
Diversity in Local Government:

Summary of survey – general public

November 2018

The **Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee** launched an inquiry into Diversity in Local Government in May 2018. As part of its inquiry, the Committee conducted two surveys – one aimed at the general public and the other aimed at local councillors who are currently in post. The following analysis deals with the survey aimed at the general public only.

Survey promotion and analysis

The aim of the survey was to hear from as diverse a range of Welsh citizens as possible. The survey was promoted extensively through a variety of channels:-

- Through the networks of key stakeholders;
- On social media, including focused advertisements which enabled us to target audiences in areas where we tend to get less survey responses;
- People visiting the Senedd during the National Eisteddfod for Wales and those who visited our stand at the Royal Welsh Show, Pride Cymru and during Senedd@Delyn; and
- People taking part in Assembly Education and Youth Engagement school visits, outreach sessions and visits to the Senedd and Pierhead, which ensured that a section of those who responded to the survey were not self-selecting.

To compile this summary an in-depth analysis of a complete data set was conducted; all data can be sourced to individual responses and further analysis can be undertaken upon request. Each question in the survey is addressed in turn.



Results are calculated from the number of respondents who answered the specific question and not the overall number of respondents of the survey, of which there were **872 responses** in total.

1. Do you know who your local councillor(s) is/are?

53.8% of respondents to this question do know who their local councillor(s) is/are.

34.8% do not know who their local councillor(s) is/are, whilst 11.3% are not sure.

2. Thinking about your community, do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

“I’m able to influence the decisions made about my community, such as decisions on roads, schools, public transport and social care.”

22.5% agreed or strongly agreed with the above statement.

18.9% neither agreed nor disagreed with the above statement.

54.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the above statement.

4.3% did not know whether they agreed or disagreed with the above statement.

3. In your view, who makes the key decisions about your community?

33.7% of respondents to this question believed that local councillor(s) made the key decisions about their community. 17.6% chose Assembly Member(s), with 15.8% choosing Community/ Town Councillor(s).

11.3% chose Member of Parliament and 3.2% chose Mayor.

10.7% of respondents to this question selected ‘Don’t know’. For those who selected ‘Other (please specify)’, (7.7%) these were some of the more common answers given:-

- Council officers
- Business
- Council Cabinet
- Those with money

4. What do you think is/are the main role(s) of a local councillor? (Tick all that apply)

14.5% of survey respondents believed the main role of a local councillor was to engage with members on matters of importance to them.

13.9% chose representing the views of residents at council meetings, whilst 13.7% chose responding to the queries and concerns of residents..

13.2% believed that keeping the community informed of issues that affect them was the main role of a local councillor, whilst 12.6% believed that developing policies and strategies to benefits the community was their main role.

10.4% of respondents to this question chose putting residents in touch with the relevant people within the council, with 10.1% selecting scrutinising decisions made by the council as the main role of a local councillor. 9.3% chose leading campaigns on behalf of residents.

1.2% of respondents selected 'Don't know' with 1.0% selecting 'Other (please specify)'. For those who selected 'Other (please specify)', the following responses were some of the answers given (please note that the following are a sample of the responses received. All responses are available on request):-

"Community leadership"

"Develop and manage relationships with key stakeholders such as local police etc"

"Put their constituents priorities above those of their political allegencies and/or private gain"

"Hold regular, informal street surgeries"

"Having a spine to realise that sometimes doing the right thing for the greater good and not bend to the will of a few to keep themselves in position!"

"Make sure they regularly attend meetings and don't fall asleep. Councillors need to be very fit and well to carry out their dutites and responsibilities."

5. Please select the statement that best applies to you

67.5% of respondents to this question said that they had never considered standing as a local councillor for a local government election.

19.2% of respondents to this question said they had considered standing as a local councillor for a local government election but decided not to pursue it, whilst 0.9% said they had considered standing as a local councillor for a local government election and pursued it.

8.8% of respondents to this question said they have stood for election and were elected, whilst 3.6% said they have stood for election but were not elected.

6. Following on from your answer to the previous question, what are the factors that influenced your decision? (For example, time commitment, salary, to influence policies and strategies and make a change in your community).

Qualitative data analysis revealed the following overarching themes.

Theme	Quotes
Time commitment	<p><i>"Time commitment. Jobs to do in evenings and throughout morning and afternoon"</i></p> <p><i>"Time, what is spare time? 3 jobs. Work, sleep, repeat."</i></p> <p><i>"time commitment with a young family and the thought of it being dominated by the older generation and mainly men"</i></p>
Lack of interest	<p><i>"No interest in politics or similar due to next to no education on the subject throughout school etc"</i></p> <p><i>"I wouldn't like a public role and would hate campaigning to get elected"</i></p> <p><i>"I'd rather not work in politics thanks - too political!"</i></p>
Age	<p><i>"I'm 18 and female, therefore people would not take me seriously."</i></p> <p><i>"Seems to be a job for old people??"</i></p> <p><i>"I wouldn't know how I would stand as a councillor and as I'm fairly young (25) I'm still deciding what I'd like to do as a career."</i></p>
Lack of information	<p><i>"No idea what it entails, or even how to"</i></p> <p><i>"Not knowing where to start. Whom to speak to or get advice on standing from."</i></p> <p><i>"Unaware of what the job entails, how to run for the role, the impact of the role, etc."</i></p>
Political allegiance	<p><i>"Not sure which party to join. So appointment as a councillor is out of the question"</i></p> <p><i>"Do not want to be aligned to a particular political party"</i></p> <p><i>"I am not a member of a political party and feel it would be a massive challenge to get elected as an independent. I am also a woman and most of the councillors in my community are men which makes it a huge challenge."</i></p>

7. If you have previously been elected as a councillor but stood down during your term, or decided not to stand at the following election, what were your reasons for doing this? (Tick all boxes which apply)

22.9% of respondents to this question chose *'time commitment'* as their reason for choosing to stand down during their term, or not to stand at the following election. 12.4% selected the *'pressure of the role'*, with 11.1% selecting *'support within the role'*.

10.5% of respondents chose *'work pattern'*, with 9.2% choosing *'abuse or harassment'* and 7.8% choosing *'salary'*.

26.1% of respondents to this question selected *'Other (please specify)'*. Some of the answers given were as follows (please note that the following is a sample of the responses received. All responses are available on request):-

"The impact on personal life both in time and privacy is way beyond expectations. Social media and the new climate of abuse and hate has made things different ad more personal"

"Frustration, role limitations, bureaucracy"

"Inner political maneuvering"

8. What are the factors that would make standing at local council elections more appealing to you? (Tick all that apply)

A *'better understanding of the role and responsibilities'* (28.5%) was chosen by respondents to this question as the leading factor that would make standing at local council elections more appealing. This was followed by *'Flexible working pattern'* (19.0%) and *'Greater support for local councillors'* (17.3%).

14.0% of respondents to this question chose *'Better salary/ allowances'* with 11.5% choosing *'The support of my existing employer'*.

For the 9.7% of respondents who chose *'Other (please specify)'*, these were some of the answers submitted, which have been categorised by theme (please note that the following are a sample of the responses received. All responses received are available on request).

Theme	Description
Improved processes/ system	<p><i>“A restructured system in which the councilors are in fact capable of serving the community”</i></p> <p><i>“A reduction in powers of councillors: all too often they are ill-informed and incapable of making responsible decisions, and overly beholden to a variety of interests.”</i></p> <p><i>“Adjustments to overcome barriers to my participation as disabled person. Political parties being more disabled aware. More accessible public transport. More disability awareness amongst local government staff”</i></p>
Making a difference	<p><i>“If there was a genuine opportunity to make a difference”</i></p> <p><i>“The belief that I would be able to make positive change”</i></p> <p><i>“Honesty transparency and a willingness by all levels to actually serve the community that employs them all”</i></p>
Support	<p><i>“Mentoring from someone I trust, to help me work with people I don't like and to help me get resilient”</i></p> <p><i>“Better information on how to conduct a campaign for those who don't have the support of parties - official or otherwise.”</i></p> <p><i>“Support for independent candidates”</i></p>
Greater diversity	<p><i>“A likelihood to see people like myself”</i></p> <p><i>“Colleagues that were like me - not 60+ white, male.”</i></p> <p><i>“More diverse role models and more transparency/ fairness for party selectors.”</i></p>

9. Do you undertake any community or voluntary work locally?

56.0% of respondents to this question said they did undertake community or voluntary work locally.

42.0% said they did not undertake any community or voluntary work locally, whilst a further 1.9% said they were not sure.

Demographic of respondents

Location

67.6% of survey respondents came from South Wales, with 17.3% coming from Mid and West Wales and 15.2% from North Wales.

Age

32.8% of survey respondents were aged 25 and under, 50.4% were aged between 26 – 64, with 16.9% aged 65 and over.

Gender

56.8% of survey respondents identified as female, with 38.7% identifying as male. 2.1% preferred not say with a further 2.4% preferring to use their own term. For those who preferred to use their own term, the following were some of the answers given:-

“Bigender”

“Gender fluid”

“Non binary”

1.7% of survey respondents considered themselves to be transgender, with 2.5% preferring not to say. 95.9% did not consider themselves transgender.

Sexuality

73.0% considered themselves to be heterosexual, 7.2% as bisexual, 6.0% and as gay/lesbian (or homosexual). 9.8% of respondents preferred not to answer, whilst a further 4.0% chose ‘Other (please specify)’. For those who selected the latter, these were some of the answers given (please note that this is a sample of the answers received. All responses are available on request):-

“Pansexual”

“Helisexual”

Ethnicity

90.0% of survey respondents identified as White. 4.3% identified as Asian, 2.3% as Mixed/Multiple Ethnic, 1.2% as Black/African/Caribbean and 2.3% identifying as an other ethnic origin.

Disability

75.6% of respondents to this question said they did not have a long-standing physical or mental health condition or disability (anything that has lasted at least 12 months or that is likely to last at least 12 months). **18.6%** did have a long-standing physical or mental health condition or disability and **5.9%** preferred not to say.

For those who did have a disability, **25%** were physical, **36.8%** were mental health related, **5.9%** learning related, **9.9%** sensory, **18.4%** related to a medical condition (e.g. Cancer) and **3.9%** preferred not to say.