

PROTOCOL ON CO-OPTION

Meaning of “Co-optee”

The expression co-optee is used to describe members of committees, sub-committees or panels who are not Councillors or Officers.

Role of Co-optees

The Council recognises the valuable input and different perspective they bring into the Council's decision-making process. Their role depends in what capacity they are appointed, which could be as representatives of an organisation of an interest group or they may be co-opted for their expertise or experience.

Co-optees role is to complementing, rather than replace, the role of elected Members who remain accountable to the electorate and are ultimately responsible for decision making.

Presumption on co-option

The usual presumption is that all committees, sub-committees will consist of Councillors. The co-option of non-councillors into committees or panels would normally be limited to cases where:

- (a) there is a statutory requirement to co-opt non-councillors (for example Standards Committee or the scrutiny of education)
- (b) where the Council sets a scrutiny or policy panel and the committee that sets it up considers that a co-optee or co-optees would bring some expertise or experience that would enhance the deliberations of the panel.
- (c) in exceptional cases where the unique nature of the function of the committee or body makes co-option desirable (for example the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee)

Expenses

Co-optees would normally be paid only disbursements or out of pocket expenses. With some exceptions set out in the scheme for members' allowances, no co-optee will be paid an allowance.

Voting

Co-optees have no voting rights except where this is granted by law (such as church representatives in the scrutiny committee dealing with education or the independent member/s of the standards committee).

Invitees

Where co-option is not appropriate, the Chair of the relevant committee, sub-committee or panel may, at his/her discretion, invite non-councillors to attend a meeting and speak. Such invitation may, in exceptional cases, be a standing invitation, but no standing invitation with speaking rights shall be granted.

No invitee has speaking or voting rights and, unlike a co-optee, they are not members of the committee or body. This means they have to leave the meeting when exempt business is transacted.

Further advice and guidance

This protocol is intended by way of a general basic information. Should anyone need more detailed or specific advice, you may contact The Monitoring Officer or Head of Democratic Services on 291500 or 291006 respectively.