

## Enhancing the Effectiveness of Advisory Committees - Executive Summary

Good governance in a municipality is heavily dependent upon the effective coordination between Municipal Council, Civic Administration and fully transparent, functional, effective & vibrant Advisory Committees. It is clear that there is a lack of trust, cooperation and coordination between these groups, which over time has rendered many AC's ineffective and underutilized.

The Clerk of the City of London's ongoing Review is the long overdue but critical first step towards rectifying this situation and needs to be supported and brought to a conclusion so that we can begin the hard work of repairing these relationships and providing value for the Citizens of London.

It is with this in mind that we respectfully submit the attached report as well as the following summary of recommendations and offer TAC as a potential test bed to pilot improvements.

**Tariq Khan and Dan Foster**  
**2019-03-15**

### **Recommendations**

#### **A. Temporary Working Group:**

1. A Working Group (WG) should be constituted to review the Clerks Interim Report on Advisory Committees, assist with further review and consultations and to work to finalize this review and report back to the CSC within 120 days. This WG should be fully mandated in terms of coordination with City Staff and external institutions and may be comprised as follows:
  - 2 City Councilors,
  - 2 Advisory Committee Members-At-Large,
  - A representative of the Office of the Mayor, and
  - 1 support person from the Clerk's office.

#### **B. General:**

1. Parent Standing Committees should take a more active role in mentoring their Advisory Committees including the introduction of a standard template for Work Plans and periodic presence at Advisory Committee meetings.
2. Standing Committees should also ensure their priorities and expectations are documented and communicated to their Advisory Committees annually in advance of the planning cycle and that senior Staff provide Standing Committees with formalized and timely updates on all relevant Work in Process.
3. Advisory Committee members should be encouraged to have departmental tours and project site visits guided and steered by concerned staff as a component of their ongoing orientation.
4. Standing Committee members should commit to periodic presence at Advisory Committee meetings.
5. The Advisory Committee Chair/Vice chair should be formally empowered to take a more active role in attendance management.

6. Advisory Committee voting members who fail to attend 3 consecutive meetings should be referred to their parent Standing Committee for review and action up to and including dismissal.
7. The format of the annual reception to recognize the services of Advisory Committee members may be modified. To add value to the event, the reception may be given more formal conference style look. An Advisory Committee Conference would provide an opportunity and platform for AC members to present their experiences and recommendations to their peers as well as receive recognition for outstanding performance. The following may be categories for specific recognition:
  - Sharing 'Best Practices' of best performing Advisory Committees,
  - Recognition awards/certificate to best performing Advisory Committees,
  - Recognition awards/certificate to best performing Chairs/Vice Chairs,
  - Recognition awards/certificate to best performing members, and
  - General attendance recognition awards.

### C. TAC Specific

1. Do not merge Transportation (TAC) and the Cycling (CAC) Advisory Committees into the TMAC as recommended by the Clerk in June 2018.
2. Refer the following the following recommendations regarding the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) Terms of Reference to the above-mentioned Working Group for review and consideration:
  - a) **Mandate:** None
  - b) **Composition - Voting Members:** Increase the size of the At-Large contingent to at least 8 members. Remove the requirement of Members-At-Large to utilize active modes of Transportation and recruit more members with the capability to devote time to Sub-Committees and Working Groups.
  - c) **Composition - Non-Voting Members:** Invite all current special interest group representatives including CAC to participate in the Non-Voting Member group.
  - d) **Term of Office:** Formalize the current temporary extension by making Advisory Committee appointments effective June 1st of the year following a Municipal Election (4 year term) so as to allow for an improved recruitment cycle which is more reflective of the interests of the incoming Council.
  - e) **Appointment Policies:** City Staff should conduct exit interviews/surveys with all outgoing appointees and report the results to Council periodically.
  - f) **Conduct:** Voting Members who do not attend 3 consecutive meetings will be referred to Civic Works Committee for review and action up to and including dismissal. All Voting Members should expect to be called upon to chair at least one Sub-Committee and/or Working Group over the course of their term of appointment.

## Enhancing the Effectiveness of Advisory Committees - Report

### 1. Background

Ongoing Review of Advisory Committees is defined in Article 2 of the City of London policy document; **General Policy for Advisory Committees**. This document is comprehensive in a

sense that it covers almost all topics from formation to operation of Advisory Committees and is currently under review. In last quarter of 2018, public forum sessions were arranged by the Clerk's office and consultations with all existing Advisory Committees related to their respective terms of references are continuing into 2019.

While preparing this document, efforts have been made to be brief, concise and to the point in order to avoid any replication/reproduction of any contents currently available in the **Terms of Reference** of Advisory Committees as well as in the **General Policy for Advisory Committees** document. The focus of this brief document is to discuss & highlight areas to be improved and provide recommendations for the improvement both in general and specific to the Transportation Advisory Committee.

## 2. The Role of Advisory Committees in Municipal Governance

Good governance in a municipality is heavily dependent on the effective coordination between Municipal Council, Civic Administration and transparent, fully functional, effective & vibrant Advisory Committees. From municipal government's perspective, an Advisory Committee is a group of concerned citizens who bring & contribute unique knowledge, expertise, vibrant public interface and skill sets in order to more effectively guide and steer the organization towards goals embedded in Council's vision and mission statements.

Each municipal council forms Advisory Committees as per their local requirements but unlike the structure for Commissions, there is no provincial oversight to ensure uniformity from municipality to municipality. A properly composed, structured & mandated advisory committee provides a gateway to municipal council for public interaction/relations and can be a tremendous complement to the reach & effectiveness of the council as it works to carry out a specific initiative.

That said, Advisory Committees have no authority to govern and therefore they must not issue directives to Council or Staff. Rather, being a resource, their role is to serve to make recommendations and/or provide key information, materials and public feedback. They also serve to promote municipal policies and programs which fall within their mandate.

Though mentoring is out of the normal ambit of functions of an Advisory committee, in ideal conditions, an Advisory committee comprising of key members with exceptional skill set, experience & exposure in public service programs/project in municipal settings can also offer guidance to staff in order to help them achieve their project/program's specific goals.

## 3. Advisory Committees - City of London

Advisory Committees in City of London are governed by the City Council's policy document: **General Policy for Advisory Committees**. The document has 23 sections and serves as the guiding document for the constitution and operations of ACs. Furthermore Terms of Reference (TOR) specific to each AC have been framed. The 13 Advisory Committees report to just 3 parent Standing Committees of Council as follows:

Community & Protective Services:   Accessibility AC  
  Animal Welfare AC  
  Child Care AC  
  Community Safety & Crime Prevention AC  
  Diversity, Inclusion & Anti-Oppression AC  
  Housing AC

Planning & Environment:           AC on Heritage  
   AC on the Environment  
   Agricultural AC  
   Environmental and Ecological Planning AC  
   Trees and Forests AC

Civic Works:                            Cycling AC  
   Transportation AC

### 3.1 Committee Effectiveness - TAC Case Study

In the backdrop of Transportation infrastructure improvement challenges, road safety and the projects conceived under Bus Rapid Transit, the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) was well positioned to play an important role for Council, Staff and the BRT Project Team.

Reporting to the standing Civic Works Committee (CWC) of Council, it consists of 20 members, including 7 Non-Voting members representing City Staff and 13 Voting members comprised as follows:

1. Four members-at-large
2. One representative from each of the following:
  - a) Cycling Advisory Committee
  - b) Advisory Committee on the Environment
  - c) Community Safety & Crime Prevention Advisory Committee
  - d) Accessibility Advisory Committee
  - e) London Middlesex Road Safety Committee
  - f) Canadian Automobile Association (CAA)
  - g) Urban League of London
  - h) Chamber of Commerce representative
  - i) London Development Institute

**3.1.1** The above composition meets all of the requirements of an ideal municipal Advisory Committee: rich and diverse in experience & expertise and equipped with the required skill set to take on any theoretical challenge in the Transportation sector and provide its recommendations in the most efficient and effective way. For analysis of working efficiency purposes, let's apply this assumption by reviewing its role in the Bus Rapid Transit Project (BRT).

**3.1.2** In view of the multi-year dialog on BRT (through two Council mandates) and keeping in view the mandate of TAC as per its **Terms of Reference**, the role of TAC was/is more important than generally perceived. TAC should have been able to focus narrowly on the project in order to advise/support the standing committee/council. In ideal conditions, TAC should have reviewed and evaluated the project, gathered input from public and provided feedback to the council through CWC by drafting number of proposals & presentations during 2016-2018. Somehow, we don't see any significant activity from TAC in this regard. Prima facie, from a BRT project perspective, TAC seems to be an ineffective Advisory Committee but in reality things are altogether different and the apparent 'ineffectiveness' of TAC may not be attributed to its present members by any means. In Sections 4-6 of this document, the root cause will be analyzed in more detail.

**3.1.3** There may be similar situations/cases with other Advisory Committees as well. The quorum problems, poor performance on Work Plans, inability to provide timely input, lack of coordination among Advisory Committees, Staff and respective Standing Committees etc are just the

symptoms rather than the root causes of the apparent 'ineffectiveness' of Advisory Committees. Detailed analysis shows that this is a complex problem and there are many inter-related factors involved which need to be addressed in order to bring about the necessary reforms. The areas which need special attention from the Clerk are discussed in Section 4 of this document.

#### **4. Sustainability and Continuous Improvement**

Effective Advisory Committees have clearly defined terms of reference and an effective methodology for its interactions with its parent Standing Committee. This is very important to ensure that its members have a clear purpose and guidelines for their membership and so that they add value and stay aligned with the objectives of Council.

##### **4.1 Recruitment and Selection Processes**

People are the building blocks of an effective Civic Administration and likewise they are the main driver of value-added outcomes for Advisory Committees. The recruitment and selection processes need enhancements to make them more robust, transparent and free of political intrigue. This is especially true of TAC because the majority of the voting membership is recruited directly (or indirectly via cross-committee appointments) through these processes.

**4.1.1 Timing:** The establishment of Committees currently occurs too early in the mandate of a new council. Due to an anomaly in the new election format in 2018, the Clerk recommended to Council the extension of Committee mandates to June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019 in order to allow her more time to execute the Recruitment and Selection processes. We think this was a good idea and should be adopted permanently. In addition to buying the Clerk time, it also allows the new Council to establish its financial and strategic priorities, and Standing Committees prior to the Recruitment Phase, thus improving the chances of success. The other benefit of an offset four-year cycle is that outgoing Committees can continue to add-value to ongoing projects being administered by City Staff and assist in the development of Year One Committee Work Plans.

**4.1.2. Effective Advertisement:** The Recruitment process needs to be more robust and should include but not be limited to, print, electronic & social media, automated calling, public places including shopping areas, libraries, community centres, university/college notice boards, setting up public booths at festivals/events, London Transit infrastructure like bus-stops/shelters, Bus & Railway stations, City Hall and city MP/MPP offices, worship places and so forth. The Recruitment phase should be ongoing and applications should be accepted at any time. *This is the key to the whole process.*

**4.1.3 Tapping Retired Expert Resources:** This is one of the most important and vital resources seemingly untapped so far as we see a very small fraction of retired experts in the Advisory Committees. London is rich in retirement community, if properly approached; retired experts may be willing to contribute their experience and expertise. Reaching out to professional organizations to identify local members might reap considerable benefits.

**4.1.4 Redesign of the Application forms:** The Present application form is too generic and needs to be redesigned to align with the Selection process. In order to have suitable candidates for specific fields, it is very important that the application form is designed in a way that an interested candidate may identify their strengths, experiences and skills in the context of the required field. A survey type design format may also be adopted in certain sections of form where each question may have certain weighting. The form should be able to help the selection board to allocate marks to candidates for each of the desired requirements during the selection phase.

In some cases an Advisory Committee may have its own customized form. If desired, we may help in the redesign of those application forms.

**4.1.5 Desired Skill Sets:** For certain specified Advisory Committees the Selection criteria should allow for a focus on technical expertise and experience of the candidate in the particular field/subject of the Advisory Committee. (See 4.1.7)

**4.1.6 Selection Process - Vacancies – Application Waterfall:** If application forms are properly redesigned, the selection process may be reduced significantly or even eliminated through criteria ranking. Council may elect the required slate of candidates and then establish an ongoing waiting list from the remaining candidates. New applications will be evaluated as per pre established criteria as received and placed on selection lists. This should provide an ongoing and immediate supply of potential candidates for appointments by Council to vacancies without being an administrative burden on City Staff.

**4.1.7 University, College & Skill Development Institutions:** Where applicable (See 4.1.5) it may be advisable to request a faculty member expert in a particular subject, to respective subject specific Advisory Committee. The assignment period may be from one year to four years as suited to the organization. It is general practice in the Universities and Colleges that all tenured staff do research work in their fields of expertise. A subject specific Advisory Committee is an ideal incubator for such research.

Each Advisory committee should have at least one post grad or fourth year student as its member. Board of Governors/Directors may develop an incentive of 2-5% marks for a student who actively contributes to their respective Advisory Committee. It is also observed that new comers have degrees from their country of origin but in most cases their credentials are not readily acceptable hence they go to placement centres and skill development institutes for certification. Recruitment of such students to an Advisory Committee by the concerned agencies at least for one year may be helpful for job placements. Students should be voting members and they will be expected to actively participate in Advisory committee meetings and its sub group meetings to add value to work of the Advisory committees.

#### **Recommendation:**

- A Working Group (WG) should be constituted to review the Clerks Interim Report on Advisory Committees, assist her with further review and consultations and to work to finalize this review and report back to the CSC within 120 days. This WG should be fully mandated in terms of coordination with City Staff and external institutions and may be comprised as follows:
  - 2 City Councilors,
  - 2 Advisory Committee Members-At-Large,
  - A representative of the Office of the Mayor, and
  - 1 support person from the Clerk's office.

## **5. Operations: The Business of Advisory Committees**

Articles 3 & 15 of the **General Policy for Advisory Committees** describe the modus operandi for the business of Advisory Committees. Article 15 emphasizes that “The parliamentary rules outlined in the Council Procedure By-law shall be observed, as far as applicable, by each advisory committee”. Although observance of parliamentary rules are not mandatory for the business of Advisory committees, they are generally applied..

Articles 17-20 outline the Agenda and Reporting mechanisms. Article 19 provides the complete mechanism for Advisory Committee to follow when offering its opinions or recommendations on a particular subject/topic/project. Similarly Article 20 requires that Advisory Committee prepare and present their respective Annual Report and Work Plan to its parent standing committee.

Finally, Article 21 states that “Council recognizes the value of the impartial and objective advice received from committee members and the challenges and inherent restrictions facing committee members in assessing and recommending various options in a conscientious and ethical manner.”

Applying these articles within the context of the TAC Case Study reveals some very interesting but unusual observations.

**5.1 Communication & Consultation:** TAC prepared & submitted its 2018 Work Plan in February, but it was not approved by CWC. Rather, it was referred to Staff, in March 2018 for additional input. The Committee as constituted at that time was a group of capable, seasoned and informed members. This impasse and the resulting recommendations submitted by senior Staff may well have left CWC and Council with the unfounded impression the TAC was just another of several ‘inefficient and ineffective’ Advisory Committees. Further analysis will show this is hardly the case and that the root causes of this impasse were:

- a lack of timely **Leadership** on the part of CWC in that they failed to mentor TAC properly,
- the existence of a **Communications** gap - TAC was either unaware of or unwilling to bend to CWC priorities and expectations, and
- a marked lack of **Meaningful Consultation** between senior Staff and TAC.

It is clear that CWC failed in its responsibility to direct TAC by providing them with their priorities and expectations in the development of their annual Work Plan. Furthermore, senior Staff failed to share relevant project plans on an ongoing periodic basis, resulting in a TAC Work Plan which was developed in a vacuum with predictable results.

Further exacerbating the problem was the fact that there were unfilled vacancies amongst the Member-At-Large contingent. This was rectified by Council by March 2018 with the appointment of two new members.

TAC formed a Work Plan Working Group which properly communicated and consulted with all parties, resulting in revised Work Plan in the required template, which was submitted in June and approved by CWC later that fall. It also produced a Work In Process (WIP) document, which clearly communicated Staff project plans and consultation checkpoints and which is a project management stakeholder management best practice.

**5.2 Time Boxing:** Currently, Staff applies a very rigid form of Consultation with its Advisory Committees. It is very common that a project plan, an environmental assessment or a policy document which has been in the works for many months is presented at a monthly meeting with the expectation that Committee provide a response in a span of 4-6 weeks. It has also been observed from time to time that these documents were not provided by the specified Agenda mail-out cut-off and/or have referenced Public Information Centre (PIC) meetings which have already occurred. Whether by accident or design, ‘time boxing’ is disrespectful to Advisory Committees and makes it virtually impossible for them to add value. Furthermore, the rigidity of the current practice of Consultation is in direct conflict with Articles 17 & 21 of the **General Policy for Advisory Committees** which reinforce the value of dialogue and information sharing from the beginning of the consultative process. This too is a project management best practice.

**Recommendations:**

- Parent Standing Committees should take a more active role in mentoring their Advisory Committees including the introduction of a standard template for Work Plans and periodic presence at Advisory Committee meetings.
- Standing Committees should also ensure their priorities and expectations are documented and communicated to their Advisory Committees annually in advance of the planning cycle and that senior Staff provide Standing Committees with formalized and timely updates on all relevant Work in Process.
- Advisory Committee members should be encouraged to have departmental tours and project site visits guided and steered by concerned staff as a component of their ongoing orientation.

**5.3 Quorum:** This has been a concern for almost every Advisory Committee. The quorum problem needs to be properly diagnosed and addressed. There are many clues throughout the TAC case study and we are sure that other Committees have their own rationales but in our experience they can be synthesized into two main root causes:

- poor morale caused by the indifference often demonstrated by Council and senior Staff, and
- scheduling conflicts caused by personal/profession commitments and the inflexibility of the current meeting format.

**Recommendations:**

- Standing Committee members should commit to periodic presence at Advisory Committee meetings.
- Chair/Vice chair should be formally empowered to take a more active role in attendance management.
- Advisory Committee voting members who fail to attend 3 consecutive meetings should be referred to their parent Standing Committee for review and action up to and including dismissal.

**5.4 Recognition & Rewards:** Article 22 of the **General Policy for Advisory Committees** recognizes the services of members of Advisory committees: “The Municipal Council shall host an annual reception, subject to budget availability, to honour those members-at-large and those agency representatives who have served the Municipal Council, without remuneration by the Municipality, as a voting member of one or more of its advisory committees and whose attendance has been in keeping with set policy.” This is an excellent gesture on the part of Council which is designed to encourage members Advisory Committees. There is an opportunity for participants to take home more than just the value of a “meet & greet” experience. Such events may be made productive and interactive if a performance-highlight component is added which may be structured to recognize and reward high performing teams and allowing them to share their ‘Best



Practices' with their peers and Council. This would also reinforce the value of public service in general and Advisory Committees in particular.

#### **Recommendation:**

- The format of the annual reception to recognize the services of Advisory Committee members may be modified. To add value to the event, the reception may be given more formal i.e. conference-style look. An Advisory Committee Conference would provide an opportunity and platform for AC members to present their experiences and recommendations to their peers as well as receive recognition for outstanding performance. The following may be categories for specific recognition:
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  - General attendance recognition awards.

### **6. Merger of TAC and CAC into TMAC**

We do not think the merger of Transportation (TAC) and Cycling (CAC) Advisory Committees is in the public interest. It is our contention that the City of London benefits from a strong separate voice for Cycling, comprised of passionate advocates which has clearly added value for their community. To water this down in the recommended TMAC structure would be a mistake for cyclists, pedestrians, mobility-challenged citizens and motorists alike.

Similarly, as outlined in the analysis and recommendations flowing out of above mentioned TAC Case Study we feel strongly that TAC has much unrealized potential to add value. There is clearly a need for a voice for the other modes of Transportation. However, there also needs to be a greater commitment on the part of appointees to more actively participate in outside activities such as Sub-Committees and Working Groups.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Do not merge Transportation (TAC) and the Cycling (CAC) Advisory Committees into the TMAC as recommended by the Clerk in June 2018.
- Refer the following the following recommendations regarding the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) Terms of Reference to the above-mentioned Working Group for review and consideration:
  - **Mandate:** None
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- **Appointment Policies:** City Staff should conduct exit interviews/surveys with all outgoing appointees and report the results to Council periodically.
- **Conduct:** Voting Members who do not attend 3 consecutive meetings will be referred to Civic Works Committee for review and action up to and including dismissal. All Voting Members should expect to be called upon to chair at least one Sub-Committee and/or Working Group over the course of their term of appointment.