

Barriers to Politics Working Group			
REPORT	Commission on Women in Local Government		
KEY DECISION	No	Item No:	?
WARD	N/A		
CONTRIBUTORS	Executive Director for Resources & Regeneration		
CLASS	Part 1	Date:	27 June 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 gender which people face when running for and progressing as a local councillor.
- 1.2. This report provides a background to the work of the Commission on Women in Local Government who will be attending the Barriers to Politics Working Group meeting to give evidence.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1. The Barriers to Politics Working Group is recommended to:
 - Note the report.
 - Invite Lauren Lucas, Project Lead for the LGiU Commission on Women in Local Government, to give evidence.

3. CONTEXT

- 3.1. Approximately a third of councillors were female at the time of the last Census of Local Authority Councillors in 2013 (36 per cent in London and 31.6 per cent nationally).¹ 31 per cent of councillors newly elected in 2015 were women – a slight decrease compared to the 2014 figure of 32 per cent.² The table below shows the percentage of male and female councillors at the time of each Census since 2001.³

	2001 %	2004 %	2006 %	2008 %	2010 %	2013 %
Male	70.7	70.3	69.3	68.4	68.5	67.3
Female	28.5	29.1	29.3	30.8	30.6	31.7
No Response	0.8	0.6	1.4	0.8	1.0	0.9

¹ National Census of Local Authority Councillors 2013

² Electoral Reform Society, ‘Which Women Win? The 2015 English local election’ (March 2016)

³ Vyara Apostolova & Richard Cracknell, ‘Women in Parliament and Government’, *House of Commons Library Briefing Paper* (February 2017)

- 3.2. Information about candidate demographics in local elections is not routinely collected. A 2014 Survey of Local Election Candidates, published by the Elections Centre, found that 26 per cent of candidates who contested in the local elections in 2014 were female.⁴ Similarly, 26 per cent of candidates in the 2015 general election were women and 29 per cent of MPs elected were female. The Institute for Public Policy Research has suggested that mandatory reporting of gender representation in local and regional government would draw attention to the lack of representation.⁵
- 3.3. The proportion of women in leadership roles is much smaller than the proportion of men: in 2014, 12.3 per cent of local authority leaders in England were women, this compared to 16.6 per cent in 2004.⁶ Across England, 53.7 per cent of male councillors held one or more positions, such as chair or vice chair of overview and scrutiny or a cabinet member, compared to 51.4 per cent of female councillors.⁷
- 3.4. Without the current packages of support available to councillors, a greater proportion of women felt that they would not be able to fulfil their role; 36.7 per cent of women felt that they would not be able to fulfil their role or only to a small extent without support, compared to 32.3 per cent of men.⁸
- 3.5. More women than men had received one or more training opportunities in the 12 months before the census (87.3 per cent c.f. 84 per cent), however fewer women than men had received an induction (21.8 per cent c.f. 22.2 per cent).

4. COMMISSION ON WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- 4.1. The LGiU, in partnership with the Fawcett Society, has undertaken a year-long Commission on Women in Local Government. The Commission is jointly chaired by Labour's Dame Margaret Hodge MP and Conservative councillor Cllr Gillian Keegan, Director of Women2Win.
- 4.2. The Commission has taken a strategic approach and has focused on governance structures at a local level and how they are including or excluding women. The Commission has focused on the following key issues:
- women's representation at a local level, and in particular focus on women in positions of power and leadership and where women make a positive difference.
 - the barriers to women's participation and representation and the practical solutions which would enable more women to participate.
 - the diversity of women's representation including BAME women, disabled women, those with caring responsibilities and different age groups.

⁴ Based on a sample of 13 per cent of candidates. Colin Rallings et al., '2014 Survey of Local Election Candidates', *The Elections Centre* (2014)

⁵ Carys Roberts, 'Gender balance of power: Women's representation in regional and local government in the UK and Germany', *Institute for Public Policy Research* (May 2017)

⁶ Ms. Gill Bryan, Ms. Margaret Gallagher, Dr. Gill Kirkup (Convenor), Professor Joan Swann & Ms. Sheila Thornton 'Exploring Women's Participation In Local Politics', *Milton Keynes Fawcett Group* (September 2016)

⁷ National Census of Local Authority Councillors 2013 – analyses by gender

⁸ Ibid

- the impact of new governance structures, such as directly-elected mayors and Combined Authorities, on women's representation in local government.
- 4.3. The Commission conducted a series of meetings at which guests were invited to contribute their opinions, as well as a survey of councillors which gathered experiences of engaging with local parties, council work and progression in office.
- 4.4. The interim report of the Commission on Women in Local Government, 'Does Local Government Work for Women?' was published in April 2017 and is attached at Appendix A.

5. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

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

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

8. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- 8.1. Appendix A: Interim Report of the Local Government Commission, 'Does Local Government Work for Women?' (April 2017).