

Corporate Services Scrutiny Review Board

11 March 2021

Minute Extract

32/20 Gender Representation Task Group Report

Cllr Eldret presented a report of the Gender Representation Task Group. The Board noted that this was a cross-party task group which aimed to highlight how gender representation in Derby could be improved.

It was noted that the recommendations contained within the report were the recommendations of the Gender Representation Task Group and were not officer recommendations.

It was noted that a request for the Corporate Scrutiny Review Board to receive reports from a task group to consider gender representation had arisen from a motion to Council on 20 September 2017. It was reported that this motion requested a group be formed to look at the representation of females in elected roles and that the motion had been agreed, and that two meetings of the group had taken place.

It was reported that it was later suggested that the remit of the group should be extended to cover representation of gender as a whole across the Council and that the task group should report to the Corporate Scrutiny Review Board.

The Board noted that the remit of the Gender Representation Task Group was to look at the representation of gender as a whole across the Council with the intention of increasing the diversity of elected representatives within the Council. It was noted that this would enable a better representation of the diversity of the population of the City of Derby and would encourage more participation in the democratic process. It was reported that the introduction of a programme to encourage all women to stand for election for all parties would be a strong starting point.

The Board noted that there were far fewer female Chairs and Vice-chairs at the Council and that creating a more equal distribution of Chair and Vice-Chair positions would encourage more women to put themselves forward as candidates. A councillor commented that each political group could choose which candidates they put forward for these positions and that limiting which councillors' groups could nominate could be counterproductive.

The Board noted that there was currently a stigma attached to councillors who made claims using the Dependent Carers' Allowance. It was noted that this stigma was extremely off putting for potential female candidates. It was reported that women were far more likely to act as carers and that an improved Dependent Carers' Allowance would therefore incentivise more women to stand for public office. It was agreed by all councillors that the stigma attached to those claiming Dependent Carers' Allowance was unjustified and needed to stop.

The Board noted that the implementation of a Parental and Carers Leave Policy for councillors would assist councillors, and in particular, councillors with young children.

It was noted that councillors who were parents or carers would be much more comfortable taking up roles with a Special Responsibility Allowance if there was a Parental and Carers Leave Policy for councillors.

The Board noted an extract from a 2017 report of the Local Government Commission by the Fawcett Society. It was noted that the report of the Local Government Commission had found that in 2013; councillors were working up to 25 hours per-week. It was also noted that the report had found that the number of hours worked per-week by councillors were increasing. The Board noted that if the basic allowance for councillors was raised to match the minimum wage of an individual working 25 hours per-week; the basic allowance would be raised to £11,336.

It was reported that there was a well-documented pensions gap between women and men. It was noted that due to this, the removal of local government pensions, alongside other financial considerations facing councillors, was a gendered issue. It was noted that the removal of pensions for councillors was a problem for all councillors and that reintroducing pensions would increase the quality of candidates willing to stand for election.

The Board discussed the recommendations made in the report. It was decided that some of the report's recommendations significantly overlapped with the work being undertaken by the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP).

A councillor suggested that responsibility for making recommendations on councillors' allowances rested with the IRP rather than with scrutiny boards and task groups. Another councillor suggested that due to COVID-19 it may not be an appropriate time for councillors to receive an increase in their allowances.

Resolved to:

- 1. Recommend to Council that Derby City Council should aspire to achieve equal gender representation when filling Chair/Vice-chair positions; and that all reasonable steps must be taken to achieve this.**
- 2. Recommend to Council that a programme be introduced to encourage more women to stand for all Political Parties.**
- 3. Recommend that Council writes to the Government and the Local Government Association to recommend that pensions for councillors be reintroduced.**
- 4. Recommend that Council considers the following recommendations, subject to receipt and consideration of the forthcoming report and separate recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel:**
 - that the Basic Allowance be increased to £11,336 per annum, to match the annual salary of people earning minimum wage and working 25 hours a week (as referenced in the Fawcett Society report).**

- **that the Dependent Carers' Allowance be raised, and that Derby City Council recognise the importance of a Dependant Carers' Allowance as a means to support councillors with caring responsibilities, and encourages members to use this.**
- **that a Parental and Carers Leave Policy for councillors is implemented.**