

Mid Devon District Council Scrutiny Proposal Form

This form should be completed by Member(s), Officers or members of the public when proposing an item for Scrutiny.

Note: The Scrutiny Committee reserves the right to reject suggestions for scrutiny that fall outside the District Council's remit.

Proposer's name and title	Cllr Frank Letch	Date of referral	April 2021
Proposed topic title and brief description of the issue	Spotlight Review on Motion 564 – Does Local Government Work for Women: to consider and make recommendations regarding the findings of the Fawcett Society/LGiU report: 'Does Local Government Work for Women?'		
Link to national, regional and local priorities(Corporate Plan) and targets	This is part of ensuring that MDDC is a progressive council and affirming its role in helping create an equal and inclusive society for all.		
Background to the issue	<p>Motion 564, proposed by Cllr Wainwright and Cllr Norton, was agreed by Council in February 2021. Part of that Motion included a specific request for Scrutiny Committee to consider the findings of the 2017 Fawcett report 'Does Local Government Work for Women'.</p> <p>The study found that sexism is commonplace in local government with almost four in ten female councillors having experienced sexist comments from within their own party. Additionally, the culture, practices and protocols of local government can create unnecessary barriers to participation for women with caring responsibilities.</p> <p>Recommendations in the report are around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting more women into Local Government; • Improving Diversity; • Removing structural barriers to success; • Challenging sexism and changing council culture; • Networks, mentoring and building confidence; and • Leadership – both Councillors and Officers. 		
Please address as many of the following shortlisting considerations as possible: Why is this issue of concern to merit review? What is the impact on the community/area/Council?	<p>It is proposed that the Scrutiny Committee hold a 'Spotlight Review' for this work. This would be a one off Working Group, over half a day, where Members of the Group will look at the findings in the report, consider research, understand current practices, question Officers, Members and experts, before making some recommendations to take back to the Committee. Ideally this will take place in June or July.</p> <p>The Council has resolved to practice equality, fairness and inclusion, and to play its part in creating an equal society for all.</p>		

<p>Are there performance or risk concerns?</p> <p>What is the urgency?</p> <p>Is there any supporting evidence to justify the issue?</p> <p>What would be the outcome of this work?</p>	<p>There is no place for sexism, racism, bigotry, discrimination or intolerance of any form. This review will go towards helping the Council to meet this aim by reviewing current practices and culture, and recommending areas for improvement.</p> <p>The outcome of the work will be to consider what areas of the Council, or Council culture, could be improved in terms of equality. Some specific outcomes could be around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement with police forces to ensure that women understand the legal protection available against abuse and harassment. • Understand the current situation around maternity and paternity leave for Councillors, and consider a survey as to how this affects Members. Any change may need to be reflected in the constitution. • Review childcare expenses reporting. • Explore the possibility of introducing a sponsorship schemes for new Councillors. • Understand the role of the Monitoring Officer in overseeing member conduct, and promote equality in the next constitution review. • Provide councillors with appropriate training to tackle discrimination. • Review flexible working arrangements for Officers, look at how to promote job sharing; and review successful examples of job sharing. • Review of gender equality networks and support available for women who feel that they have come across sexism in the workplace.
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For Scrutiny Committee Members

Is there sufficient information available to take a decision, or is there a need for further research investigation?	
Will a review of the issue add value?	
Is this a matter for the Scrutiny Committee or another Committee/PDG?	
Decision taken: should this be added to the Work Programme, if so when should work start?	

