

<b>Barriers to Politics Working Group</b>			
<b>REPORT</b>	Barriers to Politics Working Group Draft Report and Recommendations		
<b>KEY DECISION</b>	No	<b>Item No:</b>	4
<b>WARD</b>	N/A		
<b>CONTRIBUTORS</b>	Executive Director for Resources & Regeneration		
<b>CLASS</b>	Part 1	<b>Date:</b>	6 November 2017

## **1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1. This report provides a draft of the Barriers to Politics Working Group report to be considered by members when agreeing recommendations to Full Council.

## **2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1. The Barriers to Politics Working Group is recommended to:
- Note the draft report attached at Appendix A.
  - Agree recommendations of the Barriers to Politics Working Group to be given to Full Council on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2017.

## **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Barriers to Politics Working Group was established by a Motion to Full Council on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2017 in the name of Councillor Clarke and seconded by Councillor Elliot.
- 3.2 The Barriers to Politics Working Group was tasked with examining the barriers to those wishing to enter politics as an elected member and, once elected, the barriers to remaining in post or progressing.
- 3.3 The Group's aims were to identify and investigate the various barriers that exist for individuals wishing to apply for or to undertake the role of a councillor, and to put forward recommendations to Full Council on how to address them.
- 3.4 The Group's discussions were broadly focused on barriers in relation to the protected characteristics, the nine criteria by which all people are protected from discrimination by equalities legislation, as defined within the Equality Act 2010:
- Age
  - Disability
  - Gender reassignment
  - Marriage and civil partnership
  - Pregnancy and maternity
  - Race
  - Religion and belief

- Sex
  - Sexual orientation
- 3.5 The Barriers to Politics Working Group invited expert witnesses and considered research conducted by campaigning organisations, charities and public bodies. Details of the expert witnesses and evidence sessions are contained within the draft report attached at Appendix A.
- 3.6 In addition to evidence sessions, the group conducted surveys of existing councillors and residents to gather perceptions about the role and barriers which people had faced or thought they would face as a local councillor. The survey of residents was sent out through local assemblies, the Lewisham Life online newsletter and was featured in the News Shopper local newspaper.
- 3.7 Due to the wealth of evidence submitted to the Barriers to Politics Working Group it was agreed that reporting deadlines were to be extended from the original September 2017 Full Council meeting to November 2017.

#### **4. DRAFT REPORT**

- 4.1. The draft report of the Barriers to Politics Working Group is attached at Appendix A.
- 4.2. The draft report sets out the timeline and approach of the Barriers to Politics Working group and provides context in terms of the profile of the London Borough of Lewisham, the structure of the Council and the role that councillors play. Information about the current support available to councillors in the London Borough of Lewisham and neighbouring boroughs is also provided.
- 4.3. The body of the attached draft report is structured around the evidence sessions which have taken place since the Barriers to Politics Working Group was established; these were broadly themed around the protected characteristics as outlined in section 3.4 of this report. Each of the themed sections of the report provides context (largely from the most up-to-date Census of Local Authority Councillors), a summary of evidence considered as part of the evidence sessions, and details of the findings from each of the evidence sessions.
- 4.4. The draft report concludes with a summary of the findings of the Barriers to Politics Working Group and, once finalised, will include recommendations to Full Council as agreed at this meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2017.
- 4.5. The finalised report, subject to amendments proposed by members of the Barriers to Politics Working Group and the addition of recommendations, will be presented to Full Council on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2017.

#### **5. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1. The equality implications are set out in the body of this report and the draft report of the Barriers to Politics Working Group attached at appendix A.

#### **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1. There are no specific financial implications arising from this report at this time.

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1. Legal implications will be given at the appropriate time when there are specific proposals

## **8. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

8.1. Appendix A: Draft Report of the Barriers to Politics Working Group