

SWT Executive

**Wednesday, 17th June, 2020,
6.15 pm**

Webcasting - Virtual Meeting

**Somerset West
and Taunton**

Members: Federica Smith-Roberts (Chair), Benet Allen (Deputy Chair),
Chris Booth, Ross Henley, Marcus Kravis, Richard Lees,
Peter Pilkington, Mike Rigby, Francesca Smith and
Sarah Wakefield

Agenda

- 7. Committee Governance Arrangements Report –
Addendum with comments from AGS Committee
08.06.2020**

(Pages 3 - 4)



**JAMES HASSETT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources was proud to bring the report to the Committee and had worked closely with the Leader of the Council and the Monitoring Officer to be able to report to Audit in a timely manner. He wanted to ensure that all councillors were included and engaged with the process.
- Councillors welcomed the report and did not want any delays caused by the covid pandemic.
- Councillors queried whether a councillor survey could be used instead of an 'away day', or even to set up a workshop instead.
The Monitoring Officer was aware that the covid pandemic could hinder the holding of an 'away day' but did not want that to mean that the process was delayed, so the use of a survey could be a good starting point.
- Councillors requested clarification on whether the working group was a sub group of the Audit Committee or Full Council.
The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources advised that it was a decision for all councillors. He wanted the group to have cross party involvement and that any recommendations or decisions would be brought back to Council via the Audit Committee, as he wanted to be transparent on any actions taken. The Monitoring Officer advised that it was not a sub group of the Audit Committee or Executive and agreed with the Portfolio Holder that she wanted cross party involvement.
- Councillors highlighted that the Constitutional Working Group would need to link in with the work carried out on the governance arrangements.
The Monitoring Officer agreed that the Constitutional Working Group would be involved but that there was other work to be carried out by that group first.
- Councillors highlighted that the report gave the opportunity to address the culture within the Council and to ensure that councillors had an equal role in the decision making process.
- Councillors requested information on the timeframe required for publishing proposals, if the recommended changes were taken to Annual Council in 2021.
The Monitoring Officer advised that the first task for the working group would be to compile a timetable for the process.
- Councillors queried whether the working group would determine the use of the 'away day'.
The Monitoring Officer advised that another task for the first meeting of the working group would be to draw up the scope of the project and that they would have to be creative due to the inclusion of the social distancing measures and to ensure all councillors were engaged.
- Councillors requested that the public were engaged in the process.
- Councillors queried the use of the term 'value for money' in the project and queried how that was calculated for a system that some councillors deemed to be a more democratic process.
The Monitoring Officer advised that there was a set budget used for committees, councillors, allowances and other costs within the Governance Department. So if any structural changes were made, the budget implications would need to be assessed and factored into the budget setting process.

- Councillors were pleased to see that the new administration were looking into the different options available and agreed that the work carried out would be interesting for all councillors to be involved in.

Resolved that the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee recommended to Council the following:-

- a) An all Member 'away day' was arranged to consider the items listed at section 4.5;
- b) A cross party Members Working Group was established to investigate the options and to report back through the appropriate democratic pathway;
- c) The Terms of Reference for the Council Governance Arrangements Working Group (Appendix A) were approved; and
- d) Seven Councillors were selected to form the Working Group along with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources.