

# WIRRAL COUNCIL

## FAMILIES AND WELLBEING POLICY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

9<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2013

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b><i>THE ROLE OF CO-OPTEEES AND PARTNERS</i></b>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	<b><i>ALL</i></b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b><i>MEMBERS OF THE CO-OPTEEES TASK &amp; FINISH GROUP</i></b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:</b>	<b><i>NOT APPLICABLE</i></b>

### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of work undertaken by the Co-optees Task & Finish Group, which was initiated by the meeting of the Families and Wellbeing Policy & Performance Committee, held on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2013.

### 2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Scrutiny Committee arrangements were amended at the start of the current municipal year (Annual Council, 13<sup>th</sup> / 20<sup>th</sup> May 2013). The newly formed Families and Wellbeing Policy & Performance Committee largely replaced the remits of the former Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Health and Wellbeing Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Five co-optees (that is, non-Council members) had previously been appointed to each of these former Committees.

- 2.2 The Policy & Performance Committee Procedure Rules state that 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

These members will be voting members of the committee or sub-committee of which they are a member. Where the Policy & Performance Committee / sub-committee deals with other matters (that is, non-education matters) these statutory consultees shall not vote on those matters, though they may stay in the meeting and speak.

In addition, Policy and Performance Committees or their sub-committees are entitled to recommend to Council the appointment of a number of non-voting co-optees. Co-options may relate to a prescribed period of office or to specific issues under consideration.

2.3 At the meeting of the Families and Wellbeing Policy & Performance Committee, held on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2013 a report was presented entitled 'The Role of Co-optees'. Members agreed that, given the extensive remit of the new Policy & Performance Committee and the increased Councillor membership (now fifteen), there was an opportunity to review some ways of working. As a result, it was agreed that a Task & Finish Group would be formed to formulate proposals regarding:

- The role of co-optees
- The role that partners should play in Committee meetings and in the wider scrutiny process
- The potential role for permanent sub-committees

2.4 The following Members were appointed to form the Task & Finish Group:

- Cllr Wendy Clements (Chair)
- Cllr Mike Hornby
- Cllr Moira McLaughlin
- Cllr Denise Roberts
- Cllr Pat Williams

### **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

The Members recognise the valuable contribution made by the co-optees on the former committees and the commitment shown. The Members were therefore keen to hear the views and perspectives of the co-optees and their thoughts on how the new arrangements could work most effectively.

The Members invited all of the former co-optees to attend a meeting to explore issues which included:

- Their experience as a co-opted member
- Their involvement in previous Task & Finish work of scrutiny
- How the skills and experiences of non-Council members can be used most effectively in the future

Subsequently, the Members met to discuss relevant issues and further reflect upon the co-optees views and opinions.

### **4.0 GENERAL OBSERVATIONS**

The Members recognised the valuable contribution that the co-optees have made. All co-optees expressed their desire to remain a member of the full Committee as they had found this a positive and rewarding experience. Some co-optees expressed a view that there is a requirement to train and provide induction to non-elected representatives to enable them to better understand their role and responsibilities.

Co-optees also reflected that they found Committee meetings a useful source of information which they fed back to their individual organisations. They would not like to lose this opportunity.

There was some frustration among co-optees that, in the past, some had been voting members (statutory members) while others did not have a vote at Committee meetings.

Co-optees also stated that they brought a wide range of experiences which was much broader than the specific sector that they represented at Committee.

## **5.0 THE FUTURE ROLE OF CO-OPTees**

Members debated a number of key questions and points of agreement are summarised below:

### **5.1 What does the committee want co-optees and / or non elected member representatives to do?**

- Engage and influence families and wellbeing matters
- Fully utilise skills and experiences to inform debate and policy development
- Provide challenge and act as a critical friend
- Provide an advisory role and offer guidance
- Represent views and experience of different sectors of the community, for example, service users, carers, patients, older people, church, parent governors, and children & young people.

*Why was this agreed?*

- Members felt that this represented the positive input that co-opted members are able to provide.
- Some of the co-optees expressed similar views particularly around their ability to provide advice and guidance. Co-optees also felt that they were able to represent the views and experience of the communities in which they live and work.
- Co-optees stated a desire to contribute to wider debates across the work of the Committee. It was said that there appears to be a significant focus on health scrutiny with less energy given to internal Council matters.

### **5.2 How does the committee want them to do this?**

The Task & Finish Group Members supported the following options:

- Attend Reference Groups  
It is proposed to introduce a Reference Group of non-elected representatives, who will represent a broad sector of organisations to cover the remit of the Families and Wellbeing Policy & Performance Committee – health, public health, social care, safeguarding, older people, children & young people and leisure, ensuring that views of both service users and service providers are heard. These representatives will be known as Reference Group advisors and will provide expertise and guidance to Members, ensuring that, on a regular basis, views and advice is available from a broader range of experts than just Council officers.

Reference Group advisors will be available to advise committee members on specific areas of the work programme most relevant to their areas of expertise and skills. The introduction of a Reference Group would give the opportunity for advisors to nominate their areas of interest and, therefore, be included in

pieces of work most likely to meet their interests, skills and experience. It is hoped that advisors will find this work more rewarding than attending committee meetings, the agendas for which may include few items directly relevant to their interests and experiences.

Furthermore, there would be an opportunity to select advisors that are best able to support the specific work programme of the committee. The term of office of advisors, other than the statutory co-optees, could be renewed on an annual basis when the work programme is refreshed. In this way, it could be ensured that the composition of the Reference Group reflected the broad themes of the Committee's work programme.

It is proposed that the Reference Group comprises a core group of members which would include all existing co-optees, with additional members available to support specific work programme items.

- **Attend permanent Sub Committee meetings**  
The Members of the Task & Finish Group considered whether the work of the former 0–19 Standards Sub-committee should continue within the new Committee structure. It is recommended that the creation of an Attainment Sub-Committee to deal with education issues in its broader sense provides a potential solution. The four statutory co-optees will be members of this sub-committee. If this proposal is agreed it is recommended that the three Spokespersons are given delegated authority to agree the membership and remit of the Attainment sub-committee. It is suggested that the Attainment sub-committee will report its findings to the Families and Wellbeing Policy & Performance Committee. It is also suggested that the remit of the sub-committee will be broader than education matters by also focussing on issues related to the wider determinants of attainment and the 'Narrowing the Gap' agenda.
- **Participate in Task & Finish Groups**  
As part of the new scrutiny arrangements it is envisaged that there will be a greater role for Task & Finish Groups than has been the case in the past. Therefore, there is an opportunity for both Reference Group advisors and the statutory co-optees to play a part in the work of Task & Finish Groups either as members of the Task & Finish Group or in acting as witnesses and providing evidence.

#### *Why was this agreed?*

- This approach will enable a more flexible use of advisors to be made; making use of particular experiences and skills at the appropriate time.
- The use of individuals could be tailored to specific issues based on the interests, expertise and experience of the individual and the organisation which they represent.
- The establishment of an Attainment sub-committee will enable particular focus on those issues and enable statutory co-optees to play a significant role in the scrutiny of the issues for which their role is devised, as well as the wider determinants of attainment.
- The proposal will enable the Council to meet its statutory requirements but will also enable statutory co-optees to engage in wider issues as core members of the Reference Group.

- The recommended approach will prevent the Families & Wellbeing Policy & Performance Committee from becoming too large, which potentially could have stifled debate.
- Some co-optees expressed support for more organisations working together constructively. Some co-optees also felt that working in small groups on specific issues provided the opportunity to ask more detailed questions in a more comfortable environment than a formal Committee meeting.
- The use of a Reference Group enables more organisations to have a direct input to the scrutiny process. In this respect, the proposal will be more inclusive than current arrangements.

### **5.3 How will non elected member representatives be selected?**

The statutory co-optees will be nominated as previously, namely:

- One Church of England diocese representative
- One Roman Catholic diocese representative
- Two parent governor representatives

These members will be voting members of Attainment sub-committee, although they will be only entitled to a vote on education-related matters.

It is proposed that a list of organisations will be compiled which reflect the remit of the committee. It is suggested that the list will be compiled by officers in consultation with the Chair and Spokespersons and an attempt will be made to ensure that the list broadly reflects the priorities of the Committee's work programme. Subsequently, once agreed, the organisations will be contacted in order to nominate a representative.

*Why was this agreed?*

- The primary focus of the Attainment sub-committee will be education-related issues. As the statutory co-optees have a vote on education-related matters only, the broad remits of those co-optees and that sub-committee are aligned.
- The Reference Group will be most effective if the interests of the membership reflect the activities and work programme of the Committee.

## **6.0 SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

In Summary, the Task & Finish Group Members have agreed the following approach:

- 6.1 A Reference Group comprising representatives of relevant organisations will be established. These representatives will be called upon to provide advice and challenge on topics which are directly relevant to their experience, skills and interests.
- 6.2 All existing co-optees will no longer be members of the Families and Wellbeing Policy & Performance Committee but instead will be invited to be members of the Reference Group.
- 6.3 Officers, in consultation with the Chair and Spokespersons, will compile an initial list of prospective members of the Reference Group and write to request nominations.
- 6.4 An Attainment sub-committee will be established to undertake the work formerly done by the 0 – 19 Standards sub-committee as well as examine the wider determinants of attainment.

- 6.5 Membership of the Attainment sub-committee will include the four statutory co-optees. Any existing terms of office will continue and steps will be taken to fill any vacancies.
- 6.6 The membership of the Reference Group will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that the experience and skills of the membership is consistent with topics of the Committee's work programme.

## **7.0 THE ROLE OF PARTNERS**

In reflecting on the role of co-optees, Members also considered it timely to review the role of partners within the future arrangements.

### **7.1 What is the role of partners in the new arrangements?**

Health partners have attended meetings of the previous Health & Wellbeing Overview & Scrutiny Committee. In the past, the approach taken with partners has varied, with different partners being treated differently. This has not been a conscious decision but has evolved over time with custom and practice.

The Task & Finish Group propose that four key health partners, namely, Wirral Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Wirral University Teaching Hospital (WUTH), Cheshire & Wirral Partnership Trust (CWP) and Wirral Community Trust, will be invited to attend Committee meetings in order to provide advice to the Committee and to be held to account for the services they deliver. It was recognised that the onus would be on the Committee to appropriately balance these two roles.

The Task & Finish Group also considered the role of other partners and recognised that they had a valuable contribution to make to the work of the Committee. These partners will be invited to meetings as and when appropriate.

Members agreed that joint scrutiny arrangements will be organised with neighbouring authorities as and when required to scrutinise substantial variation to services. This will apply when proposals for major changes to health services cross local authority boundaries.

*Why was this agreed?*

- The Task & Finish Group Members felt that it would be helpful for the key partners to be present. This would be in a similar capacity as senior Council officers, that is, not as a member of the Committee but to advise the Committee Members and be accountable for the services they deliver.

## **8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 Committee Members are recommended to approve the approach set out in Section 6.0.
- 8.2 The Chair and Spokespersons are authorised to finalise details of the remit, reporting mechanism and membership of the Attainment sub-committee.
- 8.3 The four main health partners, as detailed in the report, will be invited to attend all meetings of the Families and Wellbeing Policy & Performance Committee in order to provide advice to members and to be held to account for the services which they provide.
- 8.4 The Chair is requested to write to the co-optees thanking them for their contribution and to advise them of the Committee's decision.
- 8.5 The proposed arrangements will be reviewed at the end of the current municipal year.

## **Reference Papers**

'The Role of Co-optees', Families and Wellbeing Policy & Performance Committee, 9<sup>th</sup> July 2013

## **Report of the Co-optees Task & Finish Group Members:**

**Cllr Wendy Clements (Chair)**

**Cllr Mike Hornby**

**Cllr Moira McLaughlin**

**Cllr Denise Roberts**

**Cllr Pat Williams**