

Notice of Motion - 18 March 2025

Motion Title: Diversity and Representation in Local Democracy and Inspiring the Next Generation of Councillors

Proposer: Councillor Hemingway

Seconder: Councillor Kalebe-Nyamongo

“Council notes and welcomes the diverse and inclusive nature of the communities which together make the borough of Sandwell so unique and welcoming.

Council further notes the importance of affirming commitments toward ensuring local democracy is transparent, inclusive and representative of all our communities, and accessible to all, whilst always ensuring the highest standards of behaviour and conduct which our residents and communities rightly expect.

Council acknowledges that it is the responsibility of not just Sandwell Council itself but of all Councillors, whether as part of a political group or as an independent, to engage and encourage the next generation of Councillors to come forward and to continue working to improve diversity of representation in local democracy.

Council notes and welcomes the aspirations set out in the Co-operative Party’s Diverse Councils Declaration which collectively sets out a pathway to support the Council in ensuring the most inclusive representation, including the following aims –

1. Providing a clear public commitment to improving diversity in democracy.
2. Demonstrating an open and welcoming culture to all, promoting the highest standards of behaviour and conduct.
3. Setting a local Diverse Council Action Plan ahead of the next local elections. including:
 - Calling on political groups to appoint Diversity Ambassadors from their Councillors to work with each other and local party associations to encourage recruitment of candidates from under-represented groups.
 - Continuing to 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.
 - Proactively engaging local community groups and partner organisations to encourage the widest possible representation across Councillors from under-represented groups

- Encouraging all Councillors and prospective candidates to complete a survey around election time to gather views to inform future support arrangements.
 - Encouraging all political groups to set ambitious targets for candidates from under-represented groups at the next local elections.
4. Continuing the development of a Member Development Strategy, Induction Programme for new Councillors and a wider annual Member Development Programme and working towards achieving accreditation for member development through the Local Government Association (LGA) Councillor Development Charter and/or Charter Plus.
 5. Affirm commitments to supporting all Councillors including:
 - Access to counselling services for all councillors.
 - Offering training and support promoting the safety and wellbeing of Councillors whenever they are performing their official duties.
 - Taking a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and harassment of Councillors in any form.
 6. Explore options to ensure flexibility in committee and meeting arrangements:
 - Endorsing and encouraging recent Government proposals to allow remote attendance at meetings.
 - Ensuring the schedule of council and committee meetings is sufficiently flexible to ensure the widest possible participation by Councillors, including the duration of meetings and adjournments to support Councillors who may have wider familial and caring commitments who may otherwise be less able to undertake the role.
 7. Requesting the Independent Panel on Members Allowances to undertake an ongoing review of members allowances to ensure these remain fair and enable diverse representation in our Councillors, not limiting the ability to stand for public office and give service to the community to those who can afford it, including the suite of supporting policies for Councillors relating to maternity, paternity, shared parental and adoption leave.
 8. Working to ensure Councillors from under-represented groups are represented whenever possible in high profile, influential and decision-making roles.

Council therefore calls on the Leader and Cabinet to work with Opposition Leaders, Independent Councillors, and all Councillors to commit to the Diverse Councils Declaration and ensure Sandwell remains a diverse and representative Council, including continuing to explore a range of measures and support options to achieve this objective from training and development to arrangements and frameworks supporting Councillors to undertake their roles.”