

Subject:	Women in Government and Politics		
Date of Meeting:	6 December 2018		
Report of:	Executive Lead Officer for Strategy, Governance & Law		
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 A Notice of Motion was presented at Full Council on 19 April 2018 titled 'Women in Local Government and Politics'. The Motion was passed and this report sets out the action that has already been taken and provides further detail on the matters that require further discussion.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That this Committee notes the action that has been taken by the Chief Executive in writing to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (as set out in paragraphs 3.5-3.7 of this report).
- 2.2 That this Committee notes that a report will be taken to the Audit & Standards Committee regarding suggested changes to the Code of Conduct for Members (as set out in paragraphs 3.8-3.9 of this report).
- 2.3 That this Committee resolves for the matters set out in paragraphs 3.10-3.29 to be discussed by a Working Group consisting of Whips and for recommendations to be brought back to this Committee for approval.
- 2.4 That this Committee notes the achievements and progress that has already taken place as set out in paragraphs 3.30-3.46 of this report.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The report 'Does Local Government Work for Women?' was a report published in July 2017 by the Fawcett Society in conjunction with the Local Government

Information Unit. It was the culmination of a year-long study into the challenges facing women in local government and the report contains a number of recommendations for both central and local government. A copy of the report is attached in Appendix 1.

3.2 In light of the Fawcett report, a Notice of Motion was presented to Full Council on 19 April 2018 requesting that the Council:

- a. Request the Chair of the Policy, Resources & Growth Committee to call for a report detailing the options for how the Council can implement the relevant recommendations for local authorities (where not already in place) listed in the Fawcett Society/LGiU report: *'Does Local Government Work for Women?'*
- b. Request the Chief Executive write to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government , supporting the introduction of a statutory maternity, paternity, adoption and parental leave policy for Councillors;
- c. Request the Chair of the Policy, Resources & Growth Committee, to call for a report detailing options for how the council can implement its own formal maternity, paternity, adoption and parental leave policy for Councillors;
- d. Request the Chief Executive write to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government calling for guidance to be issued to local remuneration panels to promote the Fawcett model for a comprehensive dependent carers' allowance scheme, so that all childcare and adult dependent care costs are covered;
- e. Request that as part of its next review of the Members Allowances Scheme, the Independent Remuneration Panel consider options to update the Scheme, changing the hourly child and dependent care allowance to the Brighton Living Wage (£8.75); and longer term, to seek to more accurately reflect the true cost of Ofsted registered childcare and adult care;
- f. Request that Audit & Standards Committee consider adding sexual harassment and sex discrimination policies to the Code of Conduct.

3.3 The Motion was passed and each of the above is therefore considered below. They are divided into the following categories: a) matters for the Government b) matters for Audit & Standards Committee and c) matters for further discussion and d) matters already achieved or in progress.

3.4 This report only covers the recommendations within the Fawcett report that are directed at local authorities. It does not deal with the recommendations aimed at central government or for political parties nationally. The one exception is the matter set out in paragraphs 3.5-3.7 as this formed a specific part of the Motion.

3.5 Matters for the Government (b. and d.)

3.6 The Chief Executive wrote to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on 1 May 2018 to:

- i) support the introduction of a statutory maternity, paternity, adoption and parental leave policy for Councillors and
- ii) to request guidance regarding dependent carers' allowance.

3.7 A response has not yet been received.

3.8 Matters for the Audit & Standards Committee (f.)

3.9 The Fawcett report recommended that Councils be clear in Codes of Conduct that Councillor behaviour is governed by the prohibition of sex discrimination in the Equality Act 2010 and that there should be a requirement for Councillors to promote equality in their actions and behaviour. A report will be submitted for the Audit & Standards Committee in January with recommendations.

3.10 Matters for further discussion (a.)

3.11 Below (3.12-3.29) are the recommendations within the Fawcett report that relate to local authorities and which are presented for discussion. It is suggested that following discussion at this Committee, further discussion takes place within a Working Group consisting of Group Whips. Any recommendations will then be brought back to this Committee for consideration and approval.

3.12 Introducing a reasonable adjustment policy for disabled councillors –

3.13 Under the Equality Act 2010, Councils have a duty to make reasonable adjustments in relation to Members. There is also the duty to pay due regard to advancing equality and this includes encouraging disabled people to participate in public life.

3.14 The Council currently does not have a specific policy for Councillors however the same policies that apply to staff are applied to Councillors.

3.15 Local government leaders to support BAME and Muslim women who experience pressure from within their communities not to participate in political life –

3.16 The Fawcett report raised the barriers that BAME and Muslim women face when standing as a candidate. The report urged senior party figures within local government to not be inactive bystanders when they see BAME women, in particular Muslim women, pressured not to stand from within their community. The report recommended that local government leaders recognise and talk about the problem, to actively work with BAME and Muslim women to reach and encourage others in their community to stand, and to visibly support them if they do.

- 3.17 In terms of networks to work with, the International Women's Network has a wide reach including Muslim women. They are at the start of trying to set up a project that seeks to support women who have leadership potential to feel that political life is accessible to them. The project will include a learning circle, observing committees and approaching some of the female political leaders for shadowing opportunities. Other groups to engage with would be the Muslim Women's Group and Hangleton and Knoll Multi-cultural Women's group.
- 3.18 Establishing a formal role to oversee Member conduct –
- 3.19 This Fawcett recommendation is that the Council considers appointing a senior Councillor whose role it is to promote culture change and promote equality. This role would be separate from the standards complaints procedure.
- 3.20 Active sponsorship of new Councillors –
- 3.21 This Fawcett recommendation is for Councils to introduce sponsorship schemes for all new Councillors and for women Councillors to be encouraged to take part in the scheme. The scheme could be akin to a mentoring scheme with the focus being on a senior Councillor advancing the new Councillor's career. The report recommended that sponsors are supported by democratic services officers in order for the support to be as effective as possible.
- 3.22 The Council already offers a senior officer mentor for new Councillors. The above suggestion for consideration would be for the new Councillor to also be assigned a Councillor sponsor who would mentor and assist the new Councillor.
- 3.23 Adopting a requirement in the Constitution for at least 50 percent of Chairs of Committees to be women –
- 3.24 Currently, out of the nine Council Committees, five Chairs of Committees are women. This is 55% and therefore currently exceeds the recommendation. Whilst this is the current arrangement, the Fawcett recommendation seeks to impose a requirement for at least 50% of Chairs to be women, if this is possible. It is suggested in the Fawcett report that this requirement could also extend to Deputy Chairs. Currently, six Deputy Chairs are women, equating to 66%.
- 3.25 Supporting gender equality networks between Councillors and local government officers –
- 3.26 The above could be delivered through local mentoring networks or through regional networks which the Fawcett Society and LGiU intend to lead on establishing. A possible destination for gauging appetite for the development of regional networks could be the Greater Brighton Economic Board or South East 7.
- 3.27 Working with the police –
- 3.28 The Fawcett report recommends that local authorities should work with the local police force to ensure that women council candidates understand the legal protection available against online and offline abuse and harassment of Council candidates. The suggestion for consideration is for Councils to work alongside

local police forces to set up information sessions for women candidates prior to election periods, so that they can be made aware of their legal rights to protection and to ensure that both they and the police are clear when interactions on social media cross the line into illegal abuse and harassment.

3.29 There is currently no ongoing work in relation to candidates, however in terms of elected Councillors, this work is ongoing as part of the work involved in the Member Induction Programme and development of the Council's Supporting Members Programme.

3.30 Matters already achieved or in progress (a. and e.)

3.31 Maternity, paternity, adoption and parental leave policy for Councillors –

3.32 Regardless of whether a statutory policy is introduced, the Council has the ability to choose to adopt a policy for Councillors.

3.33 Part of the report from the Independent Remuneration Panel to this Committee in December will address options for a maternity, paternity, adoption and parental leave policy.

3.34 Meeting times –

3.35 The Fawcett report recommends that Councils should regularly survey Councillors to identify the most mutually convenient meeting times for all Members involved in the meetings and when setting meetings, should ensure councillors with caring responsibilities and disabled councillors are not excluded.

3.36 The timings of meetings are regularly raised and discussed.

3.37 Training to tackle discrimination –

3.38 Training is already provided as part of the Councillor induction scheme. This consists of both equalities training for new Councillors and training offered for all Councillors. One example of the latter was the recent training offered on unconscious bias.

3.39 Audio recordings of Council meetings to enable transparency –

3.40 Full Council meetings are already recorded via webcam. Most Committee meetings are also recorded. Only two Committees are not recorded (Audit & Standards Committee and Tourism, Development and Culture Committee).

3.41 Members Allowance Scheme (section – e of the Motion) –

3.42 The Independent Remuneration Panel has met to consider amending the Members Allowance Scheme in respect of child and dependent care allowance. The full report will be submitted to this Committee and to Full Council in December 2018.

3.43 Flexible working and part-time working –

3.44 Whilst the majority of the Fawcett recommendations focus on Members, one part of the report focused on the relative lack of women in senior roles, compared with the high number of women being employed by local authorities. One barrier to progression to senior roles is the lack of flexible or part-time working for senior roles.

3.45 Councils are recommended to offer all roles, including senior roles, as flexible working and part-time by default unless there is a clear business case otherwise. The business case is recommended to be backed up by a genuine organisational commitment to viewing flexible working on equal terms with traditional working patterns.

3.46 The Council already has a policy in place whereby all roles are open to being worked on a flexible working basis unless there is a clear business case whereby this would not be possible. Any Council officer can also apply for the role to be a job share, whereby part of the assessment is whether the job can be made part-time. When a post becomes vacant, consideration is also given to whether the post can be a job share.

4. **ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

4.1 The Fawcett report raised a number of recommendations. Those recommendations aimed at local authorities are set out in the body of this report. It is recommended that following discussion at this Committee, the matters set out in paragraphs 3.12-3.29 are progressed through a Working Group consisting of Whips and for recommendations to be brought back to this Committee. The matters listed are all possibilities. It can be decided to pursue the option set out, to not pursue it or to decide on another variation of the Fawcett recommendation.

5. **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION**

5.1 There has been no consultation or community engagement at present. Once it is decided which options will be pursued further, any necessary consultation or community engagement can take place.

6. **CONCLUSION**

6.1 The Fawcett Society and the LGiU published its report on the challenges facing women in local government in July 2017. This prompted a Notice of Motion at Full Council on 19 April 2018 requesting for various aspects of the Fawcett report to be explored further.

6.2 This report sets out action that has already taken place, action that is proposed and recommendations that are tabled for discussion. The matters that require discussion are in paragraphs 3.12-3.29 of this report. It is recommended that

after discussion at this Committee, the matters listed in 3.12-3.29 are further progressed through a Working Group consisting of Whips and for recommendations to be brought back to this Committee for approval.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations made in this report.

Finance Officer Consulted: Michael Bentley Date: 13 November 2018

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 The necessary legal implications of these recommendations are set out in the body of this report.

Lawyer Consulted: Sarita Arthur-Crow Date: 13 November 2018

Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 This report sets out recommendations contained within the Fawcett Society report on Women in Local Government. The aim of the recommendations is to eliminate barriers for women participating in local government. Any action taken will result in advancing equality.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.4 None

Any Other Significant Implications:

- 7.5 None

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Fawcett Society, *Does Local Government Work for Women? Final report of the Local Government Commission*, July 2017

Documents in Members' Rooms

1. Fawcett Society, *Does Local Government Work for Women? Final report of the Local Government Commission*, July 2017

Background Documents

None

