

WIRRAL COUNCIL

FAMILIES AND WELLBEING POLICY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

9TH JULY 2013

SUBJECT:	<i>THE ROLE OF CO-OPTEEES</i>
WARD/S AFFECTED:	<i>ALL</i>
REPORT OF:	<i>DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH / HEAD OF POLICY AND PERFORMANCE</i>
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	<i>CLLR ANN MCLACHLAN</i>

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an overview on the role of co-optees in the former Overview & Scrutiny Committees and presents some proposed options for the role of co-optees on the new Families and Wellbeing Policy & Performance Committee.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Previously, co-optees (that is, non-Council members) have been appointed to former Overview & Scrutiny Committees. Both the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Health and Wellbeing Overview & Scrutiny Committee included co-optees among their membership. Members will be aware that the remit of those two former Overview & Scrutiny Committees is now covered by the newly formed Families and Wellbeing Policy & Performance Committee.

3.0 ARRANGEMENTS OF THE FORMER OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

- 2.2 During the 2012/13 municipal year, the following places were allocated to co-opted members:

Former Children and Young People's Overview & Scrutiny Committee

- Mr Alex Scott, Roman Catholic Diocesan Representative (voting member)
- Vacancy, Church of England Diocesan Representative (voting member)
- Mrs H Shoebridge, Parent Governor Representative (voting member) – until 28th October 2015
- Mrs Nicola Smith, Parent Governor Representative (voting member) – until 8th February 2017
- Mrs Jane Owens, Voluntary and Community Sector Representative (non-voting member)

Former Health and Wellbeing Overview & Scrutiny Committee

- Sandra Wall, Older People's Parliament (non-voting member)
- Diane Hill - Local Involvement Network (LINK) (non-voting member)
- Brian Donaldson – Carers (non-voting member)

- Shanti Saagar - BME Community (non-voting member)
- Vacancy – Service Users (non-voting member)

The co-optees have played a valuable role in contributing their experience to the work of the Overview & Scrutiny Committees. The inclusion of co-opted members in the overview and scrutiny process is seen as good practice among scrutineers.

4.0 ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE POLICY & PERFORMANCE COMMITTEES

4.1 The Policy and Performance Committee Meeting Procedure Rules (included elsewhere on the agenda) contain two relevant sections:

Section 3 - Co-optees

Policy and Performance Committees or their sub-committees shall be entitled to recommend to Council the appointment of a number of non-voting co-optees (see also 4 below). Co-options may relate to a prescribed period of office or to specific issues under consideration.

Section 4 - Families and Wellbeing Policy and Performance Committee

The Families and Wellbeing Policy and Performance Committee and any sub-committee dealing with education matters shall include in its membership the following co-optees:

- (a) One Church of England diocese representative
- (b) One Roman Catholic diocese representative
- (c) Two parent governor representatives

Where the Policy & Performance committee / sub-committee deals with other matters, these statutory consultees shall not vote on those matters, though they may stay in the meeting and speak.

It should be noted that four of the co-optees listed above (one Roman Catholic Diocesan Representative, one Church of England Diocesan Representative and two Parent Governor Representative) are a statutory requirement and are voting members of the Committee, albeit on education matters only. The new Council Constitution, adopted in May 2013, stipulates that “at least two but not more than five Parent Governor representatives should be appointed” (Section 6.3, Article 6).

Any remaining co-optees will be present at meetings as non-voting members.

4.2 A report, ‘Appointment and Constitution of Committees 2013/14’ was presented to Council at the Annual Meeting of Council (Part 2), held on 20th May 2013. Included within that report was the following paragraph:

“The position with co-opted members is that any Policy and Performance Committee is entitled to recommend to the Council the appointment of any non-voting co-optees. The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee currently has four voting co-optees – there is a statutory requirement to have representatives of the Catholic and Church of England dioceses and of parent governors. The Pensions Committee also has voting co-optees who represent the other four districts in Merseyside and the wider membership of the Merseyside Pension Fund. The Health and Well Being Overview and Scrutiny Committee currently has five non-voting co-optees. The co-opted members of current Overview and Scrutiny Committees have been ‘slotted in’ to the new Committee that covers the functions with which they are concerned”.

- 4.3 Members will be aware that all four Policy & Performance Committees have a membership of fifteen Council members. Any co-optees will be additional to that number. Therefore, there is the potential for very large meetings. In addition, the remit of the Families and Wellbeing Policy & Performance Committee is very broad. It is therefore sensible to utilise the skills and experience of the co-optees to the greatest benefit.
- 4.4 It is envisaged that the Policy & Performance Committees will be able to structure their work programmes in a different way to the former Overview & Scrutiny Committees, with as much work as possible taking place outside the formal Committee meetings. Therefore, this seems to be an opportune time to reflect on the role of co-optees in the future.

5.0 ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- 5.1 As detailed above, four co-optees to the Committee (one Roman Catholic Diocesan Representative, one Church of England Diocesan Representative and two Parent Governor Representative) have voting rights in education decisions. However, as the Committee agendas are likely to be very varied, the number of education items may be relatively few. Consideration, therefore, needs to be given to how best to enable these co-optees to undertake their specific role.
- 5.2 One of the co-optees on the former Health and Wellbeing Overview & Scrutiny Committee represented Wirral Local Involvement Network (LINK), from which Healthwatch Wirral has evolved. Locally, Wirral Healthwatch is the consumer champion of adult and children's health and social care. It listens to the experiences people have of local, publicly-funded care, whether good or bad, and uses them to help inform and influence the commissioners and providers of services. It will report any concerns about services to commissioners, providers and to health scrutiny.

Healthwatch is allocated a statutory place on the new Health & Wellbeing Board. As the Health & Wellbeing Board is a decision-making body, the question can be legitimately raised as to whether Healthwatch should also have a place on the scrutinising body, the Families and Wellbeing Policy & Performance Committee. However, it is seen as best practice by the Department for Health and the Centre for Public Scrutiny that health scrutiny committees (or those undertaking the function of health scrutiny) work closely with local Healthwatch organisations. Some other Local Authorities are known to be appointing Healthwatch representative(s) to the Health Scrutiny Committees, for example, Cornwall Council.

- 5.3 Brian Donaldson has recently indicated his intention to resign as the Carers representative. However, it has also been proposed by the Carers Association that Louise Reece-Jones be the replacement representative.

6.0 FORMULATING OPTIONS FOR THE ROLE CO-OPTees ON POLICY & PERFORMANCE COMMITTEES

Given the changes in the overview and scrutiny arrangements, it is appropriate to review both the membership and the role of the co-opted members. Committee members may wish to consider the following points when developing options for effectively utilising co-opted members on this committee.

- *Retention of existing membership of co-optees*
 - Will enable continuity of membership from the previous municipal year
 - Recognises the contribution previously made by the co-optees
 - Meetings may involve a large number of members, which may be difficult to manage
 - It may be difficult to engage co-optees in the business of the Committee as the Committee's remit is broad, whilst the Co-optees remit is specialised.

- *Restrict membership to the four statutory co-optees*
 - Recognises the value that co-optees have previously given
 - Meets the statutory requirement regarding co-opted members
 - It may not be appropriate to engage these specific co-optees in the wider business of this Committee, therefore not utilising co-optees time effectively
 - Other existing co-optees will not be able to contribute to the work of this Committee
 - An Education sub-committee to deal with all education issues could be created to accommodate the statutory co-optees. This sub-committee could include the work of the current 0-19 Standards sub-committee.

- *Evaluate whether the current organisations that co-optees are drawn from are still fit for purpose*
 - This would enable changes in the organisational landscape to be reflected, for example, LINK being replaced by Healthwatch
 - Provides the potential for new co-optees, which may bring different experiences and perspective
 - Potential loss of continuity
 - Any assessment would have to ensure that the statutory requirement regarding co-opted members is met.

- *Review the role of co-opted members*
 - Consider if all co-optees should attend every meeting of the Families & Wellbeing P&P Committee
 - Inclusive, ensuring co-optees are party to all discussions
 - Enables continuity
 - Meetings will involve a large number of members; may restrict ability of all members to effectively contribute
 - Co-optees will be present for a large number of items in which they may not have any experience / interest in.
 - Use of co-optees skills and experiences may not be fully utilised

 - Consider if the four statutory co-optees should attend every meeting of the Families & Wellbeing P&P Committee
 - Inclusive, ensuring co-optees are party to all discussions
 - Enables continuity
 - Meetings will involve a large number of members; may restrict ability of all members to effectively contribute
 - Co-optees will be present for a large number of items in which they may not have any experience / interest in.
 - Use of co-optees skills and experiences may not be fully utilised

 - Consider if co-optees should participate in Task & Finish Groups only

- Co-optees will be members of a Reference Group to be invited to participate in relevant pieces of work
- Contribution of co-optees is likely to be enhanced as they would be involved in projects of particular relevance / interest
- Co-optees may feel that their role is diminished

The above section sets out some of the factors the Committee may wish to consider in deciding on how it effectively engages and uses the expertise of co-opted members. It may therefore be appropriate to consider these options in more detail and, in so doing, to take into account the views of the current co-opted members.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Members reflect on the issues in formulating the options for membership and role of Co-optees. The Committee establishes a Task & Finish Group to investigate this issue and make recommendations to the Committee at its next meeting in September 2013.

8.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 This report was produced to provide background information to enable Committee Members to agree the number and role of Co-opted Committee Members.

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