~~Committee of the Whole~~Governance and Priorities Committee
Terms of Reference

Purpose

The ~~Committee of the Whole~~Governance and Priorities Committee enables members of Council to review upcoming and important issues with members of administration, and the public where deemed appropriate, where the focus is on understanding the broader policy implications of the issues. The purpose of the ~~Committee of the Whole~~Governance and Priorities Committee is to:

- Hear from delegations and/or refer these on to Council
- Review matters forwarded to it by the CAO or by Council via the Agendas Committee
- Consider matters placed on the agenda by the CAO, by other members of Council (as determined by a resolution of Council) or by consideration of the Agendas Committee. Ensure that all such matters are referred to the CAO for a report
- Approve matters which it considers are within current policy
- Refer any matter on to a regular meeting of Council which is not the subject of current policy (including new statements of policy)
- Review reports or minutes from external boards and committees so that there is some degree of consistency as to how each is treated by the Council
- Meet publicly at a time which is deemed by a majority of Council as acceptable to most members of the public; meet on the alternate weeks to that of regular Council meetings
- May determine to meet in-camera on a vote of the committee at the conclusion of a meeting; in-camera matters are limited as per the legislation
- Meet principally as a forum for discussion rather than as a decision-making arena; enables all of Council to review and discuss key issues without the requirement to decide.
- May refer an item to the CAO for more information or clarification but must move the issue forward to Council for its consideration and decision upon receipt of the clarifying information (in other words, the referral process if used is intended to be limited on a normal basis to two weeks).

Legislative Authority

Municipal Government Act (Section 145 and 146).

Membership

The Committee shall consist of Council.

Chairmanship

The Mayor is the Chairperson for the meetings (unless the Mayor chooses otherwise).

Quorum

A quorum for a meeting of ~~the Committee of the Whole~~Governance and Priorities Committee should be a majority of those members present at a regularly scheduled meeting.

Meeting Schedule

Meetings are held the first and third Tuesdays of every month.

Administrative Responsibility

The General Managers are responsible for preparing any and all correspondence required for these meetings.

Mandate and Guidelines

Role of the Administration

Final reports or recommended actions should be placed on the agenda of the regular Council meeting and be subject to the discussion and debate of the Council at that time. We view the regular Council meeting as the principle decision-making forum of any municipality. This is where the major issues of the day need to be aired, debated and decided. As a result, the regular meetings of Council are recognized as the forum for decision-making.

The principal advisor to the ~~Committee of the Whole~~Governance and Priorities Committee is the CAO. Whether or not other management (or other staff) is in attendance is the prerogative of the CAO.

The primary role of the CAO as always is to act as the policy advisor to Council and to ensure that Council has access to well-rounded information that adds to Council's understanding of the issues. During a ~~Committee of the Whole~~Governance and Priorities meeting, the CAO should be engaged frequently by Council in terms of responding to questions or by directing the questions of the Councillors to other appropriate members of his administration.

When a topic is opened by the Mayor to the table (i.e. to the rest of Council in attendance) for its discussion, the best approach would be for the Mayor to ask the CAO if he had any additional or new information to add prior to opening the floor to members of Council (or even to the public). The CAO may then re-direct the question to the senior staff member most impacted by the topic or under whose jurisdiction the topic fits. Providing that it is always deemed acceptable for the CAO to intervene in an administrative presentation, once he has deferred in his initial remarks to a department head, the members of Council should be permitted to continue their questions to that individual. (This is a departure from the protocol at a regular meeting of Council where members should be asked to direct all questions of administration to the CAO).

Administrative Review of Agenda Issues

While the agenda and tone of a ~~Committee of a Whole~~Governance and Priorities Committee meeting is not as formal as that of a regular meeting, the quality of any debate will depend on the quality of the input. This requires that the CAO and his General Managers (and department

heads as appropriate) establish their own timeline such that a meeting of the senior management team (SMT) occurs several days prior to a ~~Committee of the Whole~~Governance and Priorities Committee meeting in order that the SMT can review/discuss the issues from individual departments that are proposed to go forward to ~~Committee of the Whole~~Governance and Priorities Committee.

The key for the CAO and ~~his~~ SMT is to keep the focus on the broader and more strategic issues. The key determinants of whether or not an issue goes forward to the ~~Committee of the Who~~Governance and Priorities Committee ~~le~~ meeting should incorporate consideration of:

- Is this a matter that we require Council's endorsement of?
- Is this a matter of a new or a revised policy?
- Does the issue have broad community significance?
- Is this an issue that it can be reasonably argued that Council would expect to see and provide direction to even though it may be within the parameters given to the CAO to act?

Staff Reports
Staff reports should be identified as "new business" and handled in the normal course of the CAO determining which business/policy items to place before Council through the agenda process.

Authority of a Council Member to Request Staff Reports
Any member wishing a report from ~~the~~ administration should be presenting such a request to Council as a whole through a motion at a Council meeting or through a request to the Mayor to place such a matter on the Agendas Committee meeting. No member of Council has that authority on his/her own.

Verbal Reports
Neither Council members nor staff members should be expected to provide verbal reports to their colleagues at either a committee meeting or at a regular Council meeting. Such reports are of dubious value given that no one has the opportunity to study what is being reported or to ask any thoughtful questions.

End of Meeting Additions
While it is common practice in many places to allow items to be added onto an agenda at the end of a meeting, such items should only be considered as "for information" and not "for decision". Such additions are very unfair to a policy-making body which strives for thoughtful debate which in turn requires the time to prepare through advance study. "Instant expert" decisions are often prone to be exposed as questionable or wrong when considered in the cold light of the realities of the following day.

Public Input at Meetings
Public input to any public governance process is generally considered desirable. It is not always agreeable. However, the County is a public body that according to legislation must conduct its business in public (except wherein the Council or committee of Council may determine to go in camera).

Public input could be achieved and managed in a number of ways. Obviously, the more traditional approach is through a delegation process at regular or committee meetings of Council. This requirement and forum enables a delegation to gain the attention of Council on a particular matter and to present their views for a fixed time (generally 3-5 minutes) after which Council members may be entitled to ask any questions designed to flesh out the remarks of the delegation.

A second approach is similar to the first and that is the availability of time on an agenda for County agencies, boards and committees (ABCs) to make a presentation on matters within their mandate and to seek Council's concurrence. These differ from the first process only insofar as the latter are through ongoing, recognized groups whereas the former is more frequently that of individuals seeking redress on very specific and often time-sensitive matters.

A third approach to public participation at meetings of Council (or at a ~~Committee of the Whole~~Governance and Priorities Committee meeting) is to provide a "public dialogue session" at the beginning or conclusion of a committee meeting and to engage in a more free-wheeling style of dialogue wherein members of the public are entitled to speak to matters on the committee agenda and to ask questions (through the chair) of Council members or any staff members who may have presented an issue. Such a forum needs to be carefully guarded in terms of its boundaries such that no member of the public is allowed unfettered access to staff so as to dominate or manipulate the session. Further, issues that have already been dealt with and are the subject of a Council policy or resolution are not considered open for such discussion. Terms of reference are essential for such processes in order to be effective.

Terms of Reference for the Public Dialogue Session
- While these meetings are intended to function in a more informal setting and process than a regular meeting of Council so as to encourage dialogue between members of Council, the administration and the public, the chair shall be vested with the authority to keep the meetings focused on the matter at hand and shall not tolerate any personal attacks, innuendo or rude comments
- Any public presentations should be limited to a maximum of 3 minutes unless otherwise authorized by the chair
- These are intended as working meetings wherein the focus will be on key policy issues being presented to Governance and Priorities Committee ~~the Committee of the Whole~~ by the CAO, the public, or by external agencies, boards and commissions.

Last Revised: ~~September 8, 2015~~November 30, 2021
Prepared: October 19, 2007