
Proposals for the Recruitment and Support of Two Young Person Co-optees

Committee considering report:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Date of Committee:	11 September 2025
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Jeff Brooks
Date Service Director agreed report: (for Corporate Board)	
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	
Report Author:	Gordon Oliver

1 Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to set out the proposed approach for the recruitment of two young people as co-opted members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, as required by Part 6.10 of the Council's Constitution. It also sets out how ongoing support will be provided, along with training for Members and the young people, and the safeguarding protocols that will be put in place.

2 Recommendation(s)

That the Committee endorses the proposed approach, including:

- (a) The proposed process and timescales for the recruitment of two young people as Co-opted Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.
- (b) The proposed support arrangements to be put in place for the two young people.
- (c) The proposed training to be provided to the young people, Members and other Co-opted Members of the Committee.
- (d) The proposed safeguarding protocols to be put in place.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	There will be a cost to provide external support for the young people who will be co-opted onto the Committee, and for providing training on how Members and Young People can work together effectively. It is proposed that this be funded from

Proposals for the Recruitment and Support of Two Young Person Co-optees

	the Member Training Budget. However, it should be noted that the Member Training Budget is only £15k per financial year, so this proposal would only leave £11k to complete training items. Otherwise, this would cause a budget pressure.			
Human Resource:	There are no HR implications.			
Legal:	There is no legal requirement to appoint young people as Co-opted Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee. This is a local decision in accordance with Part 6.10 of the Council's Constitution. The Council has a legal duty to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the young people who are being co-opted onto the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee. Furthermore, the Local Authority has a duty to undertake checks with the Disclosure & Barring Service for anyone who has contact with children or access to their files. All members on the CYPSC should have completed these checks.			
Risk Management:	Co-opting young people onto the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee introduces additional risks in relation to safeguarding and welfare. These risks are being mitigated through a comprehensive package of support, training, and the introduction of safeguarding protocols as set out in Section 5 of this report.			
Property:	None			
Policy:	The government's statutory guidance on overview and scrutiny stresses the benefits of co-option in terms of providing specialist external expertise.			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				

Proposals for the Recruitment and Support of Two Young Person Co-optees

A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		There are no direct impacts arising from this report.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		There are no direct impacts arising from this report.
Environmental Impact:		X		None
Health Impact:		X		None
ICT Impact:		X		None
Digital Services Impact:		X		None
Council Strategy Priorities:	X			Appointment of young people as Co-opted Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is consistent with Priority 5A of the Council Strategy: <i>'Encourage and support our local communities to take the lead in driving what is important to them'</i> .
Core Business:		X		This is business as usual activity.
Data Impact:		X		None

Consultation and Engagement:	The following have been consulted on this report: • Nicola Thomas, Annmarie Dodds and Rebecca Wilshire • Finance • HR • Corporate Board • Members of the Executive • WBC Procurement Service
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4 Executive Summary

This report updates Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on proposals for the recruitment of young people as Co-opted Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee. It also provides assurance regarding the arrangements being put in place around support and training to facilitate the effective engagement of the young people in the scrutiny process, and the safeguarding protocols that have been developed to ensure their safety and welfare.

5 Supporting Information

Background

- 5.1 As part of the changes to local scrutiny arrangements agreed at the Annual Meeting of Council on 15 May 2025, it was decided that West Berkshire Council would go above and beyond the statutory requirements and appoint two young people as Co-opted Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee. It is hoped that the young people will provide a different perspective as service users, and will enhance the scrutiny process. As non-statutory co-optees, the young people will not be permitted to vote, but they will be permitted to speak to any item considered by the Committee.
- 5.2 The co-option of young people to the Committee will require additional protocols to be put in place to address safeguarding issues, as well as specialist training for Members and the young people to ensure they can work together effectively. It is recognised that the young people will require support to understand the reports, and to develop suitable lines of questioning. Proposed arrangements are set out below.

Proposals

Recruitment

- 5.3 It is proposed to commence the recruitment process for the two young people by the end of September. An advert will be sent to all secondary schools and Newbury College for distribution via their parent/pupil newsletters. Children's Services will be asked to circulate this to children in their care. It is also proposed to promote the role through the Residents Newsletter and the Council's social media channels and via Berkshire Youth.

Proposals for the Recruitment and Support of Two Young Person Co-optees

Applicants will be asked to confirm their eligibility for the role and to complete a short personal statement (see Appendix A).

- 5.4 It is proposed that candidates be interviewed so they understand what will be expected of them and to give Members and officers confidence that they would have the requisite skills and attitude to play an active role on the committee and to enhance the level of scrutiny provided by the Committee. It is proposed that the interview panel include the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee, the Principal Policy Officer (Scrutiny and Democratic Services), and an officer experienced in working with young people, probably from Children's Services.
- 5.5 Assuming that two suitable candidates can be found, they would be appointed at the next meeting of the Committee, and formally confirmed at the next meeting of Council. The agreed terms of reference for the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee do not specify the term of the appointments, but it is suggested that they should be for a period of two years. This would be the same as for parent governor co-opted members.
- 5.6 Although non-statutory co-optees are not entitled to vote on matters considered by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, they will be allowed to speak to any item on the agenda, and they will have access to the same information provided to other committee members. As a consequence of this status, it will be necessary for co-opted members to be bound by the Members' Code of Conduct, and to sign a Declaration of Interest form. The Monitoring Officer / Deputy Monitoring Officer will provide one to one training on these aspects.

Support Arrangements

- 5.7 Given the age of the young people, it is proposed that in addition to standard induction and scrutiny training, ongoing support be provided to cover:
 - Training for councillors and young people on how to work effectively with one another;
 - Support in understanding the papers, drawing up lines of enquiry, and asking questions at a public meeting;
 - Attendance at pre-meetings in support of the co-optees;
 - Attendance at committee meetings to support the young people; and
 - Support in helping the co-optees reach out to groups of young people to understand their views better.
- 5.8 Specific and tailored support will be provided should individuals have additional needs.
- 5.9 A suggested scope is provided in Appendix A. This has been developed with reference to that used by Oxfordshire County Council.
- 5.10 It is proposed to go out to tender at the end of September, to seek expressions of interest amongst external providers for providing the above support as this expertise is

Proposals for the Recruitment and Support of Two Young Person Co-optees

not believed to be available internally. It is proposed this would be funded from the Members training budget.

Safeguarding Protocols

5.11 Co-opting young people introduces additional risks, particularly in relation to safeguarding. Provision of a support package as identified above would go some way to mitigating this risk, but a number of additional measures are also proposed, including:

- Obtaining parental consent forms for the participation of any minors;
- DBS checks for scrutiny/democratic services officers and all Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee and their Substitutes;
- Asking the young people to join meetings remotely wherever possible¹ and providing training on participation in hybrid meetings;
- Ensuring that at least two officers are in attendance throughout any meetings and generally where a young person is physically present;
- Enhanced safeguarding training for Scrutiny/Democratic Services Officers;
- A named safeguarding lead and escalation point;
- Training for Members on working with young people in a committee environment;
- Ensuring that all communication with the young people is undertaken via email, and is routed through Scrutiny/Democratic Services Officers, with a parent (or other nominated adult representative) copied into all email correspondence with minors;
- Not publishing or anonymising Declarations of Interest for the young people on the Council's website;
- Not publishing or anonymising the full names of the young people in meeting papers or on the list of committee members on the Council's website;
- Live streaming meetings in such a way as to prevent the young person from appearing on the video. If they were attending in person, this could be achieved through appropriate camera positioning. If they were joining remotely, this could be achieved through adjusting the settings in the Zoom webinar, where panellists can be prevented from starting their video.

¹ Remote attendance would be permitted since the young people would not be voting. It may also be advantageous, given that meetings are held in the evenings. However, remote attendance may not be possible for some people (e.g., due to internet connection issues, not having a quiet space at home from which to join the meeting, etc). Provision must therefore be made for the young people to attend meetings in person. This would require arrangements for them to get home at the end of the meeting

6 Other options considered

Support Arrangements

- 6.1 The Council could seek to provide support to the young people using existing, internal staff resources. The Democratic Services Team does not have the requisite skills or experience of working with young people, so support would need to be sourced from other services that regularly work with children and young people. However, it is likely that there would be limited capacity in these areas to take on additional work. In future, if an officer was to be recruited to provide support for the Youth Council or a Youth Executive, then there may be an opportunity to incorporate this function into their role.

Safeguarding

- 6.2 Not having young people in the Council Chamber, or not allowing them to start their video on Zoom may represent a barrier to effective participation. An alternative option might be to not live-stream meetings or to edit videos before they are uploaded to YouTube. However, they would still be visible to any members of the public or third parties who may be present to observe/participate in the meeting.

7 Conclusion

The proposals set out in this report are designed to ensure the effective participation of young people as Co-opted Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, while mitigating any associated risks in relation to safeguarding.

8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix A – Proposed advert and expression of interest form
- 8.2 Appendix B – Tender specification for provision of support services

Corporate Board's recommendation

*(add text)

Background Papers:

[Part 6.10 of the Council's Constitution](#)

[Agenda and Minutes for Annual Meeting of Council, 15 May 2025](#)

[West Berkshire Council Strategy 2023-27](#)

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☐ No: ☒

Proposals for the Recruitment and Support of Two Young Person Co-optees

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	☐
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	☐
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	☐
Considered or reviewed by one of the Council's Scrutiny Committees or associated Task Groups within the preceding six months	☐
Item is Urgent Key Decision	☐
Report is to note only	☐

Wards affected: N/A

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Document Control

Document Ref:		Date Created:	
Version:		Date Modified:	
Author:			
Owning Service			

Change History

Version	Date	Description	Change ID
1	26 June 2025	First Draft	
2	8 July 2025	Incorporating comments from Nicki Thomas	