

Report to: **Hub Committee**
Date: **22 March 2016**
Title: **REVIEW OF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE HUB COMMITTEE**
Portfolio Area: **Strategy and Commissioning - Cllr Sanders**

Wards Affected: **All**

Relevant Scrutiny Committee: Overview and Scrutiny (Internal) Committee

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken: The Committee recommendations will be presented to the Council meeting on 5 April 2016 for approval.

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RECOMMENDATION:

That the Working Group has undertaken an extensive review into the working arrangements of the Hub Committee and RECOMMENDS that the Hub Committee RECOMMEND to Council that the existing governance arrangements are working well and should therefore be retained, subject to the approval of some minor amendments as outlined at section 5 of the report.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 When the Council approved its revised governance arrangements, Members reiterated the importance of a review being undertaken once the new structure had been given the opportunity to bed in.

- 1.2 It was equally recognised that the Political Structures Working Group was the appropriate forum for this review to take place. In reviewing the arrangements, the Working Group has met on three separate occasions.
- 1.3 The Working Group has concluded that, subject to inclusion of a few suggested amendments (section 5 below refers), the current working arrangements were working well.

2. Background

- 2.1 At its full Council meeting on 9 December 2014, West Devon Borough Council agreed to revise its governance arrangements to come into effect from May 2015 (Minute CM 65 refers). One of the main revisions was the creation of a single Committee as follows:

"One politically balanced Hub Committee with 9 places on the Committee, scheduled to meet 10 times per year."

- 2.2 The Hub Committee has now been in place for almost a year, and it was always intended that a review of the arrangements would take place to assess the effectiveness and cost of the new structure.
- 2.3 The Political Structures Working Group (PSWG) is the appropriate body to undertake that review and has met on three occasions to consider the new arrangements.
- 2.4 In order to gauge the views of the wider membership a survey has been distributed to all Members. The responses have been considered by the PSWG. In addition, Members of the Hub Committee were invited to a meeting with the PSWG to share their views on the working of the Hub Committee to date and their roles and responsibilities.

3. Outcomes/outputs

Survey Responses

- 3.1 The Hub Review Survey was completed and returned by 20 Members. The responses to most questions were mixed.
- 3.2 The majority of Members did however state that the size of the Hub Committee was right at the current level of 9 Members. A small minority of Members suggested a smaller or a larger group, but overall the comments reflected that the current size was right.
- 3.3 There was also a majority view in favour of all Members sitting on either the Hub Committee or an Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with the balance of 11 Members serving on both Overview and Scrutiny Committees also felt to be appropriate. This would ensure that every Member continued to have a role to play in the decision making process.

- 3.4 In respect of which Lead Members to approach, the responses were mixed. Some Members admitted that they did not know which Lead Member to approach if they had concerns, whilst others more confidently stated that if they were unsure then they could find out.
- 3.5 The question asking if Members were being kept informed by Lead Members identified one of the strongest messages that came out of the survey and a key area for further work. The majority of Members felt that they were not being kept informed by Lead Members. Interestingly, this was also the case with Hub Committee Members, who were aware that they were not informing, or being informed by, their Hub colleagues.

Political Structures Working Group and the Hub Committee

- 3.6 On 8 March 2016, Members of the Hub Committee were invited to a meeting of the Political Structures Working Group, to share their views on the working of the Hub Committee. The outcomes arising from this meeting were considered in more detail by the Working Group at further meeting held on 15 March 2016.
- 3.7 The views of the Hub Committee Members mirrored the views of the wider membership in that they too raised concerns over communication with the wider membership and also between themselves.
- 3.8 The practicalities of how best to achieve that were discussed, with ideas being raised such as utilising the Members Bulletin publication and Informal Council sessions to enable Hub Committee Members to consult with the wider membership.
- 3.9 Hub Committee Lead Members also raised concerns over their specific responsibility areas. In some cases there was still uncertainty over which Lead Member had responsibility for certain areas and it was noted that this did not help officers either. In addition, there was some duplication of work where areas were split between two Members e.g. Assets.
- 3.10 In discussion on how best to undertake their responsibilities, Hub Lead Members noted that local Ward Member engagement was a key area of support that could be utilised. They also noted a potential duplication of work, or area of confusion, with Members appointed to Outside Bodies.
- 3.11 Hub Lead Members raised the lack of a clear job description that fully set out the remit of their role as a contributing factor to the lack of clarity about the role as raised by a number of Members. In reply, officers informed that, whilst there was a role profile for Hub Committee Members (as attached at Appendix 1), this had not been re-circulated since the Member Induction in May 2015.

4. Options available and consideration of risk

- 4.1 The survey responses and discussion with Hub Committee Members raised the following issues:
- Communication with the wider membership
 - Communication between lead Hub Members
 - Need to look at redistribution of workloads
- 4.2 In respect of the number of Hub Committee Members, it was perceived that there was a risk to increasing the number of Members as it could become unmanageable.
- 4.3 Overall, the feedback on the introduction of the Hub Committee was positive, and seen as a more effective and efficient way of working than the previous Two Committee system.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1 Following consideration of the survey responses, discussion with Hub Lead Members and their own deliberations, the PSWG made the following recommendations:
- 5.1.1 That the size of the Hub Committee remains at 9 Members, with both Overview and Scrutiny Committees remaining at 11 Members each. Furthermore, the Group supports retention of the current practice whereby each of the 31 Members of the Council serve on either the Hub Committee or one of the two Overview and Scrutiny Committees;
- 5.1.2 To use Informal Council meetings to remind the wider membership about the role of Hub Committee Members;
- 5.1.3 To make more use of the Members Bulletin to update the wider membership on specific news within their portfolio area. In addition, the Working Group is of the view that each edition of the Bulletin should include the list of Hub Committee Members and their respective roles and responsibilities;
- 5.1.4 To encourage all Members to attend Hub Committee meetings, read agendas and minutes in order to gain a better understanding of the role and workings of the Hub Committee;
- 5.1.5 That the current roles and responsibilities for Hub Committee Members (as attached at Appendix 2) be retained, subject to the following amendments being made to balance workloads:
- That responsibility for Environmental Health (including Licensing) should be transferred from the lead Member for Customer First to the lead Member for Health and Wellbeing; and
 - That responsibility for Sundry Debtor Write-offs should be transferred from the lead Member for Health and Wellbeing to the lead Member for Resources and Performance.
- The Group recognises that it may be necessary to make further amendments to the list of roles and responsibilities throughout the year and it is therefore recommended that the Head of Paid Service, in consultation with the Group Leaders, be given delegated authority to make such changes;

- 5.1.6 The Group recognises that a review of the Outside Bodies appointments is being undertaken by the Partnership Task and Finish Group. Whilst not wishing to duplicate this work, the Group is of the view that Group Leaders should take account of Hub Committee Member roles and responsibilities when making their respective Outside Bodies nominations for the Annual Council meeting;
- 5.1.7 To ensure that Hub Members meet collectively or communicate as a Group to reduce the risk of duplication of workload. The Working Group also recognises that it is inevitable that, for cross-cutting issues within their areas of responsibility, Hub Committee Members will always need to work together with the relevant lead officer(s);
- 5.1.8 To continually remind all Members of the roles and responsibilities of Hub Committee Members, the latest version of the role profile for Hub Committee Members should be circulated with the Members Bulletin on a quarterly basis. Specifically on the role profile, the Group wishes to reinforce the importance of lead Members presenting reports within their areas of responsibility to meetings of the Hub Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	In accordance with the Council Constitution, it is ultimately a decision for the Council if it wishes to make any proposed revisions to the Council's governance arrangements.
Financial	N	Since there is no appetite at this time to review Members Allowances, there are no financial implications associated with this report.
Risk	N	The proposed minor amendments to the working arrangements will ensure that the Council retains an efficient and cost effective governance structure.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	N	There are no equality and diversity implications associated with this report.
Safeguarding	N	There are no safeguarding implications associated with this report.
Community Safety and Crime and Disorder	N	There are no Community Safety and Crime and Disorder implications associated with this report.

Health, Safety and Wellbeing	N	There are no Health, Safety and Wellbeing implications associated with this report.
Other implications		There are no other implications associated with this report.

Supporting Information

Appendices:

- 1: Role Profile for Hub Committee Members; and
- 2: Roles and Responsibilities for Hub Committee Members (as at January 2016 meeting).

Background Papers:

Council Report and Minutes – 9 December 2014 Meeting
The Council Constitution