outside of the candidate selection process, are there any other steps that should be taken to encourage a greater diversity of candidates standing for local council elections?

Please note that the following are a sample of the responses received. All responses are available upon request.

Theme	Description
Education	*"greater education of what the role actually entails"* *"Educate people as to what a good councillor does and the impact they can have on the local community"* *"I believe politics etc. Should be taught in schools and colleges to give young people an insight into politics and may encourage younger people to stand for Councillors"*
Promotion/ publicity	*"More public promotion of the benefits of diversity and not being afraid to point the finger at male, pale, stale representation"* *"Better publicity about role of local councils and importance of inclusivity to facilitate change"*

	"Encouragement through advertising and advice on how more diverse candidates can successfully participate in local government"
Financial remuneration	*"The allowance does not reflect the time commitment or responsibilities of the role. Difficult to juggle a full time job with role. Unless rich or retired financially difficult"*
	"Allowances are low when you realise how hard it is to keep your job or find a new one"
	"Pay, many cannot afford to become a local councillor. Most need a second job, many are not flexible enough to allow this"
Flexible working	*"More flexible working practices, meeting times not starting at 5 or during the working day. Childcare not considered an expense to be claimed, as there is a reluctance to claim expenses. The allowance really isn't enough to expect anyone who hasn't completed their career to raise a family on."*
	"Greater flexibility eg with Carer Expenses"
	"Yes, have Council meetings at times when those in work can fully participate"

9. Excluding your work as a local councillor, please tick the boxes that apply to your current situation

28.2% of respondents to this question were retired. **16.9%** were self-employed or freelance, whilst **15.7%** were in full-time paid employment. **14.0%** were not in paid work, **12.3%** with caring responsibilities, **11.3%** in part-time paid employment and **1.7%** in full-time education.

10. If you have caring responsibilities, who are you responsible for?

34.0% answered '*child/children*', **18.0%** answered 'partner', **26.0%** answered '*relative*'. **22.0%** selected '*Other (please specify)*'. For those who selected the latter, the following were some of the answers provided. Please note that the following are a sample of the answers given. All responses are available on request.

> *"non related stepson with learning disability"*

> *"disabled foster children"*

> *"elderly mother and father and a severely disabled sister so understand first hand the difficulty these cuts are having on ordinary people"*

> *"1 school age dependent and 1 disabled young adult"*

11. Have you ever experienced any abuse, bullying, discrimination or harassment during your time as a local councillor? (Tick all that apply)

25.4% said yes, from the local community, whilst **19.2%** said yes from within the Council, **11.8%** said yes from within their political group/ party, **10.1%** selected '*Yes, other*' and **33.6%** said no, none of the above.

12. If you have ever experienced any abuse, bullying, discrimination or harassment during your time as a local councillor, please provide further information on your experience

Theme	Description
Social media	*"From time to time when dealing with contexious issues or a perceived lack of action with local issues (particularly litter) mostly on social media"* *Social media bullying from political opponents and anger from local community over planning issues.* *Verbal and physical attack's Attacks on social media*
From colleagues/ other members of the political party group	*"Bullying by a colleague"* *"Yes from other members of the political group. Undermining and condescending comments including spreading malicious rumours"* *"Yes from some colleagues"*
Attacks from other political parties	*"false statements from opposition party"* *"Mostly from opposition supporters"* *"when in power abuse from the opposition and when in opposition abuse from party in power"*
Attacks from the public	*"Received abuse because of decisions on planning meetings not meeting local residents expectations"* *"Verbal abuse from the community and local party members"* *"General verbal abuse in community and wider areas"*
Gender	*"Being female seems men think we are lacking intelligence"* *"Women being referred to as girls. Women's ideas being given less weight than men's. Attempts to intimidate through belittling and bullying behaviour, not directed at me but at others around me, with the intent of putting new councillors in their place"*

"Personal name calling; inneuendo or fake news, especially from the media. But I have witnessed others experience worse particularly women on women abuse"

Demographic of respondents

Location

54.8% of survey respondents came from South Wales, with **21.3%** coming from Mid and West Wales and **23.7%** from North Wales.

Age

2.2% of survey respondents were aged 25 and under, **19.1%** were aged between 26 – 44, **47.3%** were aged between 45 – 64 and **31.4%** were aged 65 and over.

Gender

34.8% of survey respondents identified as female, with **62.2%** identifying as male. **2.2%** preferred not say with a further **0.9%** preferring to use their own term. For those who preferred to use their own term, the following answers were given:-

"This is my own business"
"Not relevant to the question"
"Abimegender"

0.6% of survey respondents considered themselves to be transgender, with **4.0%** preferring not to say. **95.3%** did not consider themselves transgender.

Sexuality

81.0% considered themselves to be heterosexual, **3.9%** as bisexual, **5.2%** as gay/lesbian (or homosexual). **6.9%** of respondents preferred not to answer, whilst a further **3.0%** chose '*Other (please specify)'*. For those who selected the latter, these were some of the answers given (please note that this is a sample of the answers received. All responses are available on request):-

"Normal"
"It shouldn't matter what I consider myself to be"

Ethnicity

96.1% of survey respondents identified as White. **1.0%** identified as Asian, **0.6%** as Mixed/Multiple Ethnic, **0.3%** as Black/African/Caribbean and **1.9%** identifying as an other ethnic origin.

Disability

70.5% of respondents to this question said they did not have a long-standing physical or mental health condition or disability (anything that has lasted at least 12 months or that is likely to last at least 12 months). **23.6%** they did have a long-standing physical or mental health condition or disability, with **5.9%** preferring not to say.

37.6% identified as having a physical disability, **26.9%** a medical condition (e.g. cancer) and **17.2%** having mental health disabilities. **11.8%** said they had a sensory disability, **3.2%** a learning disability and **3.2%** preferring not to say.