

**EDUCATION AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW  
AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
26 June 2026**

**Co-optee Recruitment Update**

**Report by Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer**

**RECOMMENDATION**

1. The Committee is **RECOMMENDED** to: -
  - 1.1 **NOTE** the update on activity undertaken to fill the Committee's vacant co-optee post for a parent governor;
  - 1.2 **AGREE** to appoint Leah Q and Elza B as co-opted young people members subject to each completing and submitting a Register of Interests form, for two years, from the next scheduled meeting of the Committee.

**Executive Summary**

2. Co-opted members have a dual function to the operation of a Scrutiny committee. Not only do they bring specific, relevant expertise or experience but, coming from outside both the Council and the party-political system they provide greater public assurance of the independence and non-political output of the Scrutiny function. This report seeks to update the Committee on efforts made to date to identify nominees for co-option onto the Committee and to recommend the appointment of two co-opted young people.

**Background**

3. Within the Council's constitution it is outlined that the Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee membership includes space for six co-opted members, four of whom relate to education, and two to young people.
4. The Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee's terms of reference includes the following in relation to co-opted members:

"In addition to the county councillors the Education and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee shall include in its membership the following voting representatives:

  - (a) one Church of England representative appointed by the Oxford Diocesan Board of Education;

- (b) one Roman Catholic representative appointed jointly by the Archbishop of Birmingham and the Bishop of Portsmouth to represent the Roman Catholic Church;
  - (c) two persons who shall be parent governors of maintained schools elected in accordance with a procedure approved by the Council.
  - (d) two persons who, at the time of their original appointment, shall be aged 25 or under and either living in Oxfordshire or working for an organisation in Oxfordshire supporting or representing children and young people.”
5. The committee currently has filled the co-optee positions for the Church of England and Roman Catholic representatives and has one vacancy for a parent governor.
  6. The use of the word ‘shall’ in reference to the membership of the Committee means that the Committee does not have discretion to do otherwise and must seek to fill these vacancies. Officers have been seeking to do so.

## **Progress Updates**

### **Parent Governor Nominees**

7. The need to include co-opted members from parent governors is set out in legislation. Under s. 3 of the Parent Governor Representatives (England) Regulations 2001 it is a requirement that ‘a local education authority shall appoint at least two but not more than five parent governor representatives to each of their education overview and scrutiny committees and sub-committees.’ Since its inception, the Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee has become the scrutiny committee responsible for education and therefore must include opportunity for at least two parent governor representatives.
8. The 2001 Regulations prescribe the process for selecting these representatives, which is to hold an election amongst parent governors between those who are eligible and have put themselves forward for nomination.
9. Peace Nnaji was co-opted to sit as a co-opted member of the Committee from the February 2025 meeting. There remains a vacancy with periodic advertising. Most recently, in June 2026, all parent governors were contacted using the Council’s communication tool, Governor Hub, and also Schools News to publicise the opportunity. Parent governors have been invited to apply by 23 July 2026 in order to be part of the election. If only one parent governor were to apply then, in the absence of further applicants, it would not be necessary under the 2001 Regulations to run an election. Subject to formally establishing their eligibility and completing formalities around becoming a co-opted member, this individual would become a co-opted member of the committee.

10. It is unlikely, given the historic and national challenges in securing parent governor co-opted members, but, if more governor representatives come forward before the deadline than there are vacancies, an election will have to be run amongst parent governors to establish the nominees.
11. Under the 2001 Regulations, if no or insufficient numbers of nominees are received, the Council must attempt to fill the vacant position(s) every six months.

## **Young People**

12. After a widespread advertising campaign, supported by the Council's Engagement team, nine candidates submitted applications. Of these, four were short-listed and invited for interview. The interview panel was made up of a member of the Engagement team, Cllr Brighthouse, the Chair of the Committee, and Richard Doney, the Committee's Scrutiny Officer.
13. In the view of the panel, all of the candidates interviewed were appointable. However, the panel agreed that Elza B and Leah Q most clearly understood the remit of the Committee and also demonstrated an understanding of the representative nature of the role. Both of these candidates also demonstrated a clarity and incisiveness that would make a valuable contribution to the Committee's proceedings. The Panel therefore agreed that they should be recommended to the Committee for appointment. By the time of the Committee's meeting, neither candidate will be under the age of 18.

## **Next Steps**

14. A co-optee is a full member of the Committee and not merely an external advisor to the Committee. This means they have access to the same information provided to other committee members and can participate on equal terms. The only difference is that, in the rare instances that the Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee wishes to vote on an issue, unless that topic relates to education provided by the Council, the Constitution determines they will be unable to do so. As a consequence of this status, it is necessary that co-opted members are bound by the Members' Code of Conduct and sign a Declaration of Interest form.
15. The agreed terms of reference for the Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee state that 'Co-opted Members shall normally serve for a period of 2 years. Co-opted members may serve for one further consecutive period of 2 years with the agreement of the Committee. After this, the Committee must run an open recruitment process for any further two-year extensions. No co-opted member may serve for longer than eight years in total.' Any appointment made, therefore, should be for 2 years in the first instance.

16. Support to understand and fully participate in the formal and rule-based environment of a committee will be provided. Officers from the Scrutiny function will offer support to the young co-opted members in working with one another and with other members of the Committee, including councillors; support in understanding the papers, drawing up lines of enquiry and ways to express those views safely in a public environment.

## **Corporate Priorities**

17. By bringing a greater diversity to membership of the Committee, and therefore strengthening the quality of Scrutiny, co-opted members will add to the differing approaches in addressing how to become a fairer, greener, healthier Oxfordshire.

## **Financial Implications**

18. The role of co-optee is not a paid position, but co-optees do qualify for the same rights to travel and subsistence as Councillors, as detailed in Part 10.1 Sch 1 of the Constitution.
19. There are no other significant financial implications in relation to this report.

Comments checked by:

Drew Hodgson,  
Strategic Finance Business Partner for Law and Governance.

## **Legal Implications**

20. The legal implications are detailed within the body of this report. There are no further direct implications arising from this report.

Comments checked by:

Jay Akbar, Head of Legal and Governance Services

## **Staff Implications**

21. Support for co-opted members around understanding, navigating and remaining safe requires staff support from the Scrutiny function, which it has provided to other co-opted members and will continue to do so.

## **Equality & Inclusion Implications**

22. As younger people, it is incumbent on the Council to ensure that adequate support is provided. The package of support is designed to provide such support.

## **Risk Management**

23. Co-opted members, particularly young ones, may well need support to fulfil their responsibilities, sitting as equal members with councillors. This is not without risk. The primary steps being taken to mitigate these risks are the provision of support and protocols for the delivery of the Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
24. The final details of the protocols include:
- Enhanced training for all Scrutiny staff on safeguarding
  - A named safeguarding lead (the Scrutiny Manager) and an escalation point (their line manager)
  - Only staff holding co-optee e-mail addresses and all communications going through them. For minors, e-mails to copy in a parent or other nominated person.
25. Failure to fill the co-optee vacancies on Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee would not only reduce the experience and knowledge available to the Committee and impair the public's confidence in the apolitical nature of Scrutiny, but it would also mean the Committee would be operating outside the membership determined by Council in the Constitution.

## **Consultations**

26. None arising from this report.

Anita Bradley  
Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

Annex: None

Background papers: None

Other Documents: None

Contact Officer: Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer

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