

County Council

16 February 2018

Agenda Item 6 – Notice of Motion by Ms Lord

Women in Politics - Briefing Note

2018 marks a series of important anniversaries that have helped to shape democracy in the UK. These are:

- **February 2018** – 100th anniversary of the **Representation of the People Act 1918**, which enabled all men and some women over the age of 30 to vote for the first time;
- **April 2018** – 60th anniversary of the **Life Peerages Act 1958**, which allowed women to sit in the House of Lords;
- **July 2018** – 90th Anniversary of the **Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act 1928**, which gave women the right to vote at age 21 on the same terms as men;
- **November 2018** – 100th anniversary of the **Parliament (Qualification of Women) Act 1918**, allowing women to stand for election to the House of Commons; and
- **December 2018** – 100th anniversary of **all men and some women voting for the first time**, in the general election of December 1918.

In the 2017 Budget the Chancellor announced a £5m fund to mark the centenary of the Representation of the People Act. The Chancellor said: "It is important that we not only celebrate next year's centenary but also that we educate young people about its significance. It was the decisive step in the political emancipation of women in this country and this money will go to projects to mark its significance and remind us all how important it was."

As part of this the Houses of Parliament have launched a [Vote100](#) project which will provide a series of events and exhibitions to engage the public with Parliament and enhance the understanding of the struggle for the vote. An initiative called [EqualiTeas](#) will also run between 18 June and 2 July 2018 to celebrate 90 years since the Representation of the People 1928, which gave all men and women over 21 the equal right to vote. The initiative aims to provide an opportunity for communities to debate and celebrate equality and democracy.

Commission on Women in Local Government

In 2016/17 the LGiU and the Fawcett society worked in partnership on a year-long [Commission on Women in Local Government](#). The Commission was jointly chaired by Labour's Dame Margaret Hodge MP and Gillian Keegan, Conservative Member of Parliament for Chichester and Chichester District Councillor.

The Commission's final report, published in July 2017, found that just one in three local councillors is a woman, and the pace of change is slow, going up by just 5% since 1997. In county councils it will take until 2065 to reach equality. The report reveals that just 17 per cent of council leaders are women – a figure that has hardly shifted for 10 years.

The report also found that most councils do not have any maternity, paternity, adoption or parental leave policies in place for councillors. A Freedom of Information request on the issue found that only 12 councils, just four per cent of those responding, have any kind of formal policy in place. The West Sussex County Council Members' Allowance Scheme includes a carers' allowance for members to recover actual costs incurred for the care of dependents, including children, while they are at meetings.

The report makes a number of recommendations to the Government, political parties, and local councils which would drive change. To get more women in to the roles, the Commission calls for all parties to, for the first time, set targets for getting more women councillors in, and make it a legal requirement to get 45 per cent women candidates if they do not make progress.

Female Representation

The Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats have both used all-female lists for candidate selection. In September 2017, the Labour Party's National Executive Committee confirmed that candidates for 46 of Labour's top 76 target seats will be picked from all-women shortlists. The Conservative Party does not currently use all-female lists for Parliamentary seats.

The Conservative Party is running a [Women2Win](#) campaign with a mission to ensure the Conservative Party is representative of British people and fairly represents women at all levels of politics. Women2Win aims to increase the number of Conservative women in Parliament and in public office and is committed to identifying, training and mentoring female candidates for public office. Gillian Keegan MP supports the campaign and was formerly Campaign Director.

West Sussex County Council

There were a total of 341 candidates for the 2017 County Council election. 232 of the candidates were male and 109 were female making almost a third of candidates female. Seven divisions (10%) had no female candidate.

County Council membership for the current and two previous administrations is set out below:

Year	Male	Female	Total
2017	47	23	70
2013	51	20	71
2009	52	19	71

Tony Kershaw

Director of Law and Assurance