

**Committee:** Overview and Scrutiny Commission

**Date:** 5 April 2016

Wards: All

Subject: Review of the recruitment of co-opted members to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission

Lead officer: Julia Regan, Head of Democracy Services

Lead member: Cllr Peter Southgate, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission

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## **Recommendations:**

That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission consider how its co-option arrangements for 2015/16 have worked and decide whether it wishes to recruit any non-voting co-opted members for 2016/17.

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## **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The Commission, at its meeting on 7 October 2014, discussed and agreed proposals for a formal process for the appointment of non voting co-opted members, drawing on procedures that the Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel had put in place. The intention was to attract co-opted members from across the community through an open and transparent recruitment process. The Commission agreed to make a maximum of two appointments for a period of 12 months and to review thereafter.
- 1.2 The Commission agreed a recruitment process to attract applications from people who have a particular interest or experience of crime and community safety issues or financial expertise. Shortlisted applicants attended an informal interview with the Chair, Vice Chair and Scrutiny Officer. Subsequently one appointment, of Geoffrey Newman, was made for a 12 month period ending 31 March 2016.
- 1.3 Note that the arrangements for appointing the statutory co-opted members (the Diocesan Board and Parent Governor representatives on the Children & Young People Panel and on the Commission) are not within the control of the council and are therefore not addressed in the report.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Co-opted members can provide scrutiny committees or task groups with outside knowledge, experience and skills that can inform the work of scrutiny and complement the role of councillors. Co-opted members can be particularly helpful in representing community perspectives, contributing a wider perspective and encouraging public engagement.
- 2.2 The Commission and its associated task groups may also call upon expert witnesses to present information and ask/answer questions for particular agenda items or meetings – this may be a more effective use of that person’s time given the wide remit of the Commission.

- 2.3 Co-opted members should be invited to join any training that is provided to scrutiny councillors.
- 2.4 Non-voting co-opted members are not paid an allowance but travel and any reasonable subsistence expenses that are incurred whilst fulfilling duties as a co-opted member will be re-imbursed.
- 2.5 The Commission is asked to discuss and agree whether it wishes to appoint one or more non-statutory co-opted members for the 2016/17 municipal year.

### **3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 The Commission is requested to advise on the arrangements, if any, it wishes to make for the appointment of one or more non-statutory co-opted member.

### **4. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

- 4.1 None for the purposes of this report.

### **5. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The cost of recruitment and support of co-opted members would be met within existing budgets.

### **6. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The Local Government Act 2000 provides for the formal co-option of a person onto a committee to occupy a non-voting position.

### **7. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 It is a fundamental aim of the scrutiny process to ensure that there is full and equal access to the democratic process through public involvement and engagement. The proposed approach for a widely advertised and clear process will enable local residents and community and voluntary sector groups to apply for these positions and to engage with scrutiny.

### **8. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The Police and Justice Act 2006 allows crime and disorder committees (the Commission has this role in Merton) to co-opt additional members with particular expertise in crime and disorder issues. Co-optees must be employees, officers or members of one of the responsible authorities. Cabinet Members may not be co-opted.

### **9. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are none specific to this report.

### **10. APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT**

- 10.1 None

### **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 11.1 None