

Letter to the Assembly Equalities Committee

John Griffiths AM
Chair, Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

2nd May 2019

Cc: Clerks and Members of the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee

Dear John,

We are writing to you as a number of organisations who contributed to the Diversity in Local Government Report published by the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee in early April.

The report and your recommendations are to be welcomed. At a time when politics could be considered to be in a period of considerable flux it is even more important that councillors in city or county hall are as diverse as the people they are elected to represent.

There are a number of recommendations that we as a group support; particularly those around job sharing, political education and the implementation of Section 106 of the Equality Act.

However, we remain disappointed by some areas of the report and feel that many of the recommendations made could have been stronger.

While we recognise that the Committee has conceded that change is needed around positive action, the lack of a formal recommendation around introducing quotas for local government elections to ensure greater diversity is a stark absence from this report.

As the Committee heard from a number of witnesses during the course of this inquiry positive action, such as gender quotas, is vital if we are going to fully address the current inequalities present in our local government system. Furthermore this was supported by the Expert Panel on Assembly Electoral Reform, which recommended that gender quotas be inbuilt into the Assembly's electoral system.

We would urge the Committee to reconsider the recommendations of this report and go further on endorsing formal positive action for Welsh local government.

As the report states "The more representative of the people they serve, the better equipped our councillors are to carry out their duties and

responsibilities”. This report is a timely, and critical, piece of work in terms of ensuring that our local governments across Wales are made up of more diverse representatives from a range of perspectives and backgrounds.

We look forward to discussing this further with you.

Best wishes,

Jess Blair, Director, ERS Cymru

Catherine Fookes, Director, Women’s Equality Network (WEN) Wales

Louise Miles-Payne, Senior Programme Manager, UpRising Cardiff

Jackie Jones, Wales Assembly of Women

Mutale Merrill, CEO, Bawso

Eleri Butler, CEO Welsh Women’s Aid

Lynne Tedik, Soroptimist International, Wales South Region

Frances Beecher, CEO, Llamau

Rachel Cable, Head of Oxfam Cymru

Maria Mesa, Director, Women Connect First

