



BARRIERS TO POLITICS WORKING GROUP

Date: MONDAY, 24 JULY 2017 at 7.30 pm

**Committee Room 1
Civic Suite
Lewisham Town Hall
London SE6 4RU**

**Enquiries to: Sarah Assibey
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MEMBERS

Councillor Suzannah Clarke	L
Councillor Colin Elliott	L
Councillor Joyce Jacca	L
Councillor Joan Millbank	L
Councillor Hilary Moore	L
Councillor Jacq Paschoud	L
Councillor Maja Hilton	L

Members are summoned to attend this meeting

**Barry Quirk
Chief Executive
Lewisham Town Hall
Catford
London SE6 4RU
Date: 14 July 2017**



ORDER OF BUSINESS – PART 1 AGENDA

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Lewisham



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

The public are welcome to attend our committee meetings, however occasionally committees may have to consider some business in private. Copies of reports can be made available in additional formats on request.

MINUTES OF THE BARRIERS TO POLITICS WORKING GROUP

27 June 2017

PRESENT: Councillors Suzannah Clarke (Chair), Jacq Paschoud, John Paschoud, Joan Millbank, Joyce Jacca, Hilary Moore

Also Present: Lauren Lucas (LGiU, Commission for Women in Local Government), Salena Mulhere (Officer), David Humphreys (Officer), Sarah Assibey (Clerk), Ching Yu (Representative of Parent and Carers Forum)

Apologies: Councillor Colin Elliot

1. Minutes

Cllr Hilary Moore advised she sent apologies for the last meeting but they were not reflected in the minutes of the last meeting.

The Chair also wanted the following added to the amended minutes of the April meeting:

“The minutes imply Councillors have a choice of the amount of work they take on: “How councillors choose to execute their responsibilities...is largely a matter for individual councillors...”- The group felt that councillors were often compelled to work longer due to competition between parties or to improve chances of selection. *This was due to the expectations of the electorate and the formal requirements of the job.*”

RESOLVED that subject to the amendments noted, the minutes were agreed as a true record.

2. Declarations of Interest

No interest were declared

3. Commission on Women in Local Government

3.1 Lauren Lucas from the LGiU presented a report providing background to the work of the Commission on Women in Local Government. She raised the following key issues in the presentation

3.2 The Commission was set up a year ago led by the Fawcett Society, a women’s campaigning charity. The LGiU has partnered with the Fawcett Society on the report, both to deliver part of the research and also to advise

over the course of the Commission and support them in their understanding of local government and how it works.

3.3 It is a cross-party Commission, co-chaired by Dame Margaret Hodge and Julianne Keegan, who is a Conservative councillor in Chester.

3.4 The purpose of the Commission is to gather evidence, provide recommendations and to encourage more women to stand and participate and to also look at the make up of women in Councils (i.e. women from BAME backgrounds, women with a disability and what the interaction are within these groups). This was in response to some shocking statistics: women make up more than 75% of the local authority workforce, but representation on a political level remains stubbornly low- only 17% of leaders in England and Wales are women.

3.5 The lack of progress of women in local government has remained almost unchanged in the last 10 years- at this rate it would take 48 years to achieve equal representation between women and male representatives in local government.

3.6 Looking at candidates by party, Labour has seen an increase in candidates consistently between 2008 and 2016. This represents their deliberate policy on fielding 50% female candidates and seats. It has fallen from a high base for both Liberal Democrats and remained relatively stable for Conservatives. Labour women elected has increased from 33% to 42%.

3.7 The research also demonstrated that men tend to stay in their political positions longer than women do. This incumbency holds a big advantage for men in terms of electoral success. In 2016 men were 1.6 times more likely to be long term incumbent than women were. As the cohort of councillors gets older, the ratio of men to women increases.

3.8 The greatest equality of representation of women and men in Council is 35-44 year olds. There is a large disparity in the 18-24 age group however this is a very small representation of councillors overall.

3.9 The research also found that a high number, 55%, of women with disabilities felt that they had been discriminated against compared with a lower number, 26%, of men with disabilities. The survey also showed that there was an underrepresentation of BAME women who represent 14% nationally but only 5.5% in local government.

3.10 Three main types of barrier were identified from this research:

Sexism and hostility

37% report sexist comments within their Party. 33% report sexist comments from other councillors. Sexual harassment was also reported, 10% from both the Party and from other councillors.

Exclusion from discussion/confidence and ability to be heard

Women were much more likely to report a lack of confidence in making their voice heard and that their opinions are valued. This is considerably more of a barrier for women in this area. A lack of training and support was also raised by the women who took part in this survey.

Institutional barriers

This included childcare, maternity/paternity provisions, clashes with other caring responsibilities and also distance from meetings.

3.11 The respondents outlined some suggested solutions to these barriers::

- mentoring
- flexibility of time of meetings
- provision of childcare
- better use of technology (there is suggestion that meetings could be more accessible via Skype for example).

3.12 A common issue raised between men and women was that there were not enough women councillors to choose from to take positions in Council. Another popular response was that women do not put themselves forward for senior roles. Sexism on the part of other councillors was an issue raised by 26% of women as opposed to 20% of men.

3.13 When the Commission produces its final report, it will be looking at some of the solutions mentioned in this interim report, as well as the Code of Conduct, targets, the role of Standards Boards, which can discipline councillors where necessary, and it will also further explore the use and availability of women's networks and other forms of support.

3.14 Discussing the flexibility of the time of meetings the Group raised the point that changing and varying the times of meeting may not make a great difference as day time meetings would negatively impact those in employment, as those with children may be negatively impacted by evening meetings.

3.15 For example, women hold more positions in other organisations, such as school governors, voluntary committees and local charities. However, identifying why many women fill local positions but only a few are willing or able to stand for councillor positions.

3.16 The group discussed utilising technology to tackle some of the practical barriers councillors with caring responsibilities may face, for example to take part in meetings, with the options of skype/conference calling a possible way forward. However, caution was urged as it was felt this wouldn't necessarily be beneficial on a regular basis, but would have a place in certain circumstances, such as maternity leave.

3.17 The group discussed the possible benefits of having an informal women's councillor network. It was felt that this could be a highly beneficial way of experienced women councillors supporting and engaging with other women councillors. ,

Members noted the report and thanked the representative from LGiU

4. Age and Caring Responsibilities

4.1 David Humphreys presented a report giving some context of age and caring responsibilities when becoming or in the position of a local councillor. The following key issues were raised in addition to the report.

4.2 28.8% of councillors in London had caring responsibilities at the time of the last Census of Local Authority Councillors in 2013. 25% of men had a caring responsibility for one or more person whereas 35% of women had such responsibilities.

4.3 Carers Lewisham and the Positive Ageing Council provided written submissions to the Barriers to Politics Group in advance of the meeting and a representative from the Lewisham Parent and Carers Forum was in attendance at the meeting. Carers Lewisham produced points for consideration in their report on how caring may impact on a persons ability to carry out the role of a councillor.

4.4 Looking at caring responsibilities, members raised the point that when looking after a child their increasing independence and progression is different to those looking after a child with a disability which could take place over the course of several years sometimes. This is a point for consideration- it is difficult for councillors to therefore take on any voluntary or extra work. It is difficult to do justice to the role. Many may have to stand down from positions because of the caring obligations they hold.

4.5 The group also endorsed the idea of members being more vocal of their personal caring circumstances which prohibit them from functioning in and around their role as expected, to give other members more understanding

and illuminate judgement. An anonymous case study was suggested to aid this idea.

- 4.6** Looking at caring responsibilities, members raised the point that when looking after a child their increasing independence and progression is different to those looking after a child with a disability which could take place over the course of several years sometimes. Caring responsibilities can make it difficult for councillors to take on any additional responsibilities either as a councillor, or wider voluntary/paid work.
- 4.7** The group also endorsed the idea of members sharing their personal caring circumstances with their party colleagues, to help raise awareness, normalise discussions and manage expectations around caring responsibilities in relation to colleague/party expectations. The anonymous case studies proposed might also help highlight the challenges councillors with caring responsibilities face.
- 4.8** Members raised concern over the pressures councillors might face in terms of progress. Members felt that people should be able to fulfil their role as best as they can, without the perception that they are not progressing. Progression is something that is appropriate at certain points of each individuals' life. It is fair for a councillor to step into the role when they believe they are in a good position to fulfil all their obligations as best as possible, without the scrutiny of not being ambitious.
- 4.9** The Group also clarified that progression in the microcosm of local politics is different to that of general employment, notwithstanding to many, their role of a councillor is perceived as a form of employment. Progression is not decided by any rational organised or documented mechanism as it would be for someone who worked in a larger organisation or public sector company. It is fundamentally at the whim of the majority party or the Chair of a committee. There is not a requirement for qualification, expertise or experience to hold the position of Cabinet Member, for example. Progression in Council happens on an irrational basis. The Group stated that perhaps a fairer system of selection should be considered for the recommendations.
- 4.10** The Group went on to discuss the issues and barriers of age in Council. It was stated that older councillors may feel pressure to retire from Council sooner than they would prefer to make room for younger councillors. Incumbency was also discussed in relation to the findings that it can prove to be a barrier for women. The group concluded that it should be made clear that anybody is welcome to be a councillor.

5. Future meetings

The following dates were agreed by members:

- 27th June (evidence session)
- July (to be confirmed as there is a clash) (evidence session)
- 6th September (evidence session)
- 3rd October (draft report considered and recommendations agreed)

The Group will report to the Council meeting in November.

It was agreed that the councillor questionnaire would be shared with councillors as soon as possible, as would a template for capturing case studies.

The meeting finished at 9.28pm

Agenda Item 2

BARRIERS TO POLITICS WORKING GROUP		
Report Title	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
Key Decision		Item No. 2
Ward		
Contributors	Chief Executive	
Class	Part 1	Date: 24 July 2017

Members are asked to declare any personal interest they have in any item on the agenda.

1 Personal interests

There are three types of personal interest referred to in the Council's Member Code of Conduct :-

- (1) Disclosable pecuniary interests
- (2) Other registerable interests
- (3) Non-registerable interests

2 Disclosable pecuniary interests are defined by regulation as:-

- (a) Employment, trade, profession or vocation of a relevant person* for profit or gain
- (b) Sponsorship – payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than by the Council) within the 12 months prior to giving notice for inclusion in the register in respect of expenses incurred by you in carrying out duties as a member or towards your election expenses (including payment or financial benefit from a Trade Union).
- (c) Undischarged contracts between a relevant person* (or a firm in which they are a partner or a body corporate in which they are a director, or in the securities of which they have a beneficial interest) and the Council for goods, services or works.
- (d) Beneficial interests in land in the borough.
- (e) Licence to occupy land in the borough for one month or more.
- (f) Corporate tenancies – any tenancy, where to the member's knowledge, the Council is landlord and the tenant is a firm in which the relevant person* is a

partner, a body corporate in which they are a director, or in the securities of which they have a beneficial interest.

- (g) Beneficial interest in securities of a body where:-
- (a) that body to the member's knowledge has a place of business or land in the borough; and
 - (b) either
 - (i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or 1/100 of the total issued share capital of that body; or
 - (ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the relevant person* has a beneficial interest exceeds 1/100 of the total issued share capital of that class.

*A relevant person is the member, their spouse or civil partner, or a person with whom they live as spouse or civil partner.

(3) Other registerable interests

The Lewisham Member Code of Conduct requires members also to register the following interests:-

- (a) Membership or position of control or management in a body to which you were appointed or nominated by the Council
- (b) Any body exercising functions of a public nature or directed to charitable purposes , or whose principal purposes include the influence of public opinion or policy, including any political party
- (c) Any person from whom you have received a gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £25

(4) Non registerable interests

Occasions may arise when a matter under consideration would or would be likely to affect the wellbeing of a member, their family, friend or close associate more than it would affect the wellbeing of those in the local area generally, but which is not required to be registered in the Register of Members' Interests (for example a matter concerning the closure of a school at which a Member's child attends).

(5) Declaration and Impact of interest on members' participation

- (a) Where a member has any registerable interest in a matter and they are present at a meeting at which that matter is to be discussed, they must declare the nature of the interest at the earliest opportunity and in any

event before the matter is considered. The declaration will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. If the matter is a disclosable pecuniary interest the member must take not part in consideration of the matter and withdraw from the room before it is considered. They must not seek improperly to influence the decision in any way. **Failure to declare such an interest which has not already been entered in the Register of Members' Interests, or participation where such an interest exists, is liable to prosecution and on conviction carries a fine of up to £5000**

- (b) Where a member has a registerable interest which falls short of a disclosable pecuniary interest they must still declare the nature of the interest to the meeting at the earliest opportunity and in any event before the matter is considered, but they may stay in the room, participate in consideration of the matter and vote on it unless paragraph (c) below applies.
- (c) Where a member has a registerable interest which falls short of a disclosable pecuniary interest, the member must consider whether a reasonable member of the public in possession of the facts would think that their interest is so significant that it would be likely to impair the member's judgement of the public interest. If so, the member must withdraw and take no part in consideration of the matter nor seek to influence the outcome improperly.
- (d) If a non-registerable interest arises which affects the wellbeing of a member, their, family, friend or close associate more than it would affect those in the local area generally, then the provisions relating to the declarations of interest and withdrawal apply as if it were a registerable interest.
- (e) Decisions relating to declarations of interests are for the member's personal judgement, though in cases of doubt they may wish to seek the advice of the Monitoring Officer.

(6) Sensitive information

There are special provisions relating to sensitive interests. These are interests the disclosure of which would be likely to expose the member to risk of violence or intimidation where the Monitoring Officer has agreed that such interest need not be registered. Members with such an interest are referred to the Code and advised to seek advice from the Monitoring Officer in advance.

(7) Exempt categories

There are exemptions to these provisions allowing members to participate in decisions notwithstanding interests that would otherwise prevent them doing so. These include:-

- (a) Housing – holding a tenancy or lease with the Council unless the matter relates to your particular tenancy or lease; (subject to arrears exception)
- (b) School meals, school transport and travelling expenses; if you are a parent or guardian of a child in full time education, or a school governor unless the matter relates particularly to the school your child attends or of which you are a governor;
- (c) Statutory sick pay; if you are in receipt
- (d) Allowances, payment or indemnity for members
- (e) Ceremonial honours for members
- (f) Setting Council Tax or precept (subject to arrears exception)

Agenda Item 3

Barriers to Politics Working Group			
REPORT	Barriers to entering and progressing in politics faced due to ethnicity		
KEY DECISION	No	Item No:	3
WARD	N/A		
CONTRIBUTORS	Executive Director for Resources & Regeneration		
CLASS	Part 1	Date:	24 July 2017

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report provides context for the Barriers to Politics Working Group to consider as part of the evidence session on barriers related to ethnicity which people face when running for and progressing as a local councillor.
- 1.2. This report draws on data from the most recent Census of Local Authority Councillors (2013) and provides information on research into the barriers people face due to their ethnicity whilst running for and progressing in elected office. The report highlights campaigns and initiatives which have attempted to support people to enter and progress in politics.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1. The Barriers to Politics Working Group is recommended to:
 - Note the report.
 - Consider the evidence provided at the meeting.

3. CONTEXT

- 3.1. The Equality Act 2010 defines the following characteristics as protected characteristics:
 - age
 - disability
 - gender reassignment
 - marriage and civil partnership
 - pregnancy and maternity
 - race
 - religion or belief
 - sex
 - sexual orientation
- 3.2. Lewisham's Comprehensive Equality Scheme (CES) 2016-20 sets out how the Council will meet its duties to improve the quality of life and life chances of all Lewisham's

residents as well as the various equality groups afforded specific protection under the Equality Act of 2010. The scheme contains the following five overarching objectives:

- tackle victimisation, discrimination and harassment
- improve access to services
- close the gap in outcomes for our citizens
- increase mutual understanding and respect within and between communities
- increase participation and engagement.

- 3.3. The London Borough of Lewisham has a population of 301,000 (the 13th largest in London and the 5th largest in Inner London). The population of the borough has increased by 25,000 since the 2011 Census (this represents a 9 per cent increase since 2011). By the time of the next national Census in 2021, the population of the borough is forecast to reach 321,000 (a 16 per cent increase on 2011). Children and young people make up 25 per cent of Lewisham's population, whilst those aged over 65 comprise of 10 per cent of the population.

4. ETHNICITY CONTEXT

- 4.1. At the time of the last Census of Local Authority Councillors in 2013, the vast majority of councillors were white (96 per cent). These figures were similar to previous censuses. In 2010, 96.3 per cent of councillors were white and in 2008 the figure was 96.6 per cent.
- 4.2. The table below shows the percentage of residents from each ethnic group at the time of the National Census 2011 across the population of England, London and Lewisham.

Area	White (%)	Mixed/multiple ethnic groups (%)	Asian/Asian British (%)	Black/African/ Caribbean/Black British (%)	Other ethnic group (%)
England	85.4	2.3	7.8	3.5	1.0
London	59.8	5.0	18.5	13.3	3.4
Lewisham	53.5	7.4	9.3	27.2	2.6

- 4.3. A greater proportion of councillors in London boroughs were from minority ethnic backgrounds (15.7 per cent) than was the case in England as a whole at the time of the 2013 Census of Local Authority Councillors; despite this, people from non-white backgrounds represented 40.2 per cent of the population as a whole. Councillors in the North East and South West were most likely to be white (100 per cent and 99.2 per cent of respondents respectively) than in any other region, although the figures were broadly similar in all regions apart from London.
- 4.4. A report based on data from the Census of Local Authority Councillors 2013 which divides responses in to white and other ethnicity is published by the Local Government Association. In terms of leadership within a local authority, 5.8 per cent of respondents from a non-white background were a directly elected mayor or deputy mayor; 1.6 per cent of respondents who were not white were a local authority leader compared to 2.8 per cent of white respondents. White councillors were over twice as likely to be party/group leader (7.6 percent compared to 3.4 percent).

- 4.5. The Census of Local Authority Councillors 2013 found comparable involvement in committees and subcommittees between councillors of different ethnicities: white councillors were members of an average of 3.3 committees or subcommittees, compared to 3.2 for those who were another ethnicity. Likewise, comparable time was spent on council business: councillors who were a non-white ethnicity spent an average of 20.9 hours on council business, compared to white councillors who spent 20.7 hours. A discrepancy can be observed in relation to party business, with councillors who were white spending an average of 4.2 hours on party business and councillors from a non-white background spending 5.8 hours on party business.
- 4.6. Respondents to the Census from other ethnicities were far more likely to become a councillor to resolve an issue (33.7 per cent compared to 13.7 per cent). White councillors were over twice as likely to say they became a councillor because they were asked to compared to councillors of another ethnicity (28.1 per cent of white councillors compared to 13.6 per cent from another ethnicity).
- 4.7. Councillors from a non-white background were more likely to say that they had more influence than they had expected before entering the role (60 per cent for other ethnicity and 40.8 per cent for white councillors). Respondents from a non-white ethnic background were considerably more likely to say that they would stand for re-election (81.6 per cent) compared to white councillors (64.8 percent); 15.2 per cent of white councillors said they wouldn't be standing for re-election, compared to 6.9 per cent of councillors from another ethnic background.
- 4.8. Respondents to the Census of Local Authority Councillors 2013 who were from a non-white ethnicity were more likely to have one or more caring responsibility (38.6 per cent compared to 27.5 per cent). Conversely, respondents who were from a non-white ethnicity were less likely to respond that they had a long term illness, a proxy for disability (9.3 per cent of councillors from another ethnicity compared to 13.3 per cent of white councillors).
- 4.9. According to the Census of Local Authority Councillors, approximately a third of councillors in England were women, but minority ethnic women were particularly under-represented; in 2010, 2 per cent of female councillors were non-white and in 2013, 3.5 per cent of female councillors were non-white.
- 4.10. In terms of age representation, 11.9 per cent of white councillors were aged under 45 at the time of the last Census of Local Authority Councillors, this compares to 22.7 per cent of non-white councillors.

5. ETHNICITY RESEARCH AND CAMPAIGNS

- 5.1. The BAME Women Councillors' Taskforce was convened by the Government Equalities Office in May 2008 to consider practical ways of encouraging BAME women to become local councillors and to make councils more representative of the communities they serve. The Taskforce set itself five objectives: to improve BAME women's knowledge and awareness of underrepresentation, to motivate and encourage them, to build their confidence and skills, to work to overcome cultural barriers within political parties that act as barriers to BAME women, and to help reduce stereotyping and raise awareness of the benefits of representation by BAME women.

- 5.2. The BAME Women Councillors' Taskforce conducted outreach events, a community leadership programme and a mentoring programme. The Taskforce highlighted the importance of good communications between partner organisations to harness the valuable input of each and coordinate efforts from an early stage. The Taskforce recommended that a single clear summary of the steps to becoming a councillor is developed. The group highlighted the importance of supporting the individual journey to becoming a councillor. The taskforce recommended that care is taken in matching mentors and that expectations should be managed along the way. The BAME Women Councillors' Taskforce highlighted the need for political parties to recognise that more support is needed to engage BAME women in party politics.
- 5.3. The Operation Black Vote and Government Equalities Office 'Black Asian Minority Ethnic Women Councillor Shadowing Scheme' ran in over 50 local authorities and 60 BAME women from across the country took part. The experience equipped the participants to stand for elected office and resulted in nearly a quarter of participants standing in the May 2010 local elections, with four participants elected as councillors.
- 5.4. The Operation Black Vote and Lewisham Council Civic Leadership Programme was launched in 2009 with the aim of addressing the under-representation of Lewisham's Black and Minority Ethnic residents within areas of civic and political life. Twenty-five participants took part in the 2009 programme using their skills to become more active within the community or to take public office and 40 BAME Lewisham residents took part in the second year of the programme. Four participants in the first year of the programme stood as candidates in the 2010 local elections; another candidate was appointed by the Secretary of State for Education to a role within the Office of Qualifications and Examination Regulation (OFQUAL), another chaired a Safer Neighbourhood Panel and one became a Board member for Race on the Agenda.
- 5.5. In 2017, the LGiU's Commission on Women in Local Government found that Black, Asian, and minority ethnic women are underrepresented in local government. Only 5.5 per cent of women councillors responding to the Commission's survey identified as BAME, slightly greater than the 3.8 per cent of men but vastly below the 14 per cent of the England and Wales population which identifies as BAME.
- 5.6. The Commission on Women in Local Government noted that due to the very small numbers of respondents to their survey who were BAME, they were unable to draw statistically significant conclusions. The data however did indicate that 24 of 48 BAME female respondents said they had experienced discrimination based on their protected characteristics other than gender, and 22 of 53 BAME male councillors respondents said that they had.

6. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. The equality implications are set out in the body of this report.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1. The legal implications are set out in the body of this report.

Agenda Item 4

Barriers to Politics Working Group			
REPORT	Barriers to entering and progressing in politics faced by people with disabilities		
KEY DECISION	No	Item No:	4
WARD	N/A		
CONTRIBUTORS	Executive Director for Resources & Regeneration		
CLASS	Part 1	Date:	24 July 2017

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report provides context for the Barriers to Politics Working Group to consider as part of the evidence session on barriers related to disability which people face when running for and progressing as a local councillor.
- 1.2. This report draws on data from the most recent Census of Local Authority Councillors (2013) and provides information on research into the barriers people with disabilities face whilst running for and progressing in elected office. The report highlights campaigns and initiatives which have attempted to support people with disabilities to enter and progress in politics.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1. The Barriers to Politics Working Group is recommended to:
 - Note the report.
 - Consider the evidence provided at the meeting.

3. CONTEXT

- 3.1. The Equality Act 2010 defines the following characteristics as protected characteristics:
 - age
 - disability
 - gender reassignment
 - marriage and civil partnership
 - pregnancy and maternity
 - race
 - religion or belief
 - sex
 - sexual orientation
- 3.2. Lewisham's Comprehensive Equality Scheme (CES) 2016-20 sets out how the Council will meet its duties to improve the quality of life and life chances of all Lewisham's residents as well as the various equality groups afforded specific protection under the Equality Act of 2010. The scheme contains the following five overarching objectives:

- tackle victimisation, discrimination and harassment
 - improve access to services
 - close the gap in outcomes for our citizens
 - increase mutual understanding and respect within and between communities
 - increase participation and engagement.
- 3.3. The London Borough of Lewisham has a population of 301,000 (the 13th largest in London and the 5th largest in Inner London). The population of the borough has increased by 25,000 since the 2011 Census (this represents a 9% increase since 2011). By the time of the next national Census in 2021, the population of the borough is forecast to reach 321,000 (a 6% increase on 2011). Children and young people make up 25 per cent of Lewisham's population, whilst those aged over 65 comprise of 10 per cent of the population.
- #### 4. DISABILITY CONTEXT
- 4.1. In the 2013 Census of Local Authority Councillors, respondents were asked whether or not they had a long-term illness, a proxy for disability, which limits their daily activities or the work they can do and that has lasted or is expected to last at least 12 months. Just over one in eight (13.2 per cent) of councillors confirmed that they had a disability or long-term illness which fitted the definition. This proportion has fallen slightly from 2010 (14.1 per cent), however it should be noted that the question in 2010 did not include the timescale.
- 4.2. The proportion of councillors who had a long-term illness or disability was highest in the North East (16.8 per cent), the West Midlands (16.1 per cent), and the East Midlands (15.3 per cent) and lowest in London (8.9 per cent), the South East (11.4 per cent) and the East of England (11.6 per cent). The position in London remained fixed between the 2010 and 2013 Census of Local Authority councillors with 8.9 per cent identifying themselves as having a long-term health illness.
- 4.3. At the time of the 2011 National Census, 14.4 per cent of Lewisham residents had a long-term health problem or disability which either limited their daily activities a little or a lot (7.1 per cent of residents said their daily activities were limited a lot and 7.3 per cent said their daily activities were limited a little). The Lewisham position is similar to that of the rest of London, with 14.2 per cent of London residents having a long-term health problem or disability which either limited their daily activities a little or a lot (6.8 per cent of residents said their daily activities were limited a lot and 7.4 per cent said their daily activities were limited a little). Across the whole of England, 17.6 per cent of residents had a disability (8.3 per cent of residents said their daily activities were limited a lot and 9.3 per cent said their daily activities were limited a little).
- 4.4. No differences were observed between male and female councillors in relation to whether or not the respondent identified as having a disability.
- 4.5. The proportions of councillors with a long-term illness or disability varied across political parties. Labour Party representatives (16.5 per cent) were the most likely of all of the main parties to state that they had a disability, followed by Liberal Democrat (12.0 per cent) and Conservative Party members (11.6 per cent).

- 4.6. In terms of ethnicity, 13.3 per cent of respondents who were white identified that they had a disability, compared with 9.3 per cent of respondents from other ethnicities.
- 4.7. Of the 106 councillors aged under 25 who responded to the Census, declared that they had a disability, and few councillors aged under 40 had a long term illness (3.5 per cent).

5. DISABILITY RESEARCH AND CAMPAIGNS

- 5.1. In 2010, the House of Commons, Speaker's Conference on Parliamentary Representation found that "many disabled people are deterred from any sort of involvement in politics or public life by problems at a local level, with their councils. Local authorities play an important role along the pathway to politics, but they do not always make it easy for disabled people to get involved." The Councillors Commission, reported in 2007 that some local authorities were failing to ensure practical help for councillors with disabilities and gave the examples of sign language interpretation at official meetings, induction loop systems and accessible meeting rooms. The Commission found that often support was not available or not publicised.
- 5.2. Research and campaigns into representation of people with disabilities has been conducted in other areas of public life. In 2010, the Advisory Panel on Judicial Diversity recommended a fundamental shift in approach from a focus on selection processes towards a judicial career that addresses diversity at every stage. In the same year, Disability Rights: UK conducted a survey of disabled people who are board level directors, departmental directors, or non-executive directors. The findings of the research identified 'high fliers' with disabilities, who agreed overwhelmingly that mentoring and support from senior staff were key to their success. However, the research also found that disabled people were significantly less likely to get that kind of mentoring and senior support.
- 5.3. The Equality and Human Rights Commission response to the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities call for evidence on the right of persons with disabilities to participate in decision-making, 'Smoothing the Pathway to Politics for Disabled People', was published in 2016. One of the Commission's recommendations was directed at representation in local government: the Commission found that steps taken by local authorities to allow elected members and the public to fully participate in public life should be exemplary practice. The full report is attached at Appendix A.
- 5.4. The Government Equalities Office has published 'Political Life: Disabled People's Stories' which sets out experiences disabled people have had in getting experience, standing for elected office and working in political life. The case studies give examples of barriers people with disabilities have faced and how they have overcome them. One of the case studies by a former Parliamentary intern recognised that some people expect there to be people who have negative attitudes towards their involvement in politics because of their disability, but his experience was that people's attitudes are very positive towards disabled people being involved in politics. However, one current councillor had experienced a lack of understanding from others within all sectors. Other case studies identified the cost of funding a British Sign Language translator or support worker as a barrier for candidates with disabilities. One candidate identified logistics for attending meetings as a potential barrier which he would overcome by thoroughly researching locations ahead of time.

- 5.5. Councillor David Beaman (Farnham Town Council) in 'Political Life: Disabled People's Stories' recommended training schemes to support councillors and potential candidates with disabilities. Apart from allowing information to be more widely disseminated, Councillor Beaman states that such training sessions would also provide the opportunity for people with disabilities to network to share and learn from the experiences of others. Additionally, Councillor Beaman recommends that consideration should be given to short and longer-term placements with Leaders of local authorities to provide mentoring and shadowing opportunities for candidates with disabilities.
- 5.6. The Local Government Association has published 'Make a Difference. Be a Councillor. A Guide for Disabled People' and introduced a mentoring scheme to support and encourage disabled people in politics as part of the 'Be a Councillor' Campaign. The guide is attached to this report as Appendix B. As part of the previous government's Access to Elected Office for Disabled People Strategy, the Access to Elected Office for Disabled People Fund was established; a cross-party group of MPs has recently called on the Government to reopen the fund.

6. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. The equality implications are set out in the body of this report.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. The legal implications are set in the body of the Report.
- 8.2. Additionally, Article 29(b)(ii) of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities requires the UK Government to enable people with disabilities to participate in non-governmental organisations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country. Community participation and 'civil society' have been encouraged by the UK Government in England and Wales through Department for Communities and Local Government funded projects and the Localism Act 2011 which introduced new rights for communities to take greater control in their local areas.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- 9.1. Appendix A: 'Smoothing the Pathway to Politics for Disabled People: Equality and Human Rights Commission response to the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities call for evidence on the right of persons with disabilities to participate in decision-making.'
- 9.2. Appendix B: 'Make a Difference. Be a Councillor. A Guide for Disabled People.'

Smoothing the Pathway to Politics for Disabled People

Equality and Human Rights Commission response to the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities call for evidence on the right of persons with disabilities to participate in decision-making.

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Introduction

1. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) thinks Britain will be a fairer, better country if we harness the potential of everyone in our society, and ensure they have equal opportunity to achieve positions of influence - as our elected officials, judges and the people appointed to the boards of public bodies and private companies.
2. There were three policy initiatives, all co-incidentally published in 2010, to understand the challenges people from different parts of the population including disabled people face in participating in public and political life:
 - Disability Rights: UK (formerly RADAR) conducted the first ever survey of disabled people who are board level directors, departmental directors, or non-executive directors.¹ The findings of the research, which was supported by Lloyds Banking Group, identified a talent pool of 'disabled high fliers', who agreed overwhelmingly that mentoring and support from senior staff were key to their success. However, the research also found that disabled people were significantly less likely to get that kind of mentoring and senior support; and 75% of those disabled people who could keep a disability or health condition hidden at work did so for fear being pigeonholed, stereotyped or stopped from progressing.
 - The Advisory Panel on Judicial Diversity recommended a fundamental shift in approach from a focus on selection processes towards a judicial career that addresses diversity at every stage.² While the report prompted improved participation by women and ethnic minorities in the judiciary, less attention was given to disabled people or lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people. The Judicial Appointments Commission's data on judicial appointments, which shows the numbers of disabled people who were recommended for judicial appointments, indicates that self-declared disabled applicants find it no harder to get through the application process than non-disabled people. ³ However, this data doesn't tell us much in isolation of the broader picture of disabled people's representation in the judiciary, which unfortunately isn't available as the official Judicial Diversity Statistics, which look at the diversity of appointed judges, do not cover disability.⁴
 - The House of Commons Speaker's Conference on Parliamentary Representation was convened to consider the disparity between the representation of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people in the House of Commons and their representation in the UK population at large.

¹ Disability Rights UK, "Doing Seniority Differently," 2010, available at: <http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/doing-seniority-differently-summary>

² Ministry of Justice, Improving Judicial Diversity, May 2011, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/217354/judicial-diversity-report-2010.pdf A report on Magistracy and Disability will soon be available in the Centre for Disability Studies Archive (University of Leeds) <http://disability-studies.leeds.ac.uk/library/>

³ Judicial Appointments Commission, Statistical Bulletin, 2015, available at: <https://jac.judiciary.gov.uk/news/jac-official-statistics-june-2015>

⁴ Judicial Office Statistics Bulletin, June 2015, available at: https://www.judiciary.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/judicial_diversity_statistics_20151.pdf

It delivered 71 conclusions and recommendations, which the Speaker said went “to the heart of the House’s future.”⁵

3. All three reviews of the diversity of public and political life in Britain were frustrated by the same problems:
 - the lack of accurate, or in some cases any, data about under-represented groups. This was a particular problem for disability, and consequently it’s difficult to establish a complete picture or make comparisons;
 - the lack of attention given to evaluating what works and what does not so that there’s no clear evidence about the impact policy and procedural changes have had in practice;
 - initiatives have not always been followed through due to a lack of sustained leadership, or a piecemeal approach with some recommendations being implemented, but not others, ultimately limiting impact.
4. In March 2012, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Navi Pillay, noted that the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) heralded a new era for the political participation of disabled people. She welcomed the efforts that many countries have made to enable persons with disabilities to participate in political and public life on an equal basis with others. However she also noted that disabled people continue to encounter legal, physical and communication barriers in the exercise of their rights under Article 29 of the CRPD.⁶
5. The UN Disability Committee is expected to examine the UK’s compliance with CRPD in 2016. Following the UK General Election in May 2015, elections for the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales will also be held in 2016. The EHRC considers this to be an important time to take stock of how implementation of Article 29 of the CRPD – the right to participate in political decision-making – could help to smooth the pathway to politics for disabled people in England, Scotland and Wales.
6. That’s why we are focusing on political life in this report, which is our response to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities’ call for evidence on the right of persons with disabilities to participate in decision-making.⁷

⁵ House of Commons, Speaker’s Conference on Parliamentary Representation, January 2010, available at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/other-committees/speakers-conference-on-parliamentary-representation/>

⁶ Fourth annual interactive debate of the Human Rights Council on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Interactive debate on participation of persons with disabilities in political and public life, 1 March 2012, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Disability/Pages/politicalpubliclife.aspx>

⁷ Terms of Reference are available here: and in the annex to this report:
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Disability/SRDiseabilities/Pages/DecisionMaking.aspx>

Summary

7. Five years on from the Speaker's Conference on Parliamentary Representation only a handful of its recommendations have been implemented. These include some positive developments for disabled people, for example section 141 of the 1983 Mental Health Act was repealed. This provision had automatically disqualified MPs from office where they had been sectioned for more than six months, has been repealed. Further, an Access to Elected Office Fund was piloted to help disabled people stand for election in England, with similar schemes being explored in Wales and Scotland.
8. Between 2010 and 2015, there has been demonstrable progress in the diversity of MPs: non-white MPs now make up more than 6% of the House of Commons, a 56% increase on 2010; and 29% of MPs are now women - up from 22% in 2010. There are also now 32 openly lesbian, gay or bisexual MPs, the highest number ever. Improvements have been made in the House of Lords, with 11% of those appointed since 2000 declaring that they have a disability. However, it's likely that there has been a decrease in the number of disabled MPs following the General Election in 2015. For example, four declared disabled MPs either retired or lost their seats, leaving only two who have, so far, self-described as being disabled.
9. The UK Government has suggested that to be representative of the 11 million disabled people in the UK, the House of Commons ought to include at least 65 disabled MPs.⁸ However, the exact number of disabled parliamentarians is not known because an important recommendation of the Speaker's Conference - for the House to collect data about under-represented groups – has still not been implemented. The House of Lords Appointments Commission does not survey current peers, or those it appoints. The Scottish and Welsh Parliaments don't collect and publish this data either. A provision in the Equality Act 2010 for political parties to publish diversity data about their candidates has also not been enacted.
10. Disability data is collected at the local government level in England, Scotland and Wales, although response rates from councillors can be low. The disability picture of local government across Great Britain is fairly static. For example 13% of councillors in England declared they had a disability in both 2008 and 2013. Local councillors are also aging, with a significant proportion of councillors across Great Britain aged 65 and over. Local authorities play an important role along the pathway to politics, but they do not always make it easy for disabled people to get involved. Despite equality legislation requiring local authorities to make sure reasonable adjustments are made for councillors and their constituents with disabilities. For example, sign language interpretation, induction loop systems and accessible meeting rooms are not always available or publicised.
11. The Equality and Human Rights Commission's evidence and analysis highlights five key actions to smooth the pathway to politics for disabled people:

⁸ Government Equalities Office, Government Response to the Speaker's Conference on Representation, March 2010, para 9, available at: <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/speakers-conference/7824.pdf>

1. Regular, sensitive and confidential collection of disability data from elected Members of the House of Commons, National Assembly for Wales and Scottish Parliament to ensure disabled members get the support they need to fully participate in public life; and a confidential disability survey of all current Members of the House of Lords.
2. Enactment of s106 of the Equality Act 2010, so that political parties are required to publish diversity data about their candidates.
3. The UK Government should reopen the Access to Elected Office Fund in England, and work with the Scottish and Welsh Governments to explore options for making the scheme, or similar funds, available across Great Britain.
4. The UK, Welsh and Scottish Governments should introduce, or continue, evidence-based, targeted campaigns to tackle barriers and build confidence amongst disabled people interested in standing for elected office
5. All elected bodies, at the national, regional and local level should be leaders in making the practical changes needed to enable disabled people to fully participate in political life, such as making available and advertising sign language interpretation, induction loop systems and accessible meeting rooms for local council meetings.

House of Commons

- **Representation**

12. Article 29 of CRPD requires the UK Government to ensure disabled people can effectively and fully participate in political and public life on an equal basis with others. This includes the right to vote and opportunity to be elected.
13. There are over 11 million people with a disability, limiting long term illness or impairment in the UK. The prevalence of disability rises with age. Around 6% of children are disabled, compared to 16% of working age adults and 45% of adults over State Pension age.⁹ The EHRC's basic position, set out in our evidence to the Speaker's Conference, is that a Parliament which reflects the diversity of the nation it represents will result in better legislation and a higher degree of public confidence in the democratic process.¹⁰
14. While disability data about Members of the House of Commons is not collected, anecdotal evidence suggests there was a significant fall in the number of disabled MPs following the 2015 General Election. For example, along with the retirement of Labour MPs David Blunkett and Anne McGuire, there was defeat at the polls for the Liberal Democrat Stephen Lloyd and Labour's Dame Anne Begg. This appears to leave the Conservative MPs Paul Maynard and Robert Halfon as the only MPs who would self-describe as disabled people. However, there are others who have spoken in past Commons debates of their own health conditions and some Members may self-declare in the coming months.
15. This handful of declared disabled MPs, out of 650 in the House of Commons, falls short of being representative of the 16% of working age adults with a disability. This contrasts with the progress that was made in relation to other under-represented groups at the 2015 general election. The proportion of women MPs increased from 21.8% in 2010 to 29.4%¹¹, and in the proportion of MPs who are from an ethnic minority from 4.2% to 6.3%.¹² According to numerous media reports, there are also now 32 openly lesbian, gay or bisexual MPs, the highest number ever.

- **Developments**

16. The EHRC has always supported the idea of an Access to Public Life Fund or the extension of Access to Work entitlements to allow disabled people the same

⁹ UK Government, Family Resources Survey 2011-12, available at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/family-resources-survey--2>

¹⁰ EHRC, Submission to the Speaker's Conference, 2009, p.4
<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/legal-and-policy/our-legal-work/parliamentary-briefings/submission-to-the-speaker-s-conference-on-parliamentary-representation>

¹¹ Inter- Parliamentary Union, Women in National Parliaments World Classification, 1 June 2015, available at: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm> Also see the House of Commons Briefing, Women in Parliament, 19 June 2015, available at:
<http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN01250/SN01250.pdf>

¹² House of Commons, General Election Briefing, 19 July 2015, available at
<http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7186/CBP-7186.pdf>

opportunities to access politics and public life.¹³ This would need to work in conjunction with procedures put in place by the political parties to ensure that disabled people of all financial means are able to stand for public office, not just receive support for reasonable adjustments once there.

17. The Access to Elected Office for Disabled People Fund was set up in 2012 and closed for applications on 31st March 2015. The fund offered individual grants of between £250 and exceptionally up to £40,000 to disabled people who want to be considered for selection as candidates for an election, or are planning to stand for election. The average award to applicants was £4,585; the highest award was £39,735 and the lowest award was £130.¹⁴
18. The Fund supported a range of activities that are essential to standing for selection as a candidate by a political party, and activity essential to standing for election (whether for a party or as an independent candidate), for example, canvassing and attending election hustings. In certain circumstances, activity which is not directly linked to "essential" selection/election activity may be considered by the Fund to be reasonable to support. This could include, for example, taking part in a public meeting(s) to discuss local issues, especially if other candidates in the election being contested are expected to attend. The amount of funding disbursed across the country and to different political parties varied, with those in London and the South East of England applying for and receiving the most, and Labour candidates applying for and receiving the most.¹⁵
19. An evaluation of the Access to Elected Office for Disabled People Fund pilot is being undertaken to consider the extent to which the fund removed barriers to disabled people's participation in public life. The independent Administrator of the Fund is preparing a report with data on demand, the different types of support that applicants required, and the extent to which funding helped them compete on level terms with other candidates.
20. The Speaker's Conference found a number of barriers to the selection of candidates which include cost, but also a lack of confidence, time pressures and lack of support. The Conference also identified multiple barrier or disincentives in the selection process for women, people from ethnic minorities and disabled people. There was also a tendency for selection panels to fall back on "more of the same" when selecting, or to promote only "favoured sons."¹⁶ Section 104 of the Equality Act 2010 enables registered political parties to use single-sex shortlists for election candidates, but not shortlists restricted to people with other protected characteristics, such as disability. However, the provision does enable registered political parties to reserve places on electoral shortlists for people with a specific protected characteristic such as disability.

¹³ EHRC, Submission to the Speaker's Conference, 2009, p.19

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/legal-and-policy/our-legal-work/parliamentary-briefings/submission-to-the-speaker-s-conference-on-parliamentary-representation>

¹⁴ Minister for Women and Equalities, Response to Parliamentary Question, Hansard, 10 June 2010, <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrants/?id=2015-06-02.701.h>

¹⁵ Minister for Women and Equalities, Response to Parliamentary Question, Hansard, 10 June 2010, cW <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrants/?id=2015-06-02.701.h> <http://qna.files.parliament.uk/qna-attachments/348053/original/702%20attachment.pdf>

¹⁶ Speakers Conference on Parliamentary Representation, 2009, para 110, available at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/spconf/239/239i.pdf>

21. A draft private members bill put forward in 2012 was aimed at assisting those who may not be able to become MPs at present because of their disabilities or their caring responsibilities, but it failed to complete its passage through the UK Parliament and there was no further action as a result.¹⁷ Recommendations from a European Union Fundamental Rights Agency report on the participation of disabled people suggested, amongst other things, live-streamed online or video conferencing to allow MPs to participate in debates remotely.¹⁸
22. Positive measures which have been made to address inequality in political representation include the repeal, from 28 April 2013, of section 141 of the 1983 Mental Health Act that automatically disqualified MPs from office where they had been sectioned for more than six months. In proposing the repeal of section 141, the UK Government said it felt the provision was “symptomatic of an outdated attitude towards mental illness which was out of touch with the modern understanding of mental health. It treated mental ill health differently from physical ill health and sent out the message that people with mental health conditions are not welcome in public life.”¹⁹ The Mental Health (Discrimination) Act 2013 also prevented disqualification of people with mental health problems from serving in the devolved legislatures, as jurors, or company directors. In the EHRC’s analysis, amending the legislation, with a view to reducing discrimination on the basis of disability and increasing disabled people’s ability to participate in public life, would help to harmonise domestic legislation with CRPD Article 29.²⁰
23. The Speaker’s Conference acknowledged that a key pathway to politics is experience working in an MPs office. Historically, such opportunities have been confined to those sufficiently well-resourced to undertake sometimes unpaid work in London, which is one of the most expensive cities in the world. The Speaker’s Conference recommended that each Parliamentary party maintain a list of individuals from under-represented groups to be notified of internships and temporary vacancies arising in Members’ offices.²¹ This recommendation enjoyed cross party support, and the support of the Speaker. The Speaker’s Parliamentary Placements Scheme aims to tackle the culture of unpaid internships by providing a nine month paid work experience placement designed to open up Parliament to people from disadvantaged backgrounds who are interested in politics but who would not be able to afford to work without a wage.²² The Scheme was originally administered by the Social Mobility Foundation and is now supported by the House of Commons Diversity and Inclusion Team. Now in its fourth year, the scheme is small in comparison to the

¹⁷ UK Parliament (2012) Representation of the People (Members' Job Share) Bill, available at: <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2012-13/representationofthepeoplemembersjobshare.html>.

¹⁸ The right to political participation for persons with disabilities: human rights indicators' <http://fra.europa.eu/en/project/2013/political-participation-persons-disabilities>

¹⁹ United Kingdom, UK Mission to the United Nations in Geneva, response to the *Thematic Study on Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Political and Public Life* of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Disability/PoliticalParticipation/States/ResponseUK.doc>

²⁰ Equality and Human Rights Commission, Parliamentary Briefing on the Mental Health (Discrimination) Bill 2012, available at: <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/legal-and-policy/our-legal-work/parliamentary-briefings>

²¹ Speakers Conference on Parliamentary Representation, 2009, para 42, available at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/spconf/239/239i.pdf>

²² For more about the 2014/15 scheme, see: <http://www.socialmobility.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Speakers-Parliamentary-Placements-Scheme-Job-Description-Person-Spec.pdf>

size of the House of Commons, placing approximately 10 successful candidates in an MP's office, whereas there are currently 650 MPs. The Scheme is open to people of any age and any location. In previous years, successful candidates have ranged from school leavers, to those in their mid-50s and they moved to London from 10 regions across the UK. As required by the Equality Act 2010, all reasonable adjustment costs for the successful disabled applicants are funded for the duration of the placement.

- **Challenges and Recommendations**

24. Data Collection

25. That there is no legal requirement to collect disability data about candidates or MPs is a barrier to understanding the precise scale and nature of the issue. The EHRC appreciates there are challenges associated with asking about disability in any survey, particularly when this relies on self-definition. It's also important to acknowledge evidence received by the Speaker's Conference that there were "a number of deaf and hard of hearing people in Parliament, and in politics, but they are not particularly open about it, perhaps because they feel they cannot be."²³
- 26. Recommendation 1: The EHRC considers it important for the House of Commons to obtain much better information about the percentages of Members who belong to under-represented groups, to understand more about their experiences of politics and of the House of Commons, and to support them to fully participate in public life. We'd therefore support implementation of the Speaker's Conference's recommendation for the House of Commons to consider how such information could be collected, regularly, sensitively and appropriately. For example the House of Commons' occupational health department could ask Members to complete confidential questionnaires about their experience of any illness or impairment. Analysis of the anonymised questionnaires could be fed back to the Women and Equalities Select Committee annually, to consider and make recommendations.²⁴**
27. Section 106 of the Equality Act 2010, which would require registered political parties to publish data on the diversity of party candidates seeking selection, was proposed by the Speaker's Conference on parliamentary diversity, and enjoyed cross-party support and the support of the Government of the day. However, it was not enacted by the Coalition Government.
- 28. Recommendation 2: The EHRC regrets that section 106 of the Equality Act 2010 was not enacted by the Coalition Government, and encourage the current administration to reconsider this position, with a view to ensuring that other initiatives to increase parliamentary diversity are evidence based.**

29. Attitudes

²³ Speakers Conference on Parliamentary Representation, 2009, para 176, available at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/spconf/239/239i.pdf>

²⁴ Speakers Conference on Parliamentary Representation, 2009, para 57, available at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/spconf/239/239i.pdf>

30. Disability Rights: UK (formerly RADAR) in their submission to the Speaker's Conference on Parliamentary Representation noted that having very small numbers of openly disabled MPs presented "two significant problems", which were:

"Firstly, it is all too easy for a non-representative House of Commons to overlook the disability dimension to critical, mainstream policy issues. One third of all British children living in poverty has at least one disabled parent. One third of all British adults with no qualifications experiences disability. Health inequalities are acute between some groups of disabled people and their non-disabled peers (for example, people with long term mental health problems or learning disabilities are more likely to get some killer diseases like stroke and heart disease, more likely to get them young, and likely to die of them faster, than other citizens). Achieving targets on child poverty, skills or health inequalities can only succeed if the disability dimension is addressed. Yet these policy issues tend not to be viewed as "disability issues" by a non-representative House of Commons (with some exceptions). This is a disbenefit not only to disabled people but to Britain as a whole: child poverty and skills strategies that address disability successfully are quite simply more likely to be successful in meeting their overall objectives, because of the numbers involved.

Secondly, the absence of a critical mass of openly disabled MPs risks entrenching the view that disabled people are the passive recipients of public services and public policy—when disabled people can and should be part of the solution and leadership."²⁵

31. Article 29 (b)(i) CRPD requires the UK Government to promote actively an environment in which people with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in public affairs, without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. The Article also requires governments to encourage disabled people's participation in public affairs. The 2011 report 'Pathways to Politics' was a comprehensive study summarising and evaluating an individual's ability to participate formally in politics through the use of 'push, pull and prevent' factors.²⁶ The report was premised on the fact that, regardless of 'some progress over the last 30 years, elected politicians in Britain still remain highly unrepresentative of the population as a whole' and set out recommendations for increased participation.

32. "Pathways to Politics" identified barriers that prevented people from standing from or becoming elected representatives. A lack of understanding and awareness of disability and the difficulties faced by disabled people in seeking selection and election were perceived to be widespread, both nationally and locally. UK Government research has also found that "political parties although signed up to the principles of supporting prospective disabled candidates achieve elected office, would benefit from support and encouragement to ensure the principles are embedded at all levels of a political party; from the national executive to all

²⁵ Speaker's Conference on Parliamentary Representation, 27 May 2009, paras 6–7.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/spconf/167/167we04.htm>

²⁶ Durose, C., Gains, F., Richardson, L., Combs, R., Broome, K. and Eason, C. (2011) Pathways to politics. Manchester: Equality and Human Rights Commission.

http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/documents/research/pathways_to_politics.pdf

local party offices. There can sometimes be a disconnect between national parties' positions on encouraging greater diversity, and the experience of disabled people at local party/local authority level."²⁷

33. The Speaker's Conference heard about 'referred prejudice': the tendency of parties to assume that disabled people would find it difficult to get elected, for instance, because there is a perception of public reluctance to vote for them. However, the Conference found no evidence that disabled people are less likely to be elected than others, once they get through the selection process.²⁸ In September 2011, the UK Government published a summary of responses to a consultation on its proposals for providing additional support for disabled people who are seeking elected positions as MPs, councillors or other elected officials. The report included the UK Government's response.²⁹ The UK Government noted that attitudes were a key issue because "evidence suggests that negative public attitudes can have a high impact on prospective disabled political candidates; for example, in relation to election prospects, concerns over additional resources which may be required, and the electorate's reservations about being represented by a disabled candidate." The UK Government proposed to respond to this by working "more closely with political parties, the Local Government Association (LGA) and disability organisations to develop focused awareness raising."³⁰ This proposal received a medium level of support from respondents, who insisted it should be delivered in parallel with other initiatives.³¹ The Government Equalities Office subsequently published a short guide for political parties on the Equality Act 2010³² and case studies of disabled people in political life.³³

34. Recommendation 3: The EHRC welcomes the efforts the UK Government Equalities Office has made to date to tackle the particular obstacles faced by disabled people who want to become MPs, councillors or other elected officials. We recommend the Government Equalities Office uses the evidence from the evaluation of the Access to Elected Office for Disabled People Fund to determine what further measures may be needed, and how these could be targeted effectively.

35. Financial Support

²⁷ United Kingdom, Government Equalities Office (2011), Chapter 4, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-elected-office-for-disabled-people-a-response-to-the-consultation>

²⁸ Speakers Conference on Parliamentary Representation, 2009, para 177, available at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/spconf/239/239i.pdf>

²⁹ United Kingdom, Government Equalities Office (2011), available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-elected-office-for-disabled-people-a-response-to-the-consultation>

³⁰ United Kingdom, Government Equalities Office (2011), Chapter 4, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-elected-office-for-disabled-people-a-response-to-the-consultation>

³¹ Government Equalities Office (2011) p.4. available at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/85502/summary-response.pdf

³² Government Equalities Office, Compliance with the Equality Act 2010 Guidance for political parties 2012, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/85508/disabled-access-guidance.pdf

³³ Government Equalities Office, Political Life: Disabled People's Stories, 2012, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/political-life-disabled-peoples-stories>

36. While the reports of the parties themselves suggest candidacy is largely inexpensive, a survey of Conservative candidates in 2006 estimated the cost of candidacy to the individual at £41,550 over an electoral cycle (from the start of a Parliament to its dissolution, normally a period of 4 to 5 years).³⁴ The costs for a disabled candidate are likely to be higher. For example a deaf candidate may have to meet the costs of a British Sign Language Interpreter, or a candidate with a mobility impairment may need to use more taxis than a non-disabled candidate to get to and around the constituency. Conversely, their ability to sustain these costs is likely to be lower as disabled people are more likely to be in low paid employment or in receipt of benefits.

37. Recommendation 4: The Access to Elected Office for Disabled People Fund was designed to enable disabled candidates to cover the additional costs of the range of activities that are essential to standing for election. An evaluation of the Fund's pilot is being undertaken to consider the extent to which the fund removed barriers to disabled people's participation in public life. The EHRC agrees that such an evaluation is essential for ensuring that its future use is targeted and effective. Subject to the outcome of the evaluation, the EHRC would support the UK Government reopening the Fund, following any changes that may be needed to improve its effectiveness.

House of Lords

- Representation**

38. The exact number or proportion of Members of the House of Lords with disabilities is unknown.³⁵ The House of Lords Appointment Commission was established in 2000. Their latest Annual Report which covered the period October 2011 to September 2013, as well as papers from the House of Lords library indicated that of the 63 appointments made by the Commission since it was established, seven people had declared a disability (11%).³⁶ Although no data is available to show the number or proportion of Members with a disability, anecdotally it is assumed that disabilities in the House of Lords are common. This was the view of Emma Crewe who, in her study of the House covering the period before, during and immediately after the House of Lords Act 1999, stated that "the number of Peers with physical disabilities is high partly because, with an average age of sixty-eight, conditions such as deafness and arthritis are common."³⁷

³⁴ Speakers Conference on Parliamentary Representation, 2009, para 205, available at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/spconf/239/239i.pdf>

³⁵ UK Government, Equality Impact Assessment of the House of Lords Bill 2012, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/221005/EqualityImpactAssessmentLordsReform.pdf

³⁶ House of Lords Appointment Commission, Annual Report 2011-13 [http://lordsappointments.independent.gov.uk/media/28825/annual%20report%20oct%202011-sept%202013%20\(pdf\).pdf](http://lordsappointments.independent.gov.uk/media/28825/annual%20report%20oct%202011-sept%202013%20(pdf).pdf)

³⁷ Emma Crewe, *Lords of Parliament: Manners, Rituals and Politics*, 2005, p 120.

39. The House of Lords Appointments Commission actively seeks to appoint people on merit who are representative of the UK's diversity, and its appointments to date suggest this will have an impact on the diversity of the House of Lords over the long term. However, the Commission does not collate information on the number of members who have a disability, nor are members required to provide information about their ethnicity or religion. As a result, it is difficult to provide a comprehensive picture of diversity within the House of Lords and track progress.
40. Though not elected by the public, Members of the House of Lords play a crucial role in representing the public interest. Proposals for an appointed element in the House of Lords stop short of stating that Peers should be required to act on behalf of any particular groups. Hugh Bochel and Andrew Defty interviewed a number of Members of the House of Lords on the importance of having Peers appointed from previously underrepresented groups, such as disabled people, the authors note that:

“There was relatively little discussion by Peers of symbolic representation. Although many female Peers, a number of Peers from ethnic minorities, and a number of Peers with disabilities were interviewed, few spoke about their symbolic importance, although several did discuss how they ‘acted for’ these groups. However, when the idea was raised there appeared to be little opposition to the politics of presence, and while some Peers thought their role went some way beyond symbolism, they were happy to be perceived in that way. For example, one disabled Peer, who is active in the Chamber in relation to disability issues, conceded that as a woman and somebody who used a wheelchair, she was sometimes seen “as a visible presence rather than as a spokesperson.”³⁸

41. Bochel and Defty also note that:

“While many Peers claim to provide substantive representation for a range of different interests, there is very little evidence about how Peers act to provide substantive representation, and it is therefore difficult to make judgements about the extent to which those interests are actually represented. This is particularly striking when one considers that whilst Peers claimed to represent a diverse range of interests, party affiliation remains the most significant indicator of voting behaviour in the House. It is also not clear who is being represented in this way, and perhaps more importantly who is not.”³⁹

- **Developments**

42. Article 29 (a)(ii) CRPD requires the UK Government to ensure people with disabilities are able to effectively hold office and perform all public functions at all levels of government, facilitating the use of assistive and new technologies where appropriate. Sections 21 and 22 of the Equality Act 2010 require “reasonable adjustments” to be made for disabled people in many aspects of life in the UK. The Speaker’s Conference referred to the “good progress towards meeting the

³⁸ Hugh Bochel and Andrew Defty, ‘A More Representative Chamber: Representation and the House of Lords’, *Journal of Legislative Studies*, 2012, vol 18 no 1, pp 82–97.

³⁹ Hugh Bochel and Andrew Defty, ‘A More Representative Chamber: Representation and the House of Lords’, *Journal of Legislative Studies*, 2012, vol 18 no 1, pp 82–97.

needs of disabled Members" in the House of Lords.⁴⁰ The report stated that "Baroness Campbell of Surbiton, a wheelchair user, paid tribute to the support she had been given by the House of Lords authorities, telling the Conference that she had found her need for reasonable adjustments had been "absolutely superbly met by the House authorities [who had] all been extremely positive about my requirements, and have gone out of their way to make things happen". This includes the provision of a specially-adapted room close to the Lords Chamber.

43. The report also highlighted Baroness Campbell's request for the House to allow her personal assistant to finish her speeches in the Chamber, because her condition left her short of breath. In 2012, the House of Lords Procedure Committee considered the matter.

"The Committee noted that not agreeing to her request for personal assistance in the Chamber "would limit and ultimately prevent her from taking part in the work of the House. Moreover, the nature of the assistance she requires is such that it is more appropriately provided by her carers, rather than by other Members or by staff of the House. Her request that her assistant be on hand to provide her with personal and practical help is therefore, in our view, a reasonable one in the circumstances. The same principles apply to Lady Campbell's request that her assistant be authorised to read out speeches on her behalf. Hitherto other Members of the House have finished reading speeches which Lady Campbell has begun. However, we do not consider it appropriate that she should continue to be required to seek the help of other Members in order to be able to participate in the work of the House. We therefore conclude that this request too is a reasonable one in the circumstances: her words, when she cannot herself deliver them, should be spoken by an assistant, employed by her and whose presence will not be recorded in the Official Report. "

44. The report was approved by the House of Lords on 24 July 2012.⁴¹ On 14 November 2012, Baroness Campbell spoke for the first time since the new procedure was adopted. She told the House:

"I am delighted to return to the Chamber today after a long period of illness. I am even more delighted to be accompanied by my assistant. She is a new, stronger voice who will enable me to continue contributing to debates in your Lordships' House. I thank your Lordships for your understanding and agreeing to this new and unique arrangement. This is equality in action; and it is how we achieve equality that I wish to address in this debate."⁴²

45. Following the Speaker's Conference report, the Director of Facilities in the House of Lords provided a memorandum for the Conference that outlined further work that was being carried out to make physical adjustments for Members with disabilities, including:
- the addition of stair nosings, new handrails and ancillary items on doors;

⁴⁰ Speaker's Conference on Parliamentary Representation, 11 January 2010, HC 239-I of session 2009–10, para 304. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/spconf/239/239i.pdf>

⁴¹ HL Hansard, 24 July 2012, cols 605–8.

⁴² HL Hansard, 14 November 2012, col 1541.

- enabling of fire evacuation lifts for wheelchair users and good progress in the development of Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) for Members with disabilities;
- improving door opening pressures, fitting of further handrails;
- numerous improvements to WCs including replacing most taps with lever mixer taps.

46. In respect of procedure in the Chamber, the report highlighted the following:

- one deaf Member uses a palantype which provides a written version of actual speeches in the Chamber;
- a blind Member uses a Braille reader; and
- the House is working with a voice recognition specialist to investigate whether “VR in reverse” is possible—ie for the software to finish a Member’s speech in their voice should they become unable to do so due to a medical condition.⁴³

- **Challenges and Recommendations**

47. Data Collection

48. The EHRC welcomes that the House of Lords Appointment Commission seeks to appoint on merit peers who are representative of the UK’s diversity. This should help to ensure that the important decisions made in the House of Lords reflect the broad interests of the British public. However, it is difficult to provide a comprehensive picture of diversity within the House of Lords or to track the progress the House of Lords Appointments Commission is making in increasing the representation of disabled people because members are not required to provide information about any disabilities, life limiting illnesses or impairments that they may have.

49. Recommendation 5: To strengthen the House of Lords Appointment Commission’s role in increasing the diversity of Parliament, the EHRC recommends that it should conduct a confidential disability survey of all current peers and to understand what progress is being made and what more may need to be done. All future appointees should also be surveyed on a confidential basis, so that progress can be tracked over time.

Local Government in England

- **Representation**

50. A survey of local councillors in England in 2008 and 2013 shows there has been very little change in the proportion of councillors with certain protected characteristics. The number of councillors with a disability has remained static at 13%. However, there have been changes to the age profile of councillors between the two years, with a nearly 10 percentage point (pp) increase in the proportion of councillors aged 65 and over, rising from 34.3% in 2008 to 43.8% in

⁴³ Speaker’s Conference on Parliamentary Representation, 10 March 2010, HC 449 of session 2009–10, Appendix 2. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/spconf/449/44905.htm>

2013. The rise in councillors aged 70+ has been particularly marked, with an equivalent decrease in the proportion of those aged 55-64.⁴⁴

51. Article 29(b)(ii) requires the UK Government to enable people with disabilities to participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country. Community participation and ‘civil society’ have been encouraged by the UK Government in England and Wales through Department for Communities and Local Government funded projects and the Localism Act 2011 which introduced new rights for communities to take greater control in their local areas.

- **Challenges and Recommendations**

52. In 2010, the Speaker’s Conference found that “many disabled people are deterred from any sort of involvement in politics or public life by problems at the most local level, with their councils. Local authorities play an important role along the pathway to politics, but they do not always make it easy for disabled people to get involved.”⁴⁵ Despite, at the time, being required to do so under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Councillors Commission, reported in 2007 that some local authorities were failing to make sure that practical help for councillors with disabilities —such things as sign language interpretation at official meetings, induction loop systems and accessible meeting rooms—was available and publicised.⁴⁶

- 53. Recommendation 6: While it has been suggested that the Access to Work scheme could be used to support practical help for disabled Councillors, the EHRC agrees with the Speaker’s Conference that this scarce funding “intended for use by individuals—should not be used by councils to fund core legal requirements—such as action to make reasonable adjustments to buildings.”⁴⁷ We remind local authorities that making reasonable adjustments is a key part of complying with the law, and that steps taken to allow elected members and the public to fully participate in public life should demonstrate exemplar practice.**

A. Wales

54. In 2010, approximately one fifth of the working age population in Wales was disabled. Disability increases with age so that one third of people between 55 and pensionable age in Wales have a disability.⁴⁸ Comprehensive data about the diversity of Welsh Assembly Members is not collected, so we don’t know how many or what proportion of Members of the Welsh Assembly have a disability.

⁴⁴ Kettlewell, K. and Phillips, L. (2014) Census of Local Authority Councillors 2013. Available at: <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LGCL01/LGCL01.pdf>. See data table EJ1.2.

⁴⁵ Speakers Conference on Parliamentary Representation, 2009, para 182, available at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/spconf/239/239i.pdf>

⁴⁶ Representing the future—The report of the Councillors Commission—December 2007, p. 90, available at: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120919132719/http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/583990.pdf>

⁴⁷ Speakers Conference on Parliamentary Representation, 2009, para 188, available at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/spconf/239/239i.pdf>

⁴⁸ Welsh Government, Prevalence of Disability 2007-2010, 2011, available at: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/prevalence-disability/?lang=en>

55. A diversity survey of Welsh councillors was carried out in 2012.⁴⁹ A total of 3,201 responses were collected from 21 local authorities, a response rate of 35%. The majority of elected councillors were over the age of 60; 57% of county councillors and 61% of community councillors although a lower percentage of unelected candidates were of this age, 46%. A higher proportion of elected than unelected candidates were retired: 44 and 35% respectively. The proportion of both elected and unelected candidates who described themselves as having a disability was very similar (14% and 15% respectively).

56. In March in 2014, a report of the Expert Group on Diversity in Local Government made recommendations for the Welsh government, local authorities, the Welsh Local Government Association, political parties, and councillors, to help improve the numbers of young people, women, people from ethnic minorities, lesbian, gay or bisexual people, and people with disabilities standing for election to local government.⁵⁰ As a result of the report, the Welsh Government's Diversity in Democracy Programme, in which councillors mentor people from diverse backgrounds interested in becoming involved in public life, is due for its formal launch on September 17, 2015.⁵¹

57. The Welsh Government and the Welsh Local Government Association developed 'Step Up Cymru,' a mentoring scheme for under-represented groups in which participants were mentored by local councillors and Assembly members. The scheme aimed to increase involvement in democratic society, but ended in 2010.

58. Recommendation 8: The EHRC considers that it is important for the National Assembly for Wales to obtain and publish better information about the percentages of Members who belong to under-represented groups, and to know more about their experiences of politics. We'd therefore recommend that the National Assembly for Wales' Equality Policy Unit considers how best to collect, collate and publish equality information about Welsh Assembly Members in a sensitive way.

59. Recommendation 9: One of the Expert Group on Diversity in Local Government recommendations was for the Welsh Government to consider the evaluation of the Access to Elected Office pilot in England and consider operating a similar scheme for the next local elections. The EHRC supports the Welsh Government's commitment to consider the results of the evaluation of the Access to Elected Office Pilot and to engage with groups representing disabled people about operating the scheme in Welsh elections.

60. Recommendation 10: The Speaker's Conference recommended scaling up Step Up Cymru to be UK-wide mentoring scheme to give encouragement to those who might wish to become candidates for elected office at local and

⁴⁹ Broomfield, J. (2013) Survey of local government candidates 2012. Social Research 20/2013. Cardiff: Welsh Government.

<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/caecd/research/130503-local-government-candidates-survey-en.pdf>

⁵⁰ ⁵¹ Welsh Government (2014) On Balance: Diversifying Democracy in Local Government in Wales. Report of the Expert Group on Diversity in Local Government.

<http://gov.wales/docs/dsilg/publications/localgov/140305-expert-group-report-en.pdf>

⁵¹ Welsh Government, Diversity in Democracy Programme, available at:

<http://gov.wales/topics/localgovernment/diversity-in-democracy/?lang=en>

national level or be appointed to a public body. The EHRC recommends that the Welsh, Scottish and UK Governments explore the Speaker's Conference recommendation to make it (or an equivalent) a UK-wide scheme.

Scotland

61. One in five people of working age in Scotland has a disability – that's approximately 19% of the population, or one million people. While all five of the main political parties in Scotland have signed up to the "One in Five" Charter to increase diversity in Scottish politics, there is still no requirement to collect equality data about Members of the Scottish Parliament.
62. A survey of Scotland's councillors was carried out in 2013.⁵² The survey was online and the response rate was low at 26%. 73.5% of councillors who responded were aged 50 and above, with 45% aged 60 and over and fewer than 10% under 40. 33% of respondents said they have a disability or health problem that has lasted, or is expected to, last 12 months and limit their day to day activities. 29.8% of councillors have a condition that limits them a little, while 3.2% are limited a lot. 13.6% of councillors who responded provide help or care on a regular basis for someone who is sick, disabled or elderly, and 26.2% of these councillors will have to or have had to make special care arrangements in order to carry out their council business.
63. In 2014, the Scottish Government funded a pilot Parliamentary Internship Scheme which created a series of internships in the Scottish Parliament for disabled graduates. It has also supported an 'Access to Elected Office' project through Inclusion Scotland, building on the Parliamentary Internship pilot to investigate a number of areas including barriers in the 'party career path' and the case for a Scottish version of the Access to Elected office fund. The main outcome of the project will be to create a co-produced blueprint for future work to address the identified barriers.
- 64. Recommendation 11: The EHRC considers that it is important for the Scottish Parliament to obtain and publish better equality data about under-represented groups at Holyrood and to understand more about their challenges in participating in politics at the highest level in Scotland. We'd therefore recommend that the Scottish Parliament Corporate Body considers how best to collect and collate equality information about Members of the Scottish Parliament in a confidential and sensitive way.**
- 65. Recommendation 12: The EHRC supports the work of the Scottish Government and Inclusion Scotland to replicate the Access to Elected Office Project in Scotland, and recommend that a new scheme is put in place to support disabled candidates to stand in forthcoming Scottish Parliament elections.**

⁵² ⁵² Improvement Service (2013) Scotland's Councillors 2013 Research Report
<http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/documents/research/Councillor%20Survey%20Report%202013.pdf>

The right to vote

66. Article 29(a)(i) of the CRPD requires the UK Government to ensure that voting procedures, facilities and materials are appropriate, accessible and easy to understand and use for people with disabilities. Individual Electoral Registration (IER) has been introduced in the UK, whereby voters have to be registered individually and provide identification in order to be registered. Additional funding was provided by the UK Government in an attempt ‘to support the costs of activities aimed at increasing the completeness and accuracy of the electoral register.’⁵³ Concerns have been expressed that IER is not necessarily positive and that it may impact on the ability of some groups to register to vote, such as those from young and mobile populations, and people who are disabled.
67. Noting that voter turnout in the 2010 general election was low compared with other EU countries (it was only one percentage point higher in 2015), and evidence that the electoral register is only between 85% and 87% complete, the House of Commons Political and Constitutional Reform Committee announced an inquiry into voter registration and turnout in the UK and considered some radical changes, such as compulsory voting, online voting, and extending the franchise to younger people in order to re-engage British people with politics and elections.⁵⁴
68. Barriers to the process of voting were highlighted by Scope when it carried out a survey of 1,000 polling stations to assess how accessible the 2010 General Election had been for disabled people.⁵⁵ Scope found that two-thirds of polling stations had one or more significant access barriers. The Electoral Commission has since developed guidance for disabled voters and for polling station staff and noted in a news release prior to the 2015 general election that there should be no barriers to someone casting their vote.⁵⁶ Acting Returning Officers have to ensure that the voting process is fully accessible, while polling station staff should have received training on the assistance they can provide voters who wish to vote at a polling station.
69. Article 29(a)(ii) requires the UK Government to protect the right of people with disabilities to vote by secret ballot in elections and public referendums, without intimidation, and to stand for elections. Despite the widespread assumption that postal voting is the most accessible way to guarantee this right for disabled

⁵³ White, I. (2015) Individual Electoral Registration. House of Commons Standard Note: SN/PC/06764 (accessed February 2015). <http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN06764/individual-electoral-registration>

⁵⁴ ⁵⁵ House of Commons (2014) ‘Voter engagement in the UK. Fourth report of session 2014-15’. House of Commons Political and Constitutional Reform Committee. HC 232 [Incorporating HC 1059, Session 2013-14]

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmpolcon/232/232.pdf>

⁵⁵ Scope (2010) Polls Apart 5. Opening elections to disabled people.

<http://www.scope.org.uk/Scope/media/Documents/Publication%20Directory/Polls-apart-2010.pdf?ext=.pdf>

⁵⁶ <http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/journalist/electoral-commission-media-centre/news-releases-campaigns/voters-with-a-disability-are-reminded-there-should-be-no-barriers-to-them-casting-their-vote-on-7-may?>

voters, almost half of disabled voters who used the postal voting system reported one or more significant access problems.⁵⁷

70. A lack of mental capacity is not deemed an incapacity to vote in the UK, unlike in some other European countries, and people with learning difficulties or mental health conditions who meet the other registration qualifications are eligible to register.⁵⁸ The decision about how to vote must be made by the individual and not by anyone else on their behalf, including someone who may be their carer or generally make decisions for them.

Participation in local decision-making

71. The Speaker's Conference recognised that a key pathway to politics was engagement, in some degree, with local decision-making "the process by which political parties develop their policies to improve society, work to communicate those ideas to others and seek public support to put those ideas into practice."⁵⁹ According to the Citizenship Foundation, the main reasons why people do not become involved in decision-making are: "lack of time; lack of trust; and lack of the knowledge, skills and confidence to make the political process work for them."⁶⁰

72. The Public Sector Equality Duty was introduced in April 2011, harmonising the previous equality duties for race, disability and gender. The duty requires all 'public authorities', (as defined by the Human Rights Act 1998), to have 'due regard' to equality, including disability equality. The duty explicitly recognises that public authorities should have 'due regard' to 'advancing equality of opportunity,' which includes 'steps to take account of people's disabilities.' Whilst the 'general duty' applies to the three nations of Great Britain, the specific duties (regulations that make administrative provisions to help implement the duty) are different in the three nations.

73. The previous Disability Equality Duty was supported by specific duties that required public authorities to involve disabled people in the development of disability strategies. In England, this specific requirement was not replicated in the regulations developed to support the new duty. By contrast, in Wales, there is a specific duty on public authorities to involve people who are representative of one or more of the protected groups in meeting the general duty, setting equality objectives, developing equality plan and assessing the impact of its policies. This may include disabled people but this is not explicitly required.

74. Community participation and 'civil society' have been encouraged by the UK Government in England and Wales through Department for Communities and

⁵⁷ Scope (2010) Polls Apart 5. Opening elections to disabled people.

<http://www.scope.org.uk/Scope/media/Documents/Publication%20Directory/Polls-apart-2010.pdf?ext=.pdf>

⁵⁸ Fundamental Rights Agency (2014) The right to political participation for persons with disabilities.

http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-2014-right-political-participation-persons-disabilities_en.pdf

⁵⁹ Speakers Conference on Parliamentary Representation, 2009, para 11, available at:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/spconf/239/239i.pdf>

⁶⁰ Speakers Conference on Parliamentary Representation, 2009, para 27, available at:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/spconf/239/239i.pdf>

Local Government funded projects. The Localism Act 2011 introduced new rights for communities in England to take greater control in their local areas, and the Office of Disability Issues has published guidance for disabled people and their organisations to get involved in local decision-making.⁶¹

⁶¹ Office of Disability Issues, Making the Most of Partnership Boards, available at:
<http://www.disabilityinformationzone.co.uk/pdfs/OfficeDisabilityIssues/psb.pdf>

Annex: The right of persons with disabilities to participate in decision-making - Call for submissions

The Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Ms. Catalina Devandas-Aguilar, is currently preparing a study, to be presented at the 31st session of the Human Rights Council (March 2016), on the *right of persons with disabilities to participate in decision-making*.

Specific information request:

English

1. Please provide information on the legislative and policy framework in place in your country related to the status, establishment, resourcing, and functioning of representative organizations of persons with disabilities at the national, regional and local levels;
2. Please provide information on existing legislation and policies aimed at ensuring that persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, including children with disabilities, are consulted and involved in decision-making processes that directly or indirectly concern them;
3. Please provide information on any consultative body or mechanism established to consult and engage with representative organizations of persons with disabilities, including information about their composition, criteria for membership (nomination, appointment, election, etc.) and functioning;
4. Please provide information on the efforts undertaken at national, regional and/or local levels to strengthen the capacity of representative organizations of persons with disabilities, in order to facilitate their participation in legislative, policy and other decision-making processes;
5. Please explain whether and how persons with disabilities participate in monitoring the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (art. 33, para. 3), and in the nomination of experts to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (art. 34, para. 3);
6. Please identify the main challenges faced by the diversity of persons with disabilities in participating in mainstream and disability-specific decision-making processes at the national, regional and local levels, including challenges faced by persons who experience multiple discrimination (e.g., on the basis of disability, age, gender, ethnic origin, geographical location).

Additional questions for civil society:

7. Please provide information on the existence of organizations of persons with disabilities in your country, including organizations of children and women with disabilities, as well as their composition and internal decision-making processes and procedures;
8. Please identify the main challenges faced by the diversity of persons with disabilities as members of mainstream or disability-specific non-governmental organizations, and in participating in the activities of such organizations, including challenges faced by persons who experience multiple discrimination.



MAKE A DIFFERENCE. BE A COUNCILLOR. A GUIDE FOR DISABLED PEOPLE.

www.beacouncillor.org.uk



Cover images – top: Councillor Karen Bellamy, Labour, Waltham Forest
bottom: David Buxton, Liberal Democrat, Epsom & Ewell

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Make a difference. Be a councillor. A guide for disabled people.

Making a difference:

A guide to becoming a councillor for people with disabilities

What matters to you in your local area? Is it the state of the local park, the need for more activities for young people, improving services for vulnerable people, making the roads safer or ensuring that local businesses can thrive?

Whatever needs changing in your neighbourhood, you could be just the person to change it by becoming a local councillor. There are about 20,000 local councillors in England and Wales, each representing their local community and all with their own reason for doing so.

The Government and the Local Government Association (LGA) believe that democratic institutions make the best decisions when they have a mix of people with different skills, backgrounds and experiences, from right across the country.

But at the moment there are many faces missing. For example, disabled people are currently under represented in public and political life; only about 10 per cent of local councillors have a declared disability or long term impairment, compared with about 14 per cent in 2010.

Starting on the route into elected office can be daunting, particularly if you feel you face particular barriers in taking part fully in your community. This booklet will help you decide whether to take the plunge and stand for election to your local council; it also outlines the additional support that is available through the 'Access to Elected Office for Disabled People Strategy'.

You could be the fresh new talent that your council is looking for. Are you ready to help change the face of local government? No other role gives you the chance to make such a huge difference to the quality of life for people in your local area.

Councillor Sir Merrick Cockell

Chairman, Local Government Association

Helen Grant MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Justice, Women and Equalities

Councillor Tom Garrod, Conservative, Norfolk

I got involved with the local Conservative party as a teenager and started helping with election campaigns. They asked if I would stand for election. I lost the first time but a year later I was elected at the age of 19, Norfolk's youngest ever county councillor. I'm the deputy cabinet member for vulnerable children, which includes special educational needs, and it's refreshing for parents to have someone who understands the issues they face (I have cerebral palsy). One of the attractions about being a councillor for a disabled person is that to a good extent you can define what you want to do and when you want to do it. My advice to others would be to draw on your strengths as an individual and seek support when you need it. I enjoy seeing people's reaction when I tell them I'm 23, I've got a disability and I'm policy-making in the county council: that sends a really strong message.



What do councillors do?

Councillors are elected to the local council to represent their local community, so they must either live or work in the area. Becoming a councillor is both a rewarding and privileged form of public service. You will be in a position to make a difference to the quality of people's daily lives and to their prospects.

Being an effective councillor requires both commitment and hard work. Councillors have to balance the needs and interests of residents, the political party they represent (if any) and the council. These will all make legitimate demands on a councillor's time, on top of the demands and needs of their personal and professional lives. Before you consider becoming a councillor you may want to discuss it with your family and friends to make sure they understand what you are taking on. You will need their support as you'll have to spend some of your spare time on council business.

Councils carry out a wide range of duties, and manage large budgets. No one is expected to be an expert in everything, and councillor roles are flexible to suit all types of people and the skills, commitment and time they can offer. Many councillors chose to specialise in certain services areas, such as planning arts, or transport; and being disabled does not mean you would be expected to concentrate on disability related issues.

How councils work

This depends on the type of council. There are several types of local council in England, for example district, borough, county, metropolitan and unitary councils. Sometimes these are referred to as local authorities. You may also want to consider standing as a councillor for your town or parish council. These are smaller organisations that have some money to spend for the benefit of people in a small geographical area (for example a town or village).

All councils have things in common in the way they work and make decisions on behalf of their local communities. They are all led by democratically elected councillors who set the vision and direction of the council. Most are run on a system similar to that of central government, with an elected executive (or cabinet) to decide on policy and make decisions which other councillors then 'scrutinise' or examine in detail.

All councils (with the exception of town or parish councils) are large organisations that play a big part in the local economy and influence many aspects of the lives of the people who live and work there. A large proportion of the work they do is determined by central government. Local councils vary widely in terms of their style, political leadership and approach to delivering these central government programmes, and it is here that your knowledge and commitment could make a real difference.

A council can be responsible for a range of services, such as:

- education and lifelong learning
- social services and health
- housing and regeneration
- waste collection and recycling
- roads and street lighting
- arts, sports and culture
- environment
- planning and regulation
- tackling disadvantage and building strong, stable communities
- taxing and spending
- transport.

These activities are mainly funded through payments from central government and the collection of Council Tax, although Council Tax makes up only about a quarter of a council's income.

Over recent years the role of councils has changed. They now have additional responsibilities such as improving the health and wellbeing of local people through joint working with health services. Another important responsibility is community safety and crime reduction, usually achieved through partnership working with the police and community groups. Councils now deliver much of what they do in partnership with other councils, organisations and agencies, so as a councillor you may have opportunities to sit on partnership boards or committees for health, education, community safety or regeneration.

Councillor David Chung, Labour, Merton

I was inspired to get involved in politics by observing people like the late Jack Ashley and seeing what he was able to achieve. I have a mobility impairment and am a wheelchair user, and I believe passionately that disabled people must be represented in politics. Yes, as a councillor you will have to allocate time to your duties, but it doesn't have to be all-consuming. With experience you develop a sense of where to put your energies. Yes, the job is challenging, but it's also very rewarding. One piece of advice I would give new councillors is to get a mentor to support you. I enjoy all aspects of being a councillor but I particularly enjoy working in my ward on community issues such as crime, fly-tipping, planning and community development. One of my biggest achievements was working with local people to get a new community facility. I am passionate about equalities issues and reducing inequalities.

What is expected of a councillor?

The councillor's role and responsibilities include:

- representing their ward
- decision-making
- developing and reviewing council policy
- scrutinising decisions taken by councillors on the executive or cabinet
- regulatory, quasi-judicial and statutory duties
- community leadership and engagement.

Most councillors hold regular drop-in surgeries each month, which provide a chance for residents to meet you and discuss their problems or concerns. On top of this you will be dealing with 'casework' – letters, emails and phone calls from people in your ward. When dealing with casework or council business you may need to meet with local residents or council staff.

Then there are council and scrutiny meetings. Councillors may also choose to sit on quasi-judicial committees, for example the planning committee, which takes non-political decisions on planning applications. The timing, number and length of these meetings varies from council to council. If you are a member of a political party you will also be expected to attend political group meetings, party training and other events.

Don't worry if you have access or communication issues – council staff will take this into account wherever possible. Meetings with local residents or staff can sometimes take place over the phone, the internet or in your own home. You will need to be able to visit the council offices regularly, though, for council meetings, training and other events.



David Buxton, Liberal Democrat, Epsom & Ewell

I was born profoundly deaf and had huge difficulty with communication until I learnt British Sign Language (BSL) in my teens. It gave me confidence in communicating with people. My own determination, attitude and ability helped me to break through barriers. I wanted people to look at my abilities, skills and experience, not my deafness and speech impairment. My family and friends were political but I didn't think it was possible for a young deaf person to take part in mainstream politics until I saw others doing so. With BSL interpreters, it didn't matter that I was deaf and unable to use speech – I could meet people, debate, share ideas, campaign and lobby. My advice would be to focus on your skills and experience, not your disability. I have lost elections over the years (I lost the last borough council election by just 25 votes) but I never give up.



Do I need any special skills or experience?

Groups made up of diverse individuals tend to make better informed decisions. It is important that councils have councillors who reflect and represent the communities they serve, but also have a broad range of skills and life experience. You don't have to be highly educated or have a profession. Skills gained through raising a family, caring for a sick or disabled relative, volunteering or being active in faith or community groups can be just as valuable.

While you don't need any special qualifications to be a councillor, having or being able to develop the following skills and attributes will help you in the role:

Communication skills

These include listening and interpersonal skills, public speaking skills, the ability to consider alternative points of view and to negotiate, mediate and resolve conflict.

Problem solving and analytical skills

This includes being able to get to the bottom of an issue and think of different ways to resolve it, considering the advantages and disadvantages of each option.

Team working

Being able to work with others in meetings and on committees, and being able to complete any tasks that you agree to do on time.

Organisational skills

Being able to plan and manage your time, keep appointments and meet deadlines.

Ability to engage with your local community

This includes being available through the media, the internet, over the telephone and through meetings, public forums and debates.

You may have gained skills and knowledge through your professional, personal or community experience. This could include:

- knowledge of the needs of specific groups such as children and young people, older people or carers, plus your own experience of having a disability
- an understanding of financial management and reporting processes
- legal and regulatory systems or procedures
- housing, regeneration or environmental issues
- any other skills that relate to the work or facilities provided by the council.

Don't worry if you don't yet feel that you have the skills or confidence to be a councillor. All councils provide support, information and training for new councillors.

Could I be a councillor?

If you care about the area that you live or work in and the issues facing local people, you could be a councillor. Perhaps you enjoy reading the local newspaper and often have a strong opinion on the issues you read about. You may enjoy talking to friends and colleagues about what's going on in the area. You may feel that certain sections of the community or people who live in a particular neighbourhood are getting a raw deal and need stronger representation. Research tells us that people are most concerned about issues such as crime, schools, transport and the environment. Your local council can make a difference on all these issues and many more, and so can you as a local councillor.

How much time would it take up?

How much time you spend on your duties as a councillor is largely up to you and will depend on the particular commitments you take on. One council estimates the time commitment as ranging from five to 20 hours a week. Your role within the council will determine how much time you spend on council duties. Joining a planning committee, for example, will increase your workload. You will be expected to attend some council committee meetings, which are often held in the evening so that councillors can attend after work. As with most things in life, what you get back will depend on how much you put in. But remember, the amount of time you give to it is almost entirely up to you.

Why should I become a councillor?

There are many reasons why people decide to become a local councillor. They include:

- wanting to make a difference and be involved in shaping the future of the local community
- being concerned about your local area and wanting to ensure that the community gets the right services
- wanting to represent the views of local people and ensure that community interests are taken into account
- wanting to pursue your political beliefs
- wanting to ensure that disabled people are represented on the council
- wanting to contribute your business or professional skills
- concerns about one particular issue
- as an extension of what you are already doing through a political party, trade union, charity, voluntary group or school governing body – becoming a councillor can be the next step.

Who can be a councillor?

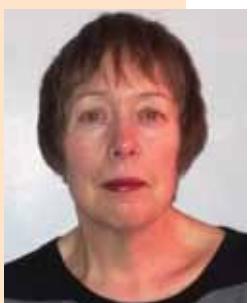
The easy answer is almost anyone, as long as you are:

- British or a citizen of the Commonwealth or European Union
- at least 18 years old
- registered to vote in the area or have lived, worked or owned property there for at least 12 months before an election.

Councillor Marie Pye, Labour, Waltham Forest

When I was young it never occurred to me that I would be a councillor. Even when I became active in a political party I never thought about it. I was happy behind the scenes, and I couldn't imagine how a disabled person could do the role. There was a by-election in my area and the local councillors asked me to stand. Although I experienced barriers in the election process, like knocking on doors and attending meetings, I always found a way round it. People were enthusiastic and willing to help. I love being a councillor and making a difference to my local area. Residents often seem to see my disability as a 'plus' as I have clearly not always had it easy. The council does everything it can to meet my access requirements. Sometimes I do things differently to other councillors. I go to just as many meetings, but in accessible venues. Luckily, a really accessible pub has just opened near the town hall!

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Councillor Rosemary Gilligan, Conservative, Hertsmere

Many changes happened in my village in the early 1980s. The main source of employment, a mental health hospital, closed, and 1,000 homes were built on its grounds. I felt strongly about it and my father said I should stand as a parish councillor. During that time I developed ME (myalgic encephalopathy) and faced a myriad of difficulties, but I didn't let this stop me. I went on to be elected to the borough council in 2002. My experiences have given me lots of patience. I now do things at a slower pace, so I'm good at standing back from a problem and seeing the solutions. I enjoy making a difference. I have been working to make the council more accessible, for example with more use of webcasting. I was honoured to be chosen as Mayor of the borough in 2009. I managed to open a bridleway as Mayor from the back of a horse, complete with civic chain.



You can't be a councillor if you:

- work for the council you want to be a councillor for, or for another local authority in a politically restricted post
- are the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order
- have been sentenced to prison for three months or more (including suspended sentences) during the five years before election day
- have been convicted of a corrupt or illegal practice by an election court.

If you are in any doubt about whether you are eligible to stand as a councillor, you should contact the returning officer in the electoral services department at your local council for advice.

Independent or political?

Over 95 per cent of councillors are members of political parties, but you don't have to belong to a political party to stand for election as a councillor. You can either stand as an independent candidate or as a group or party political candidate. The political parties in your local area are already looking for people interested in representing them and will be pleased to hear from you. They will be able to support your election campaign and your work as a councillor.

Don't worry if you are not already a party member as they will be able to go through all the options with you. Some parties have special training and encouragement schemes for new candidates. Some areas have organised residents' associations or community groups that put candidates up for election.

Will I get paid for being a councillor?

Councillors do not receive a salary. However, they do get a 'member's allowance' in recognition of their time and expenses incurred while on council business. Each council sets its own rate for members' allowances, and you can find out more about them from your local council or on its website.

Can I be a councillor and have a job?

Yes. By law if you are working your employer must allow you to take a reasonable amount of time off during working hours to perform your duties as a councillor. The amount of time given will depend on your responsibilities and the effect of your absence on your employer's business. You should discuss this with your employer before making the commitment to stand for election.

As a disabled candidate, will I get extra support?

The access to elected office for disabled people strategy provides support for disabled people who want to stand for election to public office. As part of the strategy, the Government has introduced the access to elected office for disabled people fund. The fund helps people who want to become MPs, councillors or other elected officials with any disability-related costs of being selected as a candidate or standing for election. For example, it may help if you have difficulty using public transport, if you need to pay for sign language interpreters, or are paying extra travel or accommodation costs for a carer. For more information visit:

www.access-to-elected-office-fund.org.uk

There is also an introductory training course, paid internships on the Speaker's Parliamentary Placements Scheme, and online guidance for political parties on the legal requirements to provide reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities.

The Equality Act also requires political parties not discriminate either directly or indirectly against disabled members or candidates.

Once you become a councillor, your council will work with you to overcome any barriers you come across as a result of your disability and will make sure you can be fully involved. Being a councillor is not a full-time job and may not affect any benefits you receive, but individual cases will vary so do check this with your benefits office. Your local political party may also provide extra support for candidates/councillors with a disability.

What support is available to councillors?

Councils have staff available to provide support and assistance to all councillors, regardless of whether you belong to a political party or group. Exactly what facilities you get depends on the council. Many will provide a computer for your home and some may provide paid-for internet access and an additional telephone line and/or mobile phone. You will be using email and the internet, and many councillors now choose to keep in touch with local people through social networks such as Twitter and Facebook. You should expect full IT training tailored to suit your needs. Councils also provide induction and training for new councillors on many other aspects of the job.

Councils are required by the Equality Act to make "reasonable adjustments" to accommodate the needs of disabled councillors, who would otherwise be placed at a disadvantage compared to a non-disabled councillors. It is an "anticipatory duty" meaning that councils must think in advance about the needs of disabled people and make reasonable adjustments.

Apart from being a legal duty, it is of course good business sense to accommodate reasonable diverse needs of councillors so that they can play a full and effective part in the running of the council.

Many factors will be involved in deciding what adjustments to make and they will depend on individual circumstances. Different people will need different changes, even if they appear to have similar impairments.

Michael MacDonald, local election candidate, Trafford

During my 22-year career at Trafford Council I worked as the disability equality officer and later the equality diversity officer. I have been deaf from the age of one and my first language is British Sign Language (BSL). While working at the council, I liaised regularly with councillors. I saw that their role was a good opportunity to improve people's lives. I realised that having a councillor who is disabled would encourage other disabled people to engage more with local politics and help them to feel better represented. I stood for election in 2011. Although I enjoyed it, I experienced many barriers, particularly the costs of a BSL translator. I was so pleased to hear about the access to elected office fund. Knowing that next time I will have the support of a translator at no personal cost is such a relief. I now feel that I can continue my journey in local politics with focus, determination and confidence.



If you believe that the council you wish to be elected to would need to make adjustments to accommodate your needs, you should contact them at any early stage to discuss your requirements.

Under certain circumstances, disabled councillors might also be eligible for Access to Work, which provides grants for things like specialist equipment and travel (when public transport can't be used).

The timescale

Most councillors are elected for four-year terms, but councils run different electoral cycles. Some elect the whole council once every four years, while others elect a proportion of their members each year. To find out when local elections are due to place in your area, contact your local council or visit its website. The political parties like to have their candidates in place at least a year before an election. This is so that there is time for the candidate to get to know the important local issues, meet as many voters as possible, visit community groups and raise their profile before the election takes place.

Next steps

Once you decide you want to take it further and put yourself forward as a candidate, what's the next step? The answer depends on whether you want to represent a political party or group or would like to stand as an independent candidate. If you want to represent a political party then the next step would be to get involved with your party locally as soon as possible.

This will help you find out more about what the role entails, who you will be working with and what it takes to win elections.

Ultimately it's up to the political parties' local groups to decide whether to select you as a candidate, so you need to make contact with them and get involved with their work. Political parties will expect you to be, or become, a party member. Further sources of information and support are listed in the 'useful contacts' section of this booklet.

If you are thinking about standing as an independent candidate you can contact your council's electoral services department to see when elections are next taking place. The Local Government Association's independent group can also provide information. Contact details can be found at the end of this booklet.

Whether you have been selected by a party or are standing as an independent candidate, you must make sure that you are officially nominated as the election date draws nearer. This means getting 10 people to sign your nomination papers (signatories must be registered electors in the ward where you wish to stand). These papers are available from your local council's democratic services department. You must also give your consent in writing to your nomination. All the necessary documents must be submitted 19 working days before the day of the election. For more information on this process visit www.beacouncillor.org.uk

Councillor Karen Bellamy, Labour, Waltham Forest

I was born with a disability which has left my joints very weak and prone to early arthritis and my skin very easily damaged (Elhers-Danlos Syndrome), but I was always determined not to let this stop me. I have across countless people with outstanding skills that their communities could benefit from but who struggle to participate due to their disability. As a great believer in leading by example, I decided to stand for election in 2006. Being a councillor allows me to help people and make a difference. As a disabled person, I bring a totally different perspective. I find that local people recognise that I understand their concerns and the issues they care about. I have a junior cabinet post for child and family poverty, so I'm looking at ways to help those in poverty on a day-to-day basis. Disabled people have a unique insight into a lot of issues that people face, from housing to healthcare, fuel poverty and employment.



USEFUL CONTACTS

The following people will be able to advise you on getting in touch with your chosen local party or group.

If you would like to find out more about representing the Conservative Party, contact Rachel Oldham, deputy head of local government: www.conservatives.com/get_involved/become_a_councillor.aspx
telephone: 020 7984 8048
email: rachel.oldham@conservatives.com

Conservative Councillors Association:
www.conservativecouncillors.com

Conservative Disability Group:
www.conservativedisability.org

To find out more about representing the Labour Party contact Katherine Buckingham, local government compliance officer:
www.labourcouncillor.org.uk
telephone: 020 7783 1498
email: councillors@labour.org.uk

Labour Party Disabled Members Group:
www.labourbility.com
email: info@labourbility.com

To find out more about representing the Liberal Democrats, contact Anders Hanson, senior political officer at the Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors:
www.bealibdemcouncillor.org.uk
telephone: 01422 843785
email: anders.hanson@aldc.org

Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors:
www.aldc.org

The Liberal Democrat Disability Association:
www.disabilitylibdems.org.uk
email: info@disabilitylibdems.org.uk

If you are interested in standing as an independent councillor or representing the Green Party, UKIP or another established smaller party, contact the Local Government Association's group for independent councillors:
www.independent.lga.gov.uk
telephone: 020 7664 3224
email: independent.group@lga.gov.uk

To find out the name of your local council or councils, visit www.councillor.info and enter your postcode. The website www.writetothem.com also provides information on your local councils and councillors along with your MP and MEPs (Members of the European Parliament).

Every council in England has a comprehensive website which includes details about the services it runs, who the current councillors are and contact details for different departments. For information on when elections will take place, contact the electoral services department. For advice on becoming a councillor you can contact the democratic services department. Your local council can also tell you about any town or parish councils in your area.

Guidance for candidates and information on the electoral cycle is available on the Electoral Commission website:
www.electoralcommission.org.uk

The Local Government Association (LGA) represents councils in England and Wales. Information on its work can be found at:
www.local.gov.uk

The Department for Communities and Local Government website provides news and information on the local government sector:
www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment

The Access to Elected Office Fund strategy provides support for disabled people who want to stand for election to public office:
www.access-to-elected-office-fund.org.uk

For information on “reasonable adjustments” to accommodate the needs of disabled councillors visit: http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/EqualityAct/PSED/essential_guide_guidance.pdf

For more information on how the Equality Act applies to political parties visit:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-elected-office-for-disabled-people-strategy-compliance-with-the-equality-act-2010-guidance-for-political-parties--2>

For more information on Access to work visit:
<https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>



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Agenda Item 5

Barriers to Politics Working Group			
REPORT	Future Meetings		
KEY DECISION	No	Item No:	
WARD	N/A		
CONTRIBUTORS	Executive Director for Resources & Regeneration		
CLASS	Part 1	Date:	24 July 2017

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 A timeline of meetings and reporting is suggested for members to discuss and agree a focus for subsequent sessions.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The group is recommended to:

- Agree the focus of subsequent meetings.

3. FUTURE MEETINGS

- 3.1 To enable the Group to meet that reporting deadline and gather the necessary evidence, the following schedule of meetings has been agreed:

- 6th September (evidence session)
- 3rd October (draft report considered and recommendations agreed)