BSAVA aims to become more flexible and accountable, with some changes to the way we run ourselves being proposed at the next AGM on Sunday 7 April 2019 at the BSAVA Congress in Birmingham.

How is the BSAVA currently run?

The BSAVA is both a charity and a company that is run for the members by about 350 volunteers who are supported by staff at the Association’s headquarters at Woodrow House. Some of the volunteers are also directors and sit on the BSAVA Council, which meets 3-times a year. The six officers are a small subgroup of council members who meet more frequently than the main council. Their role is to deliver the strategic plan, look at the finances and look for innovations that will deliver a better member experience; however, the officers cannot take any significant decisions without council approval. The chairs of the various committees are also part of council and meet an additional 3-times each year with the officers. The regional chairs also meet with the officers twice a year. Sounds complex? Yes, it is. Sounds like a recipe for confusion? Not as often as you would think. Sounds like it takes a long time to get anything done? We can’t lie… it can be so.

Why does the BSAVA need to change?

We have been aware for some time that the BSAVA’s organization lacked a certain amount of flexibility and accountability. The changing demographic, work pressures, client expectations, corporatization, technology and (at the time of writing) Brexit, are all putting pressure on the profession and the Association. The BSAVA is responding to those changes with many initiatives, such as the BSAVA Library (www.bsavalibrary.com), but organizational changes are also needed. For example, compared with other similar organizations, our board of directors (Council) is far larger than normal and meets too infrequently for the effective delivery of our aims.

David Doughty, the BSAVA’s Governance consultant, has reviewed the Association’s structure and function and various options for change have been discussed at Council. An independent assessment by the Professional Association Research Network (PARN) has confirmed that the current proposals are appropriate for a modern charity and professional association governance.

How do we want the BSAVA to be run?

The proposal is to have a small board of Trustees (directors) and a Council of members’ representatives. The new Board will be the six current officers (veterinary volunteers) and at least two non-veterinary directors: an external non-executive director, who provides expertise on strategic development, and the chief executive officer, who runs Woodrow House.

The role of the Board will be to focus on the strategy of providing BSAVA members with gold standard resources in small animal clinical education and science. The role of Council will be to deliver the views of the members to Board. Council will nominate the officers at Annual General Meetings and the
members (as the ‘shareholders’ in the company) will be able to vote on these nominations. The new Council would meet 3-times a year as at present and would consist of 17 members as follows:

- An independent Chair (veterinary or non-veterinary)
- 12 Council Representatives – one from each BSAVA region
- 2 Past Presidents, who will provide the ‘corporate memory’.
- 2 Chairs of Council committees (Audit and Risk and the Volunteer Development Committee)

How will these changes benefit members?
These changes will allow the BSAVA to adapt more rapidly to a profession that is itself being altered in the face of a swiftly changing world. They will also allow members to volunteer to a high level within the Association without the responsibility of becoming a company director.

The BSAVA will remain a charity, run by volunteers, for the good of the profession and the wider public. The BSAVA will still run congresses, postgraduate courses and CPD events around the country, as well as publish books, client leaflets and journals and fund clinical research by PetSavers.

What will members notice when these changes happen?
Nothing – at least, not initially. However, over time a more self-confident Association that seeks to promote membership more and deliver a better service to its existing members.

If you are interested in volunteering to help run the Association at any level – regional or one of the national committees or working groups then please contact our Volunteers Manager Carole Haile (volunteer@bsava.com). We are always looking for help and volunteering is a great opportunity for personal development, making new contacts and having great fun. Training will be provided.

Am I able to vote on these changes?
If you are a voting member of the BSAVA then you can vote at the AGM providing you attend in person or provide a proxy vote. You will receive an invitation to the AGM and a Proxy Form in March 2019.