

Advisory Committee Pilots - SWOT Comparison

Current “At Large” Configuration

Strengths

- Terms of Reference as currently written provide clear direction and convey a strong mandate (TMP/CMP)
- AC provides a much broader and considered platform to share ideas with Council
- Fosters a sense of independent thinking
- Promotes diversity and inclusion in group representation
- Ideas may come from the “bottom up” in addition to the “top down”
- Accountable to Council (via Civic Works Committee) vs. Civic Administration
- Integrated leadership amongst Council, Staff and AC (vs. Straight-line accountability)
- The parliamentary org structure promotes order, transparency and good organizational governance
- Promotes and sustains relationship building amongst like-minded Londoners
- Meets and/or exceeds the requisite level of SMEs in the committee makeup, often organically
- Demonstrated three-year track record of success in the case of TAC
- A strong Work Plan process was developed by TAC which is outcome-driven and aligned to London Plan (Strategic Vision vs. Tactical)

Community Engagement Panel

Strengths

- In effect the CEP, as envisioned, is simply an expanded, topic-driven PIC process utilizing a more flexible, “focus-group” structure lead by the Civic Administration
- Since this approach is as yet untested, see the “Opportunities” slide for potential strengths.

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Weaknesses

- The sometimes, the overly long cycle times of the formal process often preclude expedited matters from being fully explored...TAC has learned that a strong WP process can often mitigate this risk...but not fully
- Information flows slowly and often incompletely to/from Council due to barriers inherent in the parliamentary process
- AC mandates as outlined in their TORs are not always fully respected by the Civic Administration
- The Work Plan process, while providing structure, may sometimes have the effect of stifling new idea generation on topics not aligned to strategic interests of Council vs. the needs/desires of the Public
- The “At Large” pilot was established without success criteria and metrics for proper evaluation at the conclusion of the pilot period.
- The recruitment (Striking Committee) and selection processes (Council) need to be improved and focussed on expertise/merit vs. reward/vanity

Community Engagement Panel

Weaknesses

- Work planning will not be leveraged to provide focus and alignment to the London Plan and TOR
- Maintaining two different structures (AC and CEP) may not drive the expected benefits/efficiencies
- The CEP process and structure is still not entirely clear because it remains under development
- CEPs tend to be subject-focussed and steered (Command & Control vs. Collaboration) which eliminates the opportunity for free and independent thinking/input from the community (Tactical vs. Visionary)
- The level of transparency of the process from the point of view of the public (published meeting agendas, minutes, video) has not been established and/or properly evaluated.
- The CEP model has a lack of organizational structure and mature finesse and is largely ad hoc (Tactical)
- The pilot is being undertaken without criteria/metrics for proper evaluation at the conclusion of the pilot period (same mistake as with the “At Large” pilot)
- The model lacks a robust track record of success (going operational without the benefit testing)

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Opportunities

- Continue TAC in its current AC structure (with or without CAC) and undertake a proper comparative analysis which may drive improvement opportunities and models for those Advisory Committees which will remain in place.
- Recommendations regarding refinements of the recruitment and/or selection process for remaining ACs may result
- Introduction of enhanced analytics of AC effectiveness may result and be leveraged for future iterations/pilots/improvement initiatives

Community Engagement Panel

Opportunities *

- Expand the level of diversity and inclusion of the target audience on questions/issues requiring feedback to Council
- Reduced the cycle time for feedback to Council on time-sensitive matters, though the feedback may be much narrower in scope
- Enhance community engagement and feedback (Diversity and Inclusion)

* (Untested and therefore purely theoretical)

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Threats (Risks)

- Lack of support from Council
- Time-boxing by Civic Administration
- Poor assumptions/attitudes amongst many current AC members regarding mandate, attendance, due diligence, dedication and work group participation)
- Lack of skills development and succession planning for AC members threatening process sustainability
- No process to document understanding acquired to enhance the knowledge base of ACs
- No exit interview process (Early Warning System of AC dysfunction)
- Entropy associated with competing special interests
- Conflicts of interest

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Threats (Risks)

- Special interest group bias could become a dominant feature of this model
- Pre-qualified lists of key individuals and/or special interest groups may be employed by Civic Administration as a pre-screen (thus undermining the benefits of convening a broader audience)
- Engagement fatigue (Public)
- Negativity on the part of Council and/or Civic Administration (due to Overwork/Disinterest/Stress associated with recent Covid-19 protocols)
- Negative reaction in Traditional/Social Media