

<b><u>ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></b>	AGENDA ITEM No. 9
<b>30 September 2020</b>	<b>PUBLIC REPORT</b>

Report of:	Adrian Chapman, Service Director: Communities and Partnerships	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Councillor Mohammed Farooq - Cabinet Member for Digital Services and Transformation Cllr David Seaton, Cabinet Member for Resources and Chairman of the Constitution and Ethics Committee	
Contact Officer(s):	Adrian Chapman, Service Director: Communities and Partnerships	07920 160441

**PROPOSAL FOR TASK AND FINISH GROUP TO PROMOTE EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY AMONGST COUNCILLORS**

**R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S**

**FROM:** Adrian Chapman, Service Director: Communities and Partnerships      **Deadline date:** N/A

It is recommended that Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee:

1. Agree to the formation of a time-limited cross-party scrutiny task and finish group
2. Agree the Terms of Reference for the proposed task and finish group
3. Agree that the outcomes of the task and finish group should be presented back to the Committee at the relevant meeting
4. Makes any initial nominations from the scrutiny committee members to join the task and finish group

**1. ORIGIN OF REPORT**

- 1.1 At the Full Council meeting on 29 July, a motion presented by Cllr Aasiyah Joseph was agreed, requesting the formation of a task and finish group to review aspects of equality and diversity amongst councillors.

**2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT**

- 2.1 This report sets out the proposed detail for the task and finish group agreed at Full Council on 29 July, to focus on aspects of equality and diversity amongst councillors.
- 2.2 This report is for the Adults & Communities Scrutiny Committee to consider under its Terms of Reference Part 3, Section 4 - Overview Scrutiny Functions, paragraph No. 2.1 Functions 13 determined by Council:

5. Equalities

- 2.3 The outcome of this work has the potential to directly and indirectly support all of the council's corporate priorities.

**3. TIMESCALES**

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	<b>NO</b>	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	N/A
---	-----------	----------------------------------	-----

#### 4. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

4.1 At the Full Council meeting of 29 July, a motion presented by Cllr Joseph was agreed, in which it was noted that:

- Women are the biggest consumers of council services, the majority of its staff are women, yet the majority of councillors and council leaders are male
- Equal opportunity is not a 'one size fits all' approach. It is about recognising that different people have different requirements to enable them to achieve the same goal
- It (*the council*) has a duty to consider all individuals when carrying out its day to day work, including shaping policy, delivering services and in relation to its employees
- Improved provision for parental leave will contribute towards increasing the diversity of age, experience and background of councillors, in addition to assisting with retention of experienced councillors and make public office more accessible to those who might otherwise feel excluded
- Action must be taken to improve the number of female councillors, by not only making it easier for them to become councillors but by creating a culture where they wish to stay

4.2 The agreed motion stated that the council therefore resolves to request that the Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee set up a Task and Finish Group to review:

- i. How the council can promote equality and diversity for all councillors including consideration of phasing out the use of gender defining titles
- ii. The adoption of a Parental Leave policy for councillors, to assist and encourage younger people to come forward as councillors
- iii. How the council can ensure councillors with children and other caring commitments are supported as appropriate
- iv. How political groups, Group Leaders and the Mayor/Chair can help ensure better behaviour in the Council Chamber to create an atmosphere of mutual respect – for example by:
  - Giving a reminder to all members of their responsibilities at the start of each meeting
  - Quick intervention if members fail to behave correctly
  - Ensuring a fair approach is applied to all councillors in the overseeing of meetings.

4.3 The Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee is therefore asked to agree to the formation of the task and finish group.

#### 5. CONSULTATION

5.1 Not applicable.

#### 6. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

6.1 It is anticipated that the Committee will agree to the formation of a time-limited cross-party scrutiny task and finish group. This will inform the approach the council will take to supporting equality and diversity amongst our councillors.

#### 7. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

7.1 The recommendations set out in this report follow agreement made at Full Council.

#### 8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

8.1 Not applicable.

#### 9. IMPLICATIONS

### **Financial Implications**

- 9.1 There are no immediate financial implications that arise as a result of this work. Any financial implications that do arise through the work of the task and finish group will be set out in the group's final report.

### **Legal Implications**

- 9.2 There are no immediate legal implications that arise as a result of this work. Any legal implications that do arise through the work of the task and finish group will be set out in the group's final report.

### **Equalities Implications**

- 9.3 The proposed task and finish group will seek to ensure there is equality and diversity amongst our councillors, and that councillors are provided with the support necessary to enable them to carry out their functions.

### **Rural Implications**

- 9.4 There are no immediate rural implications that arise as a result of this work. Any rural implications that do arise through the work of the task and finish group will be set out in the group's final report.

### **Carbon Impact Assessment**

- 9.5 A Carbon Impact Assessment will be completed to accompany the full report from the task and finish group that will be presented back to the Scrutiny Committee.

## **10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- 10.1 None

## **11. APPENDICES**

- 11.1 Draft Terms of Reference for the task and finish group.

## **Appendix A**

### **Scrutiny Task and Finish Group to Promote Equality and Diversity Amongst Councillors**

#### **DRAFT Terms of Reference**

##### **Membership**

tbc

##### **Advisers**

Adrian Chapman, Service Director: Communities and Partnerships  
Fiona McMillan, Director of Law and Governance, and Monitoring Officer  
Mandy Pullen, Assistant Director for Human Resources  
Cllr David Seaton, Chairman of the Constitution and Ethics Committee

##### **Purpose**

To make recommendations to the Committee to inform the development of initiatives that promote equality and diversity amongst councillors.

##### **Scope**

Using a combination of reviewing good practice and learning from elsewhere, discussions with expert witnesses, research, analysis of data, and interviews with councillors, develop proposals that set out:

- i. How the council can promote equality and diversity for all councillors including consideration of phasing out the use of gender defining titles
- ii. The adoption of a Parental Leave policy for councillors, to assist and encourage younger people to come forward as councillors
- iii. How the council can ensure councillors with children and other caring commitments are supported as appropriate
- iv. How political groups, Group Leaders and the Mayor/Chair can help ensure better behaviour in the Council Chamber to create an atmosphere of mutual respect – for example by:
  - Giving a reminder to all members of their responsibilities at the start of each meeting
  - Quick intervention if members fail to behave correctly
  - Ensuring a fair approach is applied to all councillors in the overseeing of meetings.

##### **Reporting**

The Scrutiny Task and Finish group will report to the Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee.