

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

**County Council
13th July 2017**

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Rosemarie Harris, Leader

SUBJECT: Question from County Councillor Emily Durrant

Question

The lack of gender balance in democratic representation in Wales is dire. Of the 1,254 new Councillors elected in May, only 359 are women. This takes the previous 26% female representation to 27% - a pitiful rate of progress for Wales.

However, the picture in Powys is better. Women now make up 31.5% of the Council, which though still 20% out of balance, is progress worth celebrating. I would particularly like to congratulate the council for appointing its first female Leader, and thereby enabling female Council leadership across Wales to double from 9% to 18%.

(Statistics from the Equality and Human Rights Commission. Obtained directly and from Who Runs Wales, 2017)

Even so, the current Cabinet consists of only 3 women out of 10 members.

This raises a question to the Leader:

Could the Leader of the Council have done more to ensure that women in Powys are represented fairly in the Cabinet?

Answer

When choosing the Cabinet members there were a number of aspects that I wanted to consider. We as a Council are only allowed to have a maximum Cabinet of 10 members out of the total of 73.

To provide stable governance over the term of the Council, the Independents of 30 are working in collaboration with the Conservative group of 20 so Cabinet members are drawn from the two groups.

I considered it very important that the Cabinet Members were drawn from a wide geographic area and that means having representation from the three Shires.

It was necessary to appoint some Cabinet members who had experience and understanding either of the Cabinet itself or of the way that the Council is run and of the services that are provided. I chose four members plus myself who had that experience and I also chose five new Councillors who had other types of experience and expertise to contribute. I also tried to choose from across the age range so that younger Councillors were given opportunities.

I was also aware of the importance of the Welsh language and appointed two Cabinet members who are Welsh speakers.

Underpinning all these considerations, I wanted to address the gender balance but also to address that gender balance within the three Shires.

Because of the depth and breadth of work that Cabinet members are expected to undertake then the obvious capability issues naturally applied.

As we only have 23 female members out of a possible 73 in Powys it is important that women are also represented on other groups like Scrutiny and other committees and on outside bodies such as the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority and Fire Authority.

I think, in appointing the Cabinet I have done as much as I could, within the boundaries of fairness and equity to all.