

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: THURSDAY, 27 MARCH 2012
 title: CHANGES TO GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS IN CONSEQUENCE
 OF THE LOCALISM ACT 2011
 submitted by: DIANE RICE – HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES
 principal author: DIANE RICE – HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To inform Committee about a letter which the Chief Executive has received from Paul Rowsell of the Department of Communities and Local Government relating to changes to governance arrangements, in particular the Committee system.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Council Ambitions - }
 - Community Objectives - }
 - Corporate Priorities - }
 - Other Considerations - }
- The Council aims to be a well managed Council. Review of the Council's governance and Committee arrangements contributes to this objective.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Chief Executive has received a letter dated 9 March 2012, a copy of which is attached at Appendix 1 which sets out changes made by the Localism Act to the arrangements which Councils must adopt to ensure that decisions are taken in an efficient, transparent and accountable way.

2.2 This Council currently operates alternative arrangements and as can be seen from paragraph 3 of Appendix 1, the Localism Act provides that with effect from 4 May 2012, alternative arrangements will no longer be available to Councils. No action is required by the Council in consequence of the cessation of these arrangements.

3 ISSUES

3.1 The purpose of presenting this letter to Committee is to make Members aware of the flexibility provided by the Localism Act about the way in which the Council conducts its business.

3.2 There are two matters which Committee needs to consider:

1. Overview and Scrutiny Committee: The alternative arrangement system required the Council to have arrangements in place for Overview and Scrutiny. With effect from 4 May 2012, the obligation to have an Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been removed.

The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee has 14 Members and meets five times a year. The Committee has carried out various items of research on behalf of the Council into such areas as Member training, representation on outside bodies, planning enforcement etc.

The terms of reference of the Committee are set out at Appendix 2.

The Council can adopt any of the following options:

- i) Continue with the present arrangements for Overview and Scrutiny.
- ii) Cease operation of a separate Overview and Scrutiny Committee but transfer responsibility for the matters currently set out in the terms of reference of the Committee to another Committee or Committees.
- iii) Cease operation of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee and cease to perform the functions set out in the terms of reference.

The decision that Policy and Finance Committee make in relation to the Committee system will be referred to at the Annual Meeting for Approval, together with amendments to the Committee timetable if required. Members may wish to consider appointing a sub-group to advise the Council how to proceed.

2. Executive Governance Models: The Council could decide that it would like to consider adopting one of the alternative Governance Models referred to in the letter at Appendix 1 for example either the Leader and Cabinet Executive Model, or the Mayor and Cabinet Executive Model. Alternatively, the Council could resolve to hold a referendum on whether to move to a different system.

In the absence of any expressed dissatisfaction by local residents, officers or Members, with the current arrangements, or a request for change to a different type of arrangement, Members may wish to consider whether this would be something which they would wish to pursue.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – N/A
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – N/A
- Political – N/A
- Reputation – N/A

5 **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

5.1 Appoint a sub-group of four Members to make recommendations in relation to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

5.2 Confirm the Council's commitment to retaining the existing Committee system.

HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

For further information please ask for Diane Rice, extension 4418.