

TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING ON FEBRUARY 27, 2012
FROM:	CATHY SAUNDERS CITY CLERK
SUBJECT	ADVISORY COMMITTEE REVIEW

RECOMMENDATION

That, on the recommendation of the City Clerk, the following actions be taken with respect to Advisory Committees:

- a) the attached proposed by-law (Appendix "A") **BE INTRODUCED** at the Municipal Council meeting on March 20, 2012 to amend various Council policies related to advisory committees, in order to reflect policy changes approved by the Municipal Council as a result of the recent review of Advisory Committees, and to incorporate all policies related to advisory committees into one comprehensive policy;
- b) the attached proposed by-law (Appendix "B") **BE INTRODUCED** at the Municipal Council meeting on March 20, 2012 to amend Council Policy 5(9) entitled "Process for Seeking Applications for Committee Appointments and the Handling of Those Applications" to reflect current practices; and
- c) the terms of reference for the Municipal Council's advisory committees **BE APPROVED** as detailed in the attached Appendix "C".

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER
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Item #8 - Finance and Administrative Services Committee – December 12, 2011
Item#1 - Finance and Administration Committee – March 30, 2011

BACKGROUND

Municipal Council, at its meeting on January 10, 2012, resolved that:

*"...the City Clerk **BE DIRECTED** to consult with the advisory committees which are being proposed for amalgamation (i.e. Advisory Committee on the Environment, Trees and Forests Advisory Committee, Agricultural Advisory Committee and the Environmental and Ecological Planning Advisory Committee) to obtain their input with respect to representation on the amalgamated committees, so as to ensure the appropriate level of technical and non-technical representation, and to report back at the January 16, 2012 meeting of the Finance and Administrative Services Committee with supporting changes to:*

- i) the advisory committees' terms of reference;*
- ii) Council Policy 5(16) - Policies for Advisory Committees;..."*

Summary of Feedback from Advisory Committees Proposed for Amalgamation

In accordance with the Municipal Council's direction of January 10, 2012, consultation was undertaken with the affected advisory committees. While it was possible to attend meetings of the Advisory Committee on the Environment (ACE), the Environmental and Ecological Planning Advisory Committee (EEPAC) and the Trees and Forests Advisory Committees (TFAC), it was not possible to attend a meeting of the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) as there was no meeting scheduled to coincide with the timing of this report. However, contact was made with the Chair of the ACC, who in turn contacted his fellow members to obtain and provide their collective feedback.

ACE's Feedback Related to Amalgamation of Advisory Committees:

- Their mandate is sustainability and to bring in more technical mandates, such as that of the TFAC, would compromise the larger scope of the ACE.

Administration's Response:

The first two areas of the mandate of the ACE is to encourage and promote programs including preservation, maintenance and improvement of the environment; and conservation of natural resources. Trees and Forests are a logical fit into those categories and also have a key influence on some of the current focus areas regarding the environment...climate change, air quality and sustainability. The TFAC is presently working on a significant program (i.e. the Urban Forest Strategy), which is based upon, among other things, conservation of natural resources. Further the theme of sustainability is not unique to the ACE. It is arguable that this applies to all aspects of the business of the Municipal Council and its committees.

- The TFAC would have a closer relationship with the Environmental and Ecological Planning Advisory Committee (EEPAC) than it does with ACE.

Administration's Response:

The ACE currently has representation on the TFAC due to the interconnectivity of their respective mandates. The ACE's mandate is such that it is not involved in the technical review of planning applications, which is a key function of the EEPAC.

- They have a heavy workload under their current mandate and adding more responsibilities, with a less focused mandate, may result in the loss of volunteers.

Administration's Response:

The effectiveness and efficiency of any function is improved through a more coordinated and holistic approach. Further, the chance of an optimum outcome is also improved through the pooling of resources and expertise. The mandate would remain focused and duplication would be mitigated. The Municipal Council will have a key role in providing clear direction to its Advisory Committees as to what matters it wishes them to provide advice on and in setting reasonable expectations on those matters so as not to overburden its volunteers.

- People volunteer to serve on a specific advisory committee due to their personal interest and expertise.

Administration's Response:

Volunteers would continue to apply and therefore serve based on their areas of expertise and interest. In fact, the new Striking Committee process will ensure that when membership is set at the beginning of a Council term, it will be based upon an assessment of the applicants' interests and expertise. It is envisioned that Advisory Committees will continue to make use of working groups to provide further focus on specific project areas and to allocate workloads.

- A “washed down” mandate may result in a less effective advisory committee.

Administration’s Response:

The effectiveness and efficiency of any function is improved through a more coordinated and holistic approach. Further, the chance of an optimum outcome is also improved through the pooling of resources and expertise. The mandate would remain focused and duplication would be mitigated. The Municipal Council will have a key role in providing clear direction to its Advisory Committees as to what matters it wishes them to provide advice on and in setting reasonable expectations on those matters. It should be noted that the ACE currently has representation on the TFAC due to the interconnectivity of their respective mandates.

EEPAC’s Feedback Related to Amalgamation of Advisory Committees:

- The unique priorities and focus of the respective committees may become lost if they were to be amalgamated.

Administration’s Response:

Diversity of opinion often produces more innovative and balanced advice for the Municipal Council. The effectiveness and efficiency of any function is improved through a more coordinated and holistic approach. Further, the chance of an optimum outcome is also improved through the pooling of resources and expertise. The mandate would remain focused and duplication would be mitigated. The Municipal Council will have a key role in providing clear direction to its Advisory Committees as to what matters it wishes them to provide advice on and in setting reasonable expectations on those matters.

- The voting power of a particular interest area would be diminished.

Administration’s Response:

The Municipal Council defines the area of interest of an advisory committee through assigned mandates and by extension; the outcomes of the advisory committee would therefore be reflective of its area of interest.

- They have a heavy workload under their current mandate and adding more responsibilities, with a less focused mandate, may result in the loss of volunteers.

Administration’s Response:

The effectiveness and efficiency of any function is improved through a more coordinated and holistic approach. Further, the chance of a positive outcome is also improved through the pooling of resources and expertise. The mandate would remain focused and duplication would be mitigated. The Municipal Council will have a key role in providing clear direction to its Advisory Committees as to what matters it wishes them to provide advice on and in setting reasonable expectations on those matters so as not to overburden its volunteers.

- People volunteer to serve on a specific advisory committee due to their personal interest and expertise.

Administration’s Response:

Volunteers would continue to apply and therefore serve based on their areas of expertise and interest. In fact, the new Striking Committee process will ensure that when membership is set at the beginning of a Council term, it will be based upon an assessment of the applicants’ interests and expertise. It is envisioned that Advisory Committees will continue to make use of working groups to provide further focus on specific project areas and to allocate workloads.

- A “washed down” mandate may result in a less effective advisory committee.

Administration’s Response:

The effectiveness and efficiency of any function is improved through a more coordinated and holistic approach. Further, the chance of an optimum outcome is also improved through the pooling of resources and expertise. The mandate would remain focused and duplication would be mitigated. The Municipal Council will have a key role in providing clear direction to its Advisory Committees as to what matters it wishes them to provide advice on and in setting reasonable expectations on those matters.

TFAC’s Feedback Related to Amalgamation of Advisory Committees:

- TFAC is working on a specific and important project with respect to the Urban Forest Strategy and expressed concern that a change to the mandate of the Advisory Committee may jeopardize this project.

Administration’s Response:

The Municipal Council provides direction on which projects it wishes its advisory committees to work on. The importance of a project to the Municipal Council is not dependent on what advisory committee the project has been assigned to.

- The discontinuation of voting representation on the TFAC by a Council Member would be detrimental to the effectiveness of that advisory committee.

Administration’s Response:

The appointment of a Council Member to any advisory committee is contrary to existing Council Policy, which was established to help ensure that advisory committees remain autonomous to the political decision-making body. The whole intent of an advisory committee is to seek advice from the citizenry, for consideration by the Municipal Council, through one of its standing committees. Further, to place a Council Member as a voting member on an advisory committee would seem counterintuitive to Council’s own Citizen Engagement Policy. That Policy promotes a consultative process that provides the opportunity to obtain public feedback on alternatives and/or decisions in order to inform the Municipal Council’s decision making. The ability of citizens to form their own recommendations as an advisory committee member could be impeded by Council Members also holding a vote on an advisory committee. No matter how well-intentioned a Council Member may be in serving on an advisory committee, they are still “pre-empting” that advisory committee’s independence from the Municipal Council by participating as a voting member on that advisory committee in the early stages of an advisory committee’s decision making process.

- People volunteer to serve on a specific advisory committee due to their personal interest and expertise.

Administration’s Response:

Volunteers would continue to apply and therefore serve based on their areas of expertise and interest. In fact, the new Striking Committee process will ensure that when membership is set at the beginning of a Council term, it will be based upon an assessment of the applicants’ interests and expertise. It is envisioned that Advisory Committees will continue to make use of working groups to provide further focus on specific project areas and to allocate workloads.

- A “washed down” mandate may result in a less effective advisory committee.

Administration’s Response:

The effectiveness and efficiency of any function is improved through a more coordinated and holistic approach. Further, the chance of an optimum outcome is also improved through the pooling of resources and expertise. The mandate would remain focused and duplication would be mitigated. The Municipal Council will have a key role in providing clear direction to its Advisory Committees as to what matters it wishes them to provide advice on and in setting reasonable expectations on those matters. The TFAC currently has representation from the ACE and the EPPAC on its voting membership.

AAC’s Concerns Related to Amalgamation of Advisory Committees:

- The main role of the AAC is to respond to planning issues. Due to the focus on agricultural related matters, current members may be reluctant to participate on an Advisory Committee that is not focused on agriculture. Members of the EEPAC have clearly indicated that they do not wish to increase their mandate to include agriculture matters.

Administration’s Response:

It can be argued that there are linkages between the natural environment and agriculture. Many valuable natural habitats are maintained through proper agricultural land management (eg. woodlands, open space and wetlands). A holistic approach which considers all the pieces of the City of London’s natural tapestry can only benefit the overall outcome. Further, the chance of a positive outcome is also improved through the pooling of resources and expertise. The mandate would remain focused and duplication would be mitigated. The Municipal Council will have a key role in providing clear direction to its Advisory Committees as to what matters it wishes them to provide advice on and in setting reasonable expectations on those matters.

Summary

Over recent years, advisory committees have been cross-populated, at their own request, due to areas of common interest. That speaks to the current suggestion to take a more holistic approach to areas which have a common interest, to evaluate the core competencies that would be required, and to then invite an appropriate number of citizens who have those core competencies to apply for membership on the advisory committees. Any advisory committee could develop working groups, as many currently do, to focus on key subject areas, and bring back information and recommendations to the advisory committee for consideration as to next steps (i.e. what the advisory committee wishes to recommend to its standing committee).

The attached appendices reflect the recommended changes to the existing advisory committee policies, including integration of same, and also outline the proposed terms of reference for the Municipal Council’s advisory committees.

It should also be noted that some of the comments received from advisory committees encompassed matters beyond that of the review of the advisory committees’ mandates, including improved orientation, communication, recruitment of members and processes. The Civic Administration will review those additional comments and will incorporate, where appropriate, the suggested changes. Appreciation is extended to the advisory committees for their participation in the current review process.

PREPARED AND RECOMMENDED BY:
CATHY SAUNDERS CITY CLERK