

**Committee:** Overview and Scrutiny Commission

**Date:** 7 March 2017

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 whether it wishes to recruit any non-voting co-opted members for 2017/18.

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## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Note - 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 this report.
- 1.2 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. It agreed a recruitment process to attract applications from people with 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.
- 1.3 Subsequently one appointment, of Geoffrey Newman, was made for a 12 month period ending 31 March 2016. This was extended for a further 12 months by the Commission at its meeting on 5 April 2016.
- 1.4 The co-opted member's term of office will come to an end shortly. The Commission is therefore asked to consider whether it wishes to recruit any non-voting co-opted members for the municipal year 2017/18.
- 1.5 Instead of (or as well as) appointing another co-opted member, the Commission may choose to call upon independent experts to advise on specific subjects as they arise. External experts, advisers or co-opted members may also be appointed to any task group that the Commission chooses to establish in 2017/18.

## 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, service users or other stakeholders 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 than co-option 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 2017/18 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.
- 3.2 The Commission may choose not to recruit additional co-opted members.

### **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. A widely advertised and clear recruitment process would enable local residents and community and voluntary sector groups to apply and would enhance engagement 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 not 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 AND BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 10.1 None