

Full Council July 2023 – Motion: Diverse Councils Declaration

Proposed by: Cllr Valerie Bossman-Quarshie

Seconded by: Cllr Sheila Chapman

This Council notes:

- Councillors represent their community, and it is important that they reflect the diversity within their communities, particularly in respect of social class and protected characteristics under the Equality Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation).
- The work of the Co-operative Party in developing a Declaration for councils aimed at increasing diversity in local government.
- A report by the Fawcett Society and Democratic Club showed that a staggering 95% of local councils are male dominated. This means that only 18 of 382 local councils have achieved at least parity in gender representation.
- The analysis by the Fawcett Society showed that just 36% of the UK's 19,212 councillors are women, which is a similar split to representation of women in the House of Commons, which currently stands at 35%.
- Islington Council are proud to have a diverse group of councillors with the Labour Group consisting of 53% women, with the majority of the Council Executive team being women.
- The Leader of the Council, Cllr Kaya Comer-Schwartz, was elected as Islington's first Black, Jewish woman council leader.
- The standing orders of Islington Labour Group notes that the Council Executive should reflect the diversity of the area represented by the authority as far as possible.

This Council further notes:

- In last year's local elections, most of Islington Labour candidates were women, for a second set of elections in a row.
- In May last year, Islington Labour also had 12% of candidates identifying as LGBTQ+, 20% identifying as having a disability and 47% identifying as coming from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds. 55% of candidates identified as coming from a working class background.
- In 2014, Labour's first openly trans councillor, Cllr Osh Gantly, was elected.
- Islington Council was the first Council in London to appoint a Women and Girls Champion.
- The council's open and welcoming culture to all, promoting the highest standards of behaviour and conduct. This is demonstrated through the various training provided for Members when they are first elected and throughout their term in office, as well as making meetings and the role accessible for all councillors, making adjustments where a need has been identified.

- It made a commitment to work towards the standards for member support and development as set out in the LGA Councillor Development Charter and are progressing through the year three process, in which we are currently in year one.
- The Members Allowance Scheme includes a carers allowance paid at London Living Wage, a Broadband Allowance, and a range of other allowances. This was benchmarked against a number of other London Councils.
- Former Islington Labour Councillor Alice Clarke-Perry led the campaign for Parental leave policy for councillors, setting out members' entitlement to maternity, paternity, shared parental and adoption leave.
- Our commitment to demonstrate a duty of care for councillors by:
 - Providing access to the Employee Assistance Programme, a counselling service available to all councillors
 - Having regard for the safety and wellbeing of councillors whenever they are performing their role as outlined in the advice and guidance developed specifically for councillors by Emergency Planning and Health & Safety.
 - Taking a zero tolerance approach to bullying and harassment of members including through social networks

This Council resolves to:

- Adopt The Co-Operative Party's Diverse Councils Declaration to increase diversity in our local government
- Provide a clear public commitment to improving diversity in democracy
- Set out a local Diverse Action Plan ahead of the next local elections, including:
 - Appoint Diversity Ambassadors for each political group on the council to work with each other and local party associations to encourage recruitment of candidates from under-represented groups.
 - Encourage and enable people from under-represented groups to stand for office through the provision of activities such as mentoring and shadowing programmes and information and learning events for people interested in standing as official candidates.
 - Proactive engagement and involvement with local community groups and partner organisations supporting and representing under-represented groups.
 - Encourage all members and candidates to complete a candidates' and councillors' survey distributed at election time.
- Provide flexibility in council business by
 - Regularly reviewing and staggering meeting times
 - Supporting remote attendance at meetings where it is lawful
 - Agreeing recess periods to support councillors with caring or work commitments

- Continue to encourage members to take up allowances and salaries to which they are entitled, particularly any reimbursement for costs of care, so that all members receive fair remuneration for their work and that the role of member is not limited to those who can afford it.
- Ensure that councillors from under-represented groups are represented whenever possible in high profile, high influence roles.