

PROTOCOL 8

Appointment of Non-Councillor Representatives

Constitution

The Council's constitution provides that each overview and scrutiny committee or sub-committee shall be entitled to recommend to Council the appointment of a number of people as non-voting co-optees.

Education representatives

The constitution also provides that membership of the overview and scrutiny committee/sub-committee dealing with education matters includes voting representatives as follows:

- 1 Church of England diocese representative
- 1 Roman Catholic diocese representative
- 5 parent governor representatives
- 1 representative of other faiths or denominations.

General principles for co-opted members

Co-opted members are expected to attend regularly at Committee meetings, and to be available to take part in working groups/evidence gathering sessions. Co-opted members count towards the quorum of the Committee.

If a co-opted member fails (without the agreement of the Council) to attend throughout a period of 6 months, they will cease to be a co-opted member. No co-opted member may be involved in scrutinising a decision in which he/she has been directly involved.

It is a condition of appointment that a co-opted member will observe the principles of the Code of Conduct, including the Nolan principles of involvement in public life. This includes a requirement for the co-opted member to declare interests in issues under consideration, and to withdraw from any part of a meeting where they have a personal and prejudicial interest in the same way as an elected Member.

Is co-option the best way of gaining involvement?

When considering whether and who to co-opt, Members will consider the range of arrangements available to the Committee to gather information to inform its deliberations. These include the calling of expert and other witnesses, and consultation through a range of means designed to reach members of the city's communities. In many circumstances, the temporary attendance of a member of the community who has a particular knowledge of the issues under consideration can be an appropriate way of including and gathering information about how Council policies are working for the city's communities, and identifying ways of improving. Members should bear in mind that many members of the city's communities may find the formality of appointment to a Council Committee more daunting than this more informal involvement.

How can co-opted members add value to the Committee's work?

Co-opted members can make a considerable and valuable contribution to the work of the Committee through broadening the range of experience, skills and knowledge available to support elected members in their deliberations.

A committee/sub-committee that is considering whether to recommend the appointment of co-opted Members should identify, in the context of its terms of reference and the planned programme of work for the year ahead:

- The range of skills and knowledge the Committee will require to effectively conduct its work-programme.
- The range of skills and knowledge the existing (elected and co-opted) Members of the Committee/sub-Committee are already able to bring to the Committee
- Where there are gaps in the required skills and/or knowledge that a co-opted Member could fill
- Decide whether the need for these skills and knowledge is time-limited and can be filled by the Committee receiving evidence or hearing from interested parties (from one or several witnesses or experts, and on one or more occasions) or whether the Committee requires the additional expertise of a co-opted member's attendance throughout the year. In coming to a decision the Committee is referred to the table below.

Balance of membership

In determining the number of co-opted Members to be invited to serve, the committee should ensure that membership achieves a balance between the representative role of elected Members and the value that can be added through bringing a range of skills and perspectives to the work of the Committee.

- To avoid the Committee becoming unwieldy, the number of co-opted members should be kept to the minimum necessary.
- When seeking nominations, the Committee should consider how representative the Committee's elected membership is of the experience of the community as a whole with particular regard to the 6 equality strands; age, faith, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation.

Qualities for co-optees

Co-opted members are required to demonstrate the following qualities;
Effective communication skills, with the ability to listen and question effectively.
Ability to interpret and assess information to identify issues and propose solutions.
Ability to consider an issue from a range of points of view.
An open-minded approach to people and issues.
Ability to work cooperatively and as part of a team in both formal and informal settings.
A commitment to improving outcomes for people in Sunderland.

Identifying Requirements

To inform the procedure for selection, the Committee should;

- Identify the range of experience, skills, knowledge and expertise the committee is seeking and seek nominations from organisations and individuals who demonstrate they have these.

- Guard against seeking nominations from organisations or individuals with a single issue perspective or personal agenda.
- Determine the number of nominations to be sought.
- Consider advertising for individuals able to serve as co-opted members, using local press, and/or website.
- Identify organisations which represent interest groups that fill identified gaps and approach the organisation for nominations,
- Consider approaching voluntary and community sector organisations to seek nominations where there is an identified need to balance the membership to reflect the experience of all sectors of the community.

Procedure

1. When the Committee has considered the range of nominations to be sought the Review Coordinator will:
 - Seek and receive nominations on behalf of the Committee, ensuring prospective co-opted members are aware of the requirements of the role and that information put forward in support of their application will be considered in a public meeting of the Committee.
 - Report nominations to the next available meeting of the Committee.
2. When selecting co-opted members the Committee should:
 - Consider the nominations received
 - Evaluate these against the requirements identified.
 - Give preference to individuals able to make the broadest contribution to the required skills and knowledge base.
 - Propose nominations to be put to Council
3. Appointment by Council
 - Committee reports its preferred nominations to full Council
 - Council considers nominations and makes appointments of co-opted members for the Council year

Table – Should the Committee co-opt or call a witness?

Co-opted Member - advantages	Witness/Expert/public attendance and contribution - advantages
Consistent access to a broader range of perspective across the work programme	Focussed expertise/knowledge/ experience relevant to the issue being considered
Demonstrates commitment to working with community representatives and partner organisations and building close working relationships with them	Flexibility to respond to one-off issues
Allows the Committee to achieve a balanced representation of community experience across its full range of work	Demonstrates openness to flexible community involvement and rapidly build a broader range of relationships
Increases the Committee's capacity for work outside the formal Committee meeting	Timely – allows quick response to new requirements
	Informality may make it easier for interested parties to contribute

Co-opted Member - disadvantages	Witness/Expert/public attendance and contribution - disadvantages
No flexibility during the year – limited capacity to respond to new requirements	Limited time to communicate/build understanding
Risk of imbalance –may bring a single-issue perspective, or personal agenda	Resource intensive
Formality of the Committee setting may be daunting and fail to reach all sectors of the community – this may lead to crucial information not being made available	

What is expected of a co-opted Member?

1. **Before taking up your appointment** as a co-optee you will need to make a written declaration that you will abide by the Codes of Conduct for Members contained in Part 5 of the Council’s Constitution.
2. **If you are a co-opted member with voting rights, after taking up your appointment**, you will need to
 - (a) Complete an entry in the Register of Interests within 28 days of taking office.
 - (b) Abide by the Council’s Constitution and the Scrutiny handbook in terms of rules and procedures for Scrutiny Committee proceedings
3. With regard to the work of your Scrutiny Committee it is expected that you will:-
 - (a) Prepare in advance of the meeting, by reading published agenda and papers.
 - (b) Contribute to the discussions of the scrutiny committee, sub committee or working party on all matters, not just those of your specialist area.
 - (c) Bring specialist knowledge and/or skills, particularly relating to the organisation or group you represent.
 - (d) Bring an element of external challenge to the Committee discussions for example, through your representational role and also by relating issues more as the general public will view issues.
 - (e) Take an interest in, attend and contribute to the scrutiny committee, sub committee or working parties to which you volunteer or are appointed, take part in site visits, and take up relevant development and training opportunities made available to you.
 - (f) Gather evidence and research appropriate to the committee’s agenda.
 - (g) Promote awareness, understanding and interest in the work of the Scrutiny Committees

- (h) Ask questions in order to help the committee to make practical suggestions for improvements to services.
 - (i) Assist in the preparation of reports where appropriate.
 - (j) Keep informed those you represent and brief an approved substitute (if there is one) if you are unable to attend a scrutiny committee meeting.
4. You may need to declare a personal or prejudicial interest in specific agenda items – you will be given guidance on what this means.
 5. At committee, you may raise issues for consideration for future scrutiny during discussion about the committee's forward work programme.
 6. As a member of a scrutiny committee you may volunteer, or be asked by the Committee to take part in task and finish working groups. These are time-limited, set up to carry out specific pieces of work within agreed terms of reference. They make recommendations and report back to the main committee.

Support arrangements for co-opted Members

Co-opted members of the Committees will be provided with the following to support their participation in the work of the Committee, and of working groups established by it;

1. Before appointment, a co-optee will be given an induction into the requirements of the Members' Code of Conduct, including the registration and declaration of interests before signing acceptance of the Members' Code of Conduct.
2. Upon appointment, co-optees will be given:
 - An introduction to how the council works.
 - Copies of, and a brief explanation of;
The Council's Constitution,
The Corporate Improvement Plan
The Scrutiny Handbook
Key documents relevant to the Scrutiny Committee.
3. Scrutiny Officer support is available to all Scrutiny Committee co-opted members in the same way as scrutiny committee councillors. Each scrutiny committee has a named Scrutiny Officer with access to the rest of the scrutiny team for wider requests for information or guidance. Briefing before or after scrutiny meetings can be available on request.
4. The Democratic Services Officer for your committee will give you:
 - Committee details including terms of reference, current forward work programme, planned meeting dates, and recent committee papers.
 - Advice on committee management and constitutional arrangements and the decision-making process.

- 5 In line with legal requirements, paper copies of agendas and reports for your meeting will be sent to you at least 5 working days before the date of the meeting.

Access

6. Security pass/car parking
7. All meeting rooms at the Civic Centre are fully accessible and hearing loops are installed in some rooms. If you have any particular requirements or access needs to enable you to participate in meetings, please contact the Democratic Services Officer for your committee. With reasonable notice, we will also provide information in other formats, for example, large print or on tape – please contact the Democratic Services Officer for details.

Financial Support

ICT support

Access to information

You are entitled to access to all information available to the scrutiny committee, sub-committee or working party on the same 'need to know' basis as elected councillors.