Leeds CITY COUNCIL

Report author: Angela Brogden
Tel: (0113) 3788666

Report of Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support

Report to Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources)

Date: 22 June 2017

Subject: Co-opted Members

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	☐ Yes	☒ No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	☐ Yes	☒ No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	☐ Yes	☒ No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	☐ Yes	☒ No

Summary of main issues

1. For a number of years the Council's Constitution has made provision for the appointment of co-opted members to individual Scrutiny Boards.

2. This report provides guidance to the Scrutiny Board when seeking to appoint co-opted members. There are also some legislative arrangements in place for the appointment of specific co-opted members. Such cases are set out in Article 6 of the Council's Constitution and are also summarised within this report.

Recommendation

3. In line with the options available outlined in this report, Members are asked to consider the appointment of co-opted members to the Scrutiny Board.

1 Purpose of this report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek the Scrutiny Board's formal consideration for the appointment of co-opted members to the Board.

2 Background information

2.1 For a number of years the Council's Constitution has made provision for the appointment of co-opted members to individual Scrutiny Boards. For those Scrutiny Boards where co-opted members have previously been appointed, such arrangements have tended to be reviewed on an annual basis, usually at the beginning of a new municipal year.

3 Main issues

General arrangements for appointing co-opted members

3.1 It is widely recognised that in some circumstances, co-opted members can significantly aid the work of Scrutiny Boards. This is currently reflected in Article 6 (Scrutiny Boards) of the Council's Constitution, which outlines the options available to Scrutiny Boards in relation to appointing co-opted members.

3.2 In general terms, Scrutiny Boards can appoint:

- Up to five non-voting co-opted members for a term of office that does not go beyond the next Annual Meeting of Council ; and/or,

- Up to two non-voting co-opted members for a term of office that relates to the duration of a particular and specific scrutiny inquiry.

3.3 In the majority of cases the appointment of co-opted members is optional and is determined by the relevant Scrutiny Board. However, Article 6 makes it clear that co-option would normally only be appropriate where the co-opted member has some specialist skill or knowledge, which would be of assistance to the Scrutiny Board. Particular issues to consider when seeking to appoint a co-opted member are set out later in the report.

3.4 There are also some legislative arrangements in place for the appointment of specific co-opted members. Such cases are also set out in Article 6 (Scrutiny Boards) of the Council's Constitution and relate to Education representatives.

Issues to consider when seeking to appoint co-opted members

3.5 The Constitution makes it clear that 'co-option would normally only be appropriate where the co-opted member has some specialist skill or knowledge, which would be of assistance to the Scrutiny Board'. In considering the appointment of co-opted members, Scrutiny Boards should be satisfied that a co-opted member can use their specialist skill or knowledge to add value to the work of the Scrutiny Board. However, co-opted members should not be seen as a replacement to professional advice from officers.

3.6 Co-opted members should be considered as representatives of wider groups of people. However, when seeking external input into the Scrutiny Board's work, consideration should always be given to other alternative approaches, such as the role of expert witnesses or use of external research studies, to help achieve a balanced evidence base.

3.7 When considering the appointment of a standing co-opted member for a term of office, Scrutiny Boards should be mindful of any potential conflicts of interest that may arise during the course of the year in view of the Scrutiny Boards' wide ranging terms of reference. To help overcome this, Scrutiny Boards may wish to focus on the provision available to appoint up to two non-voting co-opted members for a term of office that relates to the duration of a particular and specific scrutiny inquiry.

3.8 Despite the lack of any national guidance, what is clear is that any process for appointing co-opted members should be open, effective and carried out in a manner which seeks to strengthen the work of Scrutiny Boards.

4.0 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 During 2010/11, the guidance surrounding co-opted members was discussed by the Scrutiny Chairs and it was agreed that individual Scrutiny Boards would consider the appointment of co-optees on an individual basis.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration.

4.2.1 The process for appointing co-opted members should be open, effective and carried out in a manner which seeks to strengthen the work of the Scrutiny Board. In doing so, due regard should also be given to any potential equality issues in line with the Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme.

4.3 Council Policies and Best Council Plan

4.3.1 The Council's Scrutiny arrangements are one of the key parts of the Council's governance arrangements. Within the Council's Constitution, there is particular provision for the appointment of co-opted members to individual Scrutiny Boards, which this report seeks to summarise.

4.4 Resources and Value for Money

4.4.1 Where applicable, any incidental expenses paid to co-optees will be met within existing resources.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 Where additional members are co-opted onto a Scrutiny Board, such members must comply with the provisions set out in the Member's Code of Conduct as detailed within the Council's Constitution.

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 As stated in paragraph 3.7 above, when Scrutiny Boards are considering the appointment of a standing co-opted member for a term of office, they should be mindful of any potential conflicts of interest that may arise during the course of the year in view of the Scrutiny Boards' wide ranging terms of reference.

5.0 Conclusions

5.1 For a number of years the Council's Constitution has made provision for the appointment of co-opted members to individual Scrutiny Boards. This report sets out the legislative arrangements in place for the appointment of specific co-opted members and also provides further guidance when seeking to appoint co-opted members.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 In line with the options available outlined in this report, Members are asked to consider the appointment of co-opted members to the Scrutiny Board.

7.0 Background documents[1]

7.1 None.

[1] The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.