



Durham County Council

Protocol for the co-option of non-statutory, non-voting
scrutiny members.

Introduction

- 1 The purpose of establishing a protocol for the co-option of non-statutory, non-voting scrutiny members is as follows:
 - To formalise the appointment of representatives
 - Ensure that as many overview and scrutiny members as is practical are involved in the appointment process
 - Appointments meet the requirements of the person specification
 - Formal induction, training and on-going support is available to the appointed non-voting co-optees
 - Appointment for a two-year period provides an opportunity for non-voting co-opted members to stand down if they wish to and provides overview and scrutiny with the opportunity to refresh membership and seek representatives with different experience and skills
- 2 For the purposes of this protocol, the term 'co-opted members/co-optees' refers to co-opted non-statutory, non-voting scrutiny members.

Co-opted members

- 3 The majority of members on scrutiny committees are elected members of the council although provision is available for the appointment of up to two co-optees on each committee.
- 4 Each co-optee will be subject to the formal appointment process as detailed below.
- 5 Co-optees will have no voting rights.
- 6 Each co-opted member will be appointed for a period of two years with an option to extend for a further two-year period subject to the agreement of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB). At the end of the two-year extension co-optees will be given the opportunity to apply for a further period of service however this is subject to the formal appointment process.
- 7 Up to two co-optees may serve on a scrutiny review group including cross cutting and light touch reviews.
- 8 Review groups may appoint individuals with expert and or specialist knowledge for the duration to the review, in addition to the co-optees.
- 10 Employees of Durham County Council are excluded from applying to be a co-optee.

Appointment process

- 11 Notice of any co-optee vacancies will be given on the council's website, social media and circulated to the Area Action Partnerships.
- 12 Expressions of interest are to be sent to the scrutiny team.
- 13 All existing co-optees will be invited to express an interest in applying for vacancies.
- 14 All those expressing an interest in applying will be sent:
 - Information on the role of overview and scrutiny and co-opted members
 - Protocol for co-opted non-statutory non-voting members
 - Application form
- 15 Applicants will be required to
 - Complete a short application form giving their contact details
 - Indicate which scrutiny committee they would like to be appointed to
 - Provide a statement of no more than 400 words explaining why they would like to be involved in the scrutiny process and what they can contribute to the role
- 16 The chair and vice chair of COSMB, the chair and vice chair of the appropriate committee and a relevant scrutiny officer will identify suitable candidates. An assessment against the role description and person specification will be made for each application.

Interview

- 17 Selected applicants will be invited for interview.
- 18 The interview panel is likely to be comprised of the chair and vice chair of COSMB, and the relevant chair and vice chair of the appropriate scrutiny committee together with a member from that committee (minority party representative) and a scrutiny officer. A set of prepared questions will be supplied to the panel.
- 19 The chair of COSMB, or if not present, the chair of the appropriate scrutiny committee will have the casting vote in the event of a tied vote. All applicants will be notified by email or letter of the decision of the appointment panel.
- 20 The interview will last for approximately 20 minutes.
- 21 The successful applicants will be contacted to arrange an induction to the overview and scrutiny function.

- 22 Those who have been unsuccessful can ask to join a pool of unsuccessful applicants which can be drawn upon should co-optee vacancies arise during the two-year appointment period.

Term of office

- 23 Co-opted members will be appointed for a term of two years with an option for a further two-year period subject to the agreement of COSMB.
- 24 At the end of the further two-year period of office, each scrutiny committee will ask the co-opted members if they wish to continue. If they do want to continue, they will be subject to the appointment process outlined above.
- 25 Scrutiny committees benefit from the experience that co-optees accumulate during their term of office but recognise that some may wish to stand down. Having a fixed term of office also allows scrutiny committees to refresh their membership with different skills and experience.
- 26 The cumulative term of office for a co-optee should not exceed four years unless the co-optee has gone through the formal appointment process or where the agreement of COSMB is sought.
- 27 Co-optees may terminate their membership by giving one month's notice to Helen Bradley, Head of Legal and Democratic Services should their circumstances change and they can no longer fulfil their commitments as a co-optee. In addition, should a current serving co-optee no-longer be fulfilling their commitments as a co-optee then the respective Overview and Scrutiny Committee can request that they resign with the resulting vacancy filled in accordance with this protocol.

Code of Conduct

- 28 All co-optees are required to sign the council's code of conduct which sets out the standards of behaviour expected.
- 29 Co-optees must also sign a declaration of interest form identifying any interests which an individual may have which require recording. Advice will be provided on these requirements.

Induction, training and ongoing support

- 30 Co-optees will receive an individual induction following appointment and prior to attending their first scrutiny meeting.

- 31 The induction will involve meeting with the chair and vice chair of the committee they are joining and the scrutiny officer responsible for the committee.
- 32 All co-optees will have access to in-house training opportunities relevant to the remit of the committee they are appointed to which will increase their knowledge and expertise.
- 33 Co-optees are voluntary positions but the council will make payments to cover expenses whilst fulfilling their duties i.e. travel and subsistence allowance.