

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Audit, Governance and Standards Committee Meeting – 8 June 2020

Somerset West and Taunton Council Governance Arrangements

This matter is the responsibility of the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources, Cllr Ross Henley

Report Author: Amy Tregellas, Governance Manager and Monitoring Officer

1.0 Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to recommend to Members that mechanisms are put into place to investigate and carry out an options appraisal on Council Governance Arrangements, with particular focus on the type of structure that would suit Somerset West and Taunton Council.
- 1.2 It is proposed that this is done through:
 1. Holding an all Member 'away day' so that all Members can input to the discussion
 2. Establishing a politically balanced, cross party Member Working Group to fully investigate the options available to the Council

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee recommend to Council that:

- a) An all Member 'away day' is arranged to consider the items listed at section 4.5
- b) A cross party Members Working Group is 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) are approved
- d) Seven Councillors are selected to form the Working Group along with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources

3.0 Risk Assessment

- 3.1 The Local Government Association Report titled '*Rethinking Governance – Practical Steps for Councils considering changes to their governance arrangements*' sets out a staged process to ensure that all risks are assessed as part of this process.
- 3.2 All risks associated with changing the Council's Governance Arrangements need to be identified, logged and mitigated as part of the options appraisal process being carried out by the Member's Working Group

4.0 Background and Full details of the Report

- 4.1 Following the introduction of the Localism Act in 2011, a number of Councils have reviewed their Council Governance Arrangements and made amendments where appropriate.
- 4.2 There is an appetite from Somerset West and Taunton Councillors that we also carry out a review of our arrangements.
- 4.3 To this end it is recommended that a Members Working Group be established. To enable this review to be carried out, Terms of Reference for the Working Party have been drafted and can be found in Appendix A.
- 4.4 The Terms of Reference suggest that the Working Group will follow the five step process as set out by the Local Government Association, 'thinking toolkit', i.e
- Step 1 – Plan your approach, and assess your current position
 - Step 2 – Consider some design principles
 - Step 3 – Think of ways to meet these objectives and put a plan in place
 - Step 4 – Make the change
 - Step 5 – Return to the issue after a year and review how things have gone
- 4.5 In order to ensure that all Members can feed their views into this process it is recommended that an all Member 'away day' is arranged to consider how the Council Governance Arrangements have been in the first twelve months including:
- What does work well in the current model?
 - What doesn't work well in the current model?
 - What changes could be made to improve the governance arrangements?
 - Can the current model be modified to make it more inclusive for all Councillors?
- 4.6 The recommendations are set out in section 2.1 of this report

5.0 Links to Corporate Strategy – N/A

6.0 Finance / Resource Implications – The review of the Council Governance Arrangements would need to consider the financial implications as part of the options appraisal process

7.0 Legal Implications - The review of the Council Governance Arrangements would need to consider the legal process and implications as part of the options appraisal process. The review and any decision will need to consider the principles of decision-making set out in Article 13.1 in the Constitution

8.0 Climate and Sustainability Implications - None

9.0 Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications - None

10.0 Equality and Diversity Implications - None

11.0 Social Value Implications - None

12.0 Partnership Implications - None

13.0 Health and Wellbeing Implications - None

14.0 Asset Management Implications - None

15.0 Data Protection Implications - None

16.0 Consultation Implications - None

Scrutiny/Executive Comments / Recommendation(s) – None at the current time. The report will go forward to the Executive and Council after the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee has considered it. Their comments will then be added into the report.

Democratic Path:

- **Scrutiny / Corporate Governance or Audit Committees – Yes**
- **Cabinet/Executive – Yes**
- **Full Council – Yes**

List of Appendices

Appendix A	Terms of Reference for the Council Governance Arrangements Working Group
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