

## Diversity and Equality paper<sup>1</sup>

### Background

Promoting a diverse and well informed interest in local government is an important part of SALC's work and included in the [2021-2023 Corporate Business Plan](#).

This draft paper sets out proposals for promoting diversity and equality using the [2020 Vision Campaign launched by Community Action Suffolk](#) in July 2020.

The Equality Act 2010 and subsequent Equality and Human Rights Commission 2017 are in place to challenge discrimination and promote equality of opportunity. With over 80,000 councillors in local councils, it is important for the sector that the issue of diversity receives attention.

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) launched the Diversity Commission in 2017 to support the growth of diversity in local councils. As local councils work for and are shaped by their community, the Commission looks at ways local councils can encourage every member of their community to get involved with what happens locally. The NALC initiative asks local councils to:

- encourage more people from diverse backgrounds to stand for election
- be representative of the community they serve
- devote more time to engaging those who feel isolated from their community.

As part of their work, the Diversity Commission undertook an assessment of the diversity of people who are local councillors in relation to their age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and socio-economic background as well as the diversity of representatives of county associations involved in governance. [The report was published in 2018 and is available on the NALC website here.](#)

In May 2020 NALC also published the first ever report on local council elections compiled through an online survey which gathered data from local councils, councillors and county associations attracting over 3,700 respondents. Some of the findings from this survey are interesting and potentially useful and [the report is available on the NALC website here.](#)

### Proposals

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is in draft format and being made available to members of Mid Suffolk North and South area forums for discussion purposes in order to provide the opportunity for input, opinion and feedback on this topic and help influence the final version which will be presented to the SALC Executive Committee at their next meeting.

SALC are considering a campaign to use the findings of NALC research to promote the topic offering the opportunity as a county association and its members to deliver locally on the objectives of the Diversity Commission. It is estimated the campaign would begin in October/November 2020 and extend over a period of months with a series of initiatives. The actions include:

- explore the potential for 'three layer' events working with principal authorities that explain and link the role of town and parish councils with the tiers of the public sector. To aid awareness, recruitment (where there are vacancies) and help promote the work local councils do and use the recent local successes resulting from COVID-19 to showcase partnership working across the voluntary, charitable the social enterprise sector. This would seek to capitalise on the increased interest in community matters to help inform both existing and potential new local councillors of the different ways people can get involved in local matters.
- Seek and use case studies on the value of a diverse council and promote these in publications, social media, podcasts etc.
- Consider the development of a young councillor forum and opportunity to link to the young leaders network organised by Community Action Suffolk and explore other avenues such as through graduate schemes in principal authorities.
- Promote the benefits of new ways of working including remote meetings and the opportunity this brings to those wishing to participate.
- Offer training to help develop skills around community engagement including social media training, campaign management, marketing etc., website accessibility.
- Promote the role of the SALC Board and encourage an interest from a wider range of members to consider joining.
- Liaise with the President and Vice Presidents of SALC to explore ways and opportunities to gain their support on diversity matters.

Any initiatives should make full use of the resources already available on the NALC website such as case studies and research by the Fawcett Society – ["Does local government work for women \(July 2017\) available on this website](#) and [The Young Councillor Experience available on this link on the NALC website](#).

Finally, SALC should include a pledge to show their commitment to this topic – [examples of current pledges available here on the NALC website](#).