

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANELS

SCHEME OF CO-OPTION

1. Background

- 1.1 This scheme is made by Huntingdonshire District Council under paragraph 12 of Schedule 1 of the Local Government Act 2000 to provide for the co-option of persons to its overview and scrutiny panels. Copies of the scheme are available for inspection at Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN and on the Council's website at www.huntingdonshiresde.gov.uk.

Field Code Changed

2. Purpose

- 2.1 The Council considers that the co-option of persons ([called Co-opted Members](#)) to its overview and scrutiny panels will contribute to the promotion of local democracy by –
- enabling persons interested in serving the community to become involved in local democracy without the commitment required in becoming a councillor;
 - providing expertise and knowledge of specialist subjects to the panels' investigations and debates;
 - enabling [people from all parts of the community, including those from](#) hard to reach or minority groups, to become engaged in the [local](#) political process; and
 - ~~potentially encouraging more people to put themselves forward as candidates at future local authority elections.~~
 - [introducing local perspectives into the Member arena that are not subject to political influences.](#)

3. Overview and Scrutiny Panels

- 3.1 The Council currently has appointed 3 overview and scrutiny panels –
- economic well-being;
 - environmental well-being; and
 - social well-being.

- 3.2 The number and terms of reference of the panels may vary from time to time but their principal purpose is to review and scrutinise decisions of the Cabinet, the Council and its partners and make reports and recommendations on matters affecting Huntingdonshire and its inhabitants. Meetings currently are held monthly (with the exception of May and August) in an evening, commencing at 7.00 p.m. Each of the panels comprises 10 members of the Council and 2 co-opted persons. Working groups may be appointed on an ad hoc basis from time to time to undertake more in-depth specific investigations, [with meetings scheduled to suit working group members.](#)

[Co-opted Members may meet from time to time to review their work, effectiveness, training requirements and any other matters.](#)

4. Co-option Process

- 4.1 Co-option to an overview and scrutiny panel will be made by the Council on the recommendation of the panel to which the person is to be co-opted. To be eligible for co-option, a person must meet the qualifications for election as

a member of a local authority in terms of age, residency or employment, and nationality. The rules as to politically restricted posts will also apply to persons co-opted to the panels.

4.2 A person will be co-opted to a panel for a period of up to 4 years but his/her period of co-option may come to an end earlier for any of the following reasons –

- by resignation in writing to the [Chief Executive Head of Paid Service](#),
- failure to attend a meeting of the panel or working group to which he/she is appointed for a period of six consecutive months,
- any of the reasons that would disqualify a person from continuing to hold office as a councillor, or
- by resolution of the Council on the recommendation of the overview and scrutiny panel to which that person has been co-opted.

4.3 Vacancies for co-option will be advertised in the media and on the Council's website. Persons expressing an interest will be asked to supply a short written description of themselves and why they are interested in being co-opted. Interviews will be carried out by members of the overview and scrutiny panels. ~~A co-opted person will be required to undergo a Criminal Records Bureau check.~~

5. Code of Conduct

5.1 A person co-opted to an overview and scrutiny panel must sign a declaration that he/she will comply with the Council's Members Code of Conduct. Any allegation of a breach of the Members Code of Conduct will be dealt with in the same manner as if the co-opted person was a member of the Council and the same remedies for a person found to have breached the code will apply.

6. Membership and Voting

6.1 A co-opted person will be entitled to speak but not vote at meetings of the overview and scrutiny panel to which he/she has been co-opted and any working group to which he/she has been appointed by the panel including those where the public have been excluded from the meeting, subject to the following exclusions –

- membership of a panel does not entitle a co-opted person to speak at meetings of the Council ~~nor, with the exception of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels, at~~ any other of ~~the Council's~~ committees or panels;
- a co-opted person is not able to be elected as chairman or vice-chairman of a panel;
- a co-opted person is not entitled to exercise a right of call-in of a decision of the Cabinet.

6.2 Co-opted persons will be expected to comply with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, Access to Information Procedure Rules and any of the Council Procedure Rules that apply to meetings of the overview and scrutiny panels as set out in the Council's constitution.

7. Training

7.1 ~~An induction will be provided for all persons co-opted to an overview and scrutiny panel. New Co-opted Members will be provided with an induction. This will cover the following key areas -~~

- ~~How the Council works,~~
- ~~The Council's expectations of Co-opted Members,~~

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- [What a Scrutiny Panel does, and](#)
- [Questioning.](#)

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Further training opportunities will be made available as provided for other members of the panels [and to meet the specific requirements of Co-opted Members.](#)

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8. Remuneration

- 8.1 Co-opted persons will not receive a co-optee's or care allowance but shall be entitled to claim travel and subsistence under the Council's Members Allowance Scheme.

9. Variation

- 9.1 This scheme may be varied from time to time or revoked by the Council.