

**Appendix 7****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.

