



Adult Social Care Select Committee  
16 January 2014

**Adult Social Care Select Committee: Co-opted Members**

**Purpose of the report:**

This report sets out the process by which the Select Committee can appoint co-opted members, and asks the Committee to consider whether such appointments should be made in April 2014.

**Introduction:**

1. The Adult Social Care Select Committee gave an indication at its meeting on 5 December 2013 that it would like the opportunity to consider the appointment of co-opted members. This report sets out the process by which this can be achieved, as well as outlining reasons the Committee may wish to consider such an appointment.
2. The report does not propose specific co-opted members. It is advised that any co-opted member is from a recognised organisation or special interest group, and acts in their capacity as a representative from such a body. If the Committee resolves that they would like to make any number of co-opted appointments then the Chairman and Democratic Services Officers will consult with the Adult Social Care Directorate around appropriate organisations and special interest groups to approach concerning this role.

**Process**

3. The Council's constitution states: "Committees may co-opt non-councillors, as and when required, to provide a degree of independent advice and expertise. Co-opted members cannot have voting rights unless allowed by law." (Part 2, Article 7.04).
4. The Council's Standing Orders specify that at least two-thirds of the membership of a committee must be county councillors (Standing Order 37.2).

5. The Committee would be required to make a subsequent report to the Council following the appointment of any co-opted members (Standing Order 33.2).
6. The Member's Allowance Scheme states that co-opted members are entitled to claim expenses but would not be entitled to receive any allowance in relation to their role. There would be additional costs generated as any co-opted member would be entitled to the same support and training opportunities as their elected counter-parts.
7. Any co-opted member would be entitled to the same access to any information the Committee received. This would include papers considered under Part Two arrangements.
8. Any co-opted member would be required to sign the Member Code of Conduct.
9. The Committee would need to decide how long to co-opt any member for, and how often this membership would be reviewed. In order to ensure continuity it is suggested that each co-opted member serve for four years. However, given that this is a new approach for Adult Social Care Committee, it is suggested that if co-opted members are appointed in April 2014 the Committee review membership after one year with an option to extend it for a further two years. This will bring the duration of co-opted membership in line with the next County Council elections in 2017. From 2017 onwards the Committee could co-opt members for a period of four years.

#### **Co-opted Members: Opportunities and Challenges**

10. Surrey County Council - and the Adult Social Care Directorate in particular - deliver services to some of the more vulnerable groups in society, such as older people and those with disabilities.
11. One of the Council's priorities for 2013/14 is to strengthen support for vulnerable adults, and the Adult Social Care Select Committee is helping to achieve this through reviewing and developing the Council's policies, scrutinising its services and making recommendations for action and change. Consideration should be given to whether co-opting additional members to the Committee would strengthen its ability to support the Council achieve this priority.
12. In a public policy environment where people could potentially feel excluded or apathetic, co-option could allow for greater engagement with members of the Surrey public, it could also foster greater transparency and innovation.
13. In order to support the above principles, it is advised that any proposed group would need to be user-led, Surrey-based and pan-Surrey in its scope.

14. The co-option of additional members could allow the Committee to augment its existing levels of knowledge, as well as provide skills, experience and views that might not be present in the Committee's make-up. This has the potential to encourage a broader and deeper line of scrutiny or new ideas for policy development.
15. By co-opting additional members, the Committee could give marginalised groups a voice by involving them in scrutiny, and as a result communicate more effectively with Surrey residents.
16. However, there are also other means by which the Committee has gathered the views of these groups, both formally and informally, without the need to co-opt members in the past. Examples include the provision for members of the public to submit questions, and the inclusion of user-led organisations views when considering reports.
17. The Committee should be mindful that some user-led organisations in Surrey are commissioned to provide services on the Council's behalf. Any co-option of members could potentially create a conflict of interests, or inadvertently enable a commercial advantage in some instances.

<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
Gain additional expertise and skills	Could privilege certain interests over others
Expands public reach, increases engagement	Not democratically elected members
Makes the scrutiny function more inclusionary, broadens viewpoints	Additional layer of complexity – managing the meeting
Bolsters policy development function	More administration
Potential for innovative responses to difficult issues	Potential risks linked to commercially sensitive information
Improved communication of the Council's work	

18. If the Committee decide to proceed, the Adult Social Care Directorate would be asked to make recommendations as to suitable organisations and special interest groups for the Committee's consideration. The Committee would then receive a follow-up report where there would be required

<b>Recommendations:</b>
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19. The Committee is required to review the possible opportunities and challenges presented by appointing co-opted members. The Committee is required to decide whether it wishes to recommend:
  - That the Adult Social Care Directorate propose user-led, Surrey-based organisations that would be suitable candidates for co-opted membership for Committee.

**Next steps:**

The Committee will receive a list of proposed candidates in a report to its meeting on 6 March 2013, along with a suggested approach as to the length of membership. The Committee would then need to decide whether it wished to invite these candidates to join as co-opted members.

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9

**Report contact:** Ross Pike, Scrutiny Officer, Legal & Democratic Services

**Contact details:** 0208 541 7368 / [ross.pike@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:ross.pike@surreycc.gov.uk)

**Sources/background papers:** Constitution of the Council, Surrey County Council