

## **COUNCIL – TUESDAY, 10 SEPTEMBER 2024**

### **QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

#### **QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR A MORLEY TO COUNCILLOR K MERRIE**

“Equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in the workplace is not a new concept. Indeed, it is now a given that EDI is integral to the ethos of all organisations and authorities, in an aim to ensure that those in control of decision making, are representative of the communities which they serve.

At corporate scrutiny on 29<sup>th</sup> August 2024, a report was considered which presented an EDI policy review document, the action plan which accompanied this policy evidenced how the policy would be delivered. It was recognised in this document that the current NWLDC workforce is representative of the local district population, and it also recognised the importance of the wider regional profiles being more representative by 2028.

My question relates to why the alliance member leaders of NWLDC seem to be exempt from this goal and expectation. Surely the leaders should have the aspiration to be representative of the local district population as a formal objective.

I must note objectively that all current members of the alliance administration: and specifically, the senior roles of Chair, Deputy Chair, Leader of the Council and six other cabinet members are all white male. I feel that this falls woefully short of being inclusive of the local district population and the communities we collectively serve.

I therefore ask the Portfolio Holder, in light of the current all- white Leadership of the Council, whether it is intended to introduce any new EDI targets to ensure the leadership strives to be more representative of the NWLDC community, and indeed workforce, now or in the future?”

#### **REPONSE FROM COUNCILLOR K MERRIE TO COUNCILLOR A MORLEY**

“I thank Councillor Morley for her question. The Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy is scheduled to go to Cabinet for decision later this month. If agreed the policy will apply to this Council’s services and workforce. I cannot speak for all members, but I would hope there would be cross party support for this updated policy and action plan which is absolutely the right way forward.

The arrangements for the selection of councillors are not part of the Council’s EDI policy and action plan.

Each political party has its own rules and processes for selecting individuals to run for election on to the Council.

We have also seen choices by community-minded individuals to stand as independent Councillors and this also has an influence on the demographics and make up of this chamber.

There have been efforts across political parties at all levels to make politics more representative of the communities we serve.

There is no doubt that more needs to be done by all to seek to encourage wider participation in our Council chambers across the whole of the local government sector. This is not a unique situation for this Council.

At local level, we have (or the Conservative Group) adopted a collaborative approach in building an alliance with our Liberal Democrat and independent members and this has helped to improve the representation of the different views of our communities.

My party will continue to seek to further improve representation through its selection processes in the future wherever possible at a local level.

Other parties may wish to consider their own selection arrangements for candidates.

In terms of the current Cabinet, The Constitution says that The Leader shall appoint a Deputy Leader, who shall be a Cabinet Member and deputise for the Leader and carry out the functions delegated to the Leader in periods of their incapacity or absence and, Cabinet Members to cover one of the specific portfolio responsibilities (other than those reserved to the Leader). The Cabinet comprises the Leader and at least two but no more than nine other Councillors, one of whom must be the Deputy Leader. The Leader considers their executive arrangements each year following their appointment, and these are announced to Council. The current Leader has decided that the Executive responsibilities will be exercised collectively by Cabinet and has chosen his portfolio areas and Cabinet members from the Alliance based on areas of expertise, interest, and availability for the role.