

WEST DEVON BOROUGH COUNCIL

NAME OF COMMITTEE	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
DATE	15 January 2013
REPORT TITLE	Two Committee Pilot
Report of	The Two Committee pilot review Task and Finish Group
WARDS AFFECTED	All

Summary of report: To present the findings of the review of the current two committee pilot to Overview and Scrutiny Committee for its consideration and recommendation to full Council.

Financial implications: There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee **RECOMMEND** to Council that:

1. the current pilot (due to end in May 2013) be extended until the full Council meeting in December 2013; and
2. with immediate effect, the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Resources Committee and Community Services Committee consider revising current working arrangements to ensure that the workload, particularly within the Community Services Committee, be more evenly spread amongst its Committee Members.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The two committee system pilot scheme was introduced in May 2012 following a full Council decision. The pilot is due to end in May 2013. A Task & Finish Group (T&FG) was set up to review the pilot and a scoping meeting was held to decide on objectives and desired outcomes, criteria and sources of information.
- 1.2 It was decided to assess effectiveness of the pilot against the objectives as set by the original Democratic Arrangements T&FG so that a comparison of outcomes could be scrutinised. Those Members and officers with relevant information were identified as Members, Chairs of Community Services Committee and Resources Committee, Heads of Service and Committee Officer.
- 1.3 Information was gained by formal interview, Informal Council, informal discussions, group meetings and observation of meetings. Notes of these meetings can be found in Appendix A. In addition a Member survey was completed and the findings are contained in Appendix B.
- 1.4 It is necessary for Overview and Scrutiny to make recommendations to the Council Meeting on 12 February 2013 in order to ensure that any decision on/or amendments to the two committee system can be brought to full Council before the end of the pilot date in May 2013.

2. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- 2.1 Whilst the response rate to the survey was disappointing, there was some degree of consistency within the findings of the meetings and discussions held that the pilot had not run for long enough to make a fair assessment of the two committee system.
- 2.2 There was also concern expressed that the workload of the Community Services Committee has, so far, been very high and that there had not yet been enough time to determine whether the appointment of Lead Members would ensure that this high workload did not reduce the effectiveness of the Committee or indeed whether this high workload would continue in the future.
- 2.3 Furthermore there was some degree of concern that the current use of Lead Members was not widely understood, lacked consistency of approach and could be seen to be unhelpful if not made transparent to all Members.
- 2.4 As requested by the O&S Chair, members of the Senior Management Team have looked at the possible workload of the Community Services Committee for the next municipal year but have concluded even with the known items, it is too early, both in the year and in the lifetime of the pilot to predict with any degree of accuracy whether the workload will continue at the same level.
- 2.5 In order to allow the pilot to run for enough time to make a more accurate assessment of its success, advice from Member Services is that an extension to part way through the municipal year is possible. Whilst the recommendation of the T&FG is for the current pilot to be extended until the full Council meeting in December 2013, significant changes to the committee structure could have major ramifications to the Council's political balance provisions. Therefore, officers

would find it beneficial for the T&FG to be re-convened before the Council meeting (e.g. during November) in order to provide them with some guidance on the likely extent of any changes in structure.

- 2.6 During the pilot, it has been suggested that the Chairs of the Community Services and Resources Committees should be appointed to serve on the other Committee. The T&FG can see the merits of this suggestion and feels that Group Leaders can incorporate this into their nominations for appointments to Council Bodies, which will be presented to the Annual meeting of Council in May.
- 2.7 As far as the operation of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is concerned, suggestions for changes have been discussed at previous meetings. In particular, whether the functions of the Committee should be split into two, to mirror the workings of the Resources and Community Services Committees or whether it should continue as one Committee but with specific and ongoing working groups established to allow for some degree of specialism. These options can be further considered at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 15 January 2013.

3. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 3.1 The Risk Management implications are shown at the end of this report in the Strategic Risks Template.

Corporate priorities engaged:	In some form or another, this report is linked to all of the Council Corporate Priorities
Statutory powers:	Local Government Act 2000
Considerations of equality and human rights:	None directly related to this report
Biodiversity considerations:	None directly related to this report
Sustainability considerations:	None directly related to this report
Crime and disorder implications:	None directly related to this report
Background papers:	Council Constitution; Task and Finish Group notes arising from the meetings held on 26.09.12, 14.11.12 and 06.12.12.
Appendices attached:	Appendix A - Notes of the meetings held Appendix B - Summary of the Member responses to the consultation exercise

STRATEGIC RISKS TEMPLATE

No	Risk Title	Risk/Opportunity Description	Inherent risk status				Mitigating & Management actions	Ownership
			Impact of negative outcome	Chance of negative outcome	Risk score and direction of travel			
1	Lack of agreement on extension of the pilot or a recommendation to change	The Council will not have a legal or workable system in place for the next Muniपाल year	4	2	8	↔	Full consideration at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 15 January 2013 resulting in a recommendation to full Council in time for the March meeting	Members

Direction of travel symbols ↓ ↑ ↔