

What We Heard - Summary of Engagement Findings

Development of the Governance Framework for Council Committees was supported by extensive engagement conducted over multiple phases between 2024 and early 2026, including governance framework consultation, advisory committee mandate review, and targeted input from Council, Administration, and Council Committees. Engagement also included committee-specific facilitated discussion in February 2026 and written submissions.

Engagement was designed to test governance assumptions, identify operational and lifecycle implementation risks, clarify governance roles and accountability expectations, and ensure the proposed framework reflects both governance best practices and the lived experience of committees operating within Council's governance structure.

This attachment summarizes key themes heard across engagement activities and describes how feedback informed the evolution of the Governance Framework presented in this report.

Executive Summary

Engagement undertaken between 2024 and early 2026 explored both governance structure and advisory committee mandates. Participants broadly supported strengthening governance consistency, improving mandate clarity, and aligning committee work with Council priorities.

Across engagement streams, several consistent governance themes emerged:

- The importance of continuity and institutional knowledge.
- Clearer alignment between committee mandates and Council priorities.
- Improved role clarity between Council, Administration, and advisory bodies.
- Governance processes that remain practical for volunteer-based committees.
- Accessibility and equity in governance practice (including interpretation standards and attendance accommodation considerations).
- Clarity regarding advisory independence and advocacy parameters.
- Clear escalation processes for Chair performance and member conduct.
- Clear distinction between advisory committees and delegated decision-making boards.
- Procedural fairness and transparency in appointment removal process.
- Administrative burden and reporting expectations.
- Implementation supports, templates, and training requirements.

Feedback also highlighted differing perspectives between Council Committees and Administration regarding governance expectations, evaluation approaches, and the evolving role of advisory bodies within Council's decision-making structure.

The Governance Framework reflects a balanced approach that strengthens governance clarity while maintaining flexibility and sustainability for Council Committees. The framework clarifies that committees operate continuously unless Council determines otherwise, and that End-of-Term Reviews are governance assessments rather than automatic resets or sunseting mechanisms.

Feedback was received from advisory committees, decision-making boards, Administration support teams, and City Council members, ensuring the Governance Framework reflects multiple governance perspectives.

Engagement Overview

Engagement informing the Governance Framework occurred through two interrelated streams and involved City Council members, Council Committees, Administrative Liaisons, and Administration. Engagement activities included facilitated discussions, written submissions, and surveys to test lifecycle governance concepts and reporting expectations.

Advisory Committee Mandate Review Engagement (2024)

Earlier engagement focused on mandates of advisory committees, including surveys with:

- Advisory Committees
- Administrative Liaisons
- City Council Members

This engagement explored alignment of mandates with Council priorities, barriers to effectiveness, and perspectives on governance lifecycle approaches. Findings from the mandate review directly informed development of the Governance Framework by identifying structural governance challenges and areas of inconsistency across Committees.

Governance Framework Engagement (2025/2026)

The Office of the City Clerk engaged Council Committees and Administration through facilitated discussions and written submissions to gather feedback on a draft Governance Framework. Participants rated the framework positively overall

and identified areas requiring refinement, including lifecycle governance, evaluation processes, and role clarity.

Ten Council Committees and multiple Administration teams provided feedback through surveys and written submissions, contributing to revisions reflected in the final framework.

February 2026 engagement sessions included structured discussions with current advisory and decision-making Council Committees and Administrative teams. Written submissions were also received. Engagement surfaced both governance level themes and operational implementation questions regarding:

- Lifecycle review timing
- Evaluation criteria
- Accessibility standards
- Member removal provisions
- Administrative accountability
- Work planning expectations
- Subcommittee governance parameters

Key Governance Themes

1. Continuity and Lifecycle Governance
What We Heard
• Participants consistently emphasized the importance of continuity across Council terms and the protection of institutional knowledge, multi-year initiatives, and legacy advisory work • Committees expressed concern that governance cycles tied too rigidly to municipal elections could: ◦ Disrupt long-standing initiatives ◦ Create uncertainty for volunteers ◦ Slow advisory momentum during election transitions ◦ Diminish historical contributions if reviews focus only on current Council priorities • Some committees expressed concern that routine review cycles, if perceived as potential precursors to sunseting, may create instability or reduce volunteer confidence in long-term advisory work • Some committees also questioned whether core service advisory bodies should be evaluated identically to issue-specific committees

How the Feedback Informed the Framework
• Clarified that committees operate continuously unless Council determines otherwise • Clarified that End-of-Term Review is evaluative and informational, not automatic sunseting • Refined lifecycle language to reinforce continuity while preserving Council's authority to renew, restructure, or sunset committees

2. Mandate Clarity and Alignment with Council Priorities
What We Heard
• Participants identified variability in how clearly committee mandates define advisory expectations • Several committees emphasized that alignment should not limit anticipatory governance or the ability to identify emerging issues not yet reflected in Council priorities • Some participants recommended that alignment be framed as bi-directional. For example, committees align with Council priorities while also informing and evolving those priorities through research, lived experience, and expert advice • Technical committees expressed concern that alignment language could risk politicizing long-term or science-based mandates
How the Feedback Informed the Framework
• Clarified that mandates are established by Council through bylaw and that Terms of Reference refine, not rewrite, Council-approved mandates • Clarified that committees may identify emerging issues within their mandate • Reinforced that alignment includes informing Council deliberations while maintaining strategic connection to Council priorities

3. Advisory Independence and Advocacy Parameters
What We Heard
• Participants requested clearer distinction between advisory recommendations and advocacy • Committees emphasized that recommending specific policy outcomes is inherent to advisory functions and should not be confused with external lobbying or political campaigning • Equity-mandated committees raised concern that overly restrictive advocacy language could unintentionally limit relationship based engagement or community informed perspectives
How the Feedback Informed the Framework
• Refined advocacy language to distinguish between internal advisory recommendations and external lobbying • Reinforced that committees do not engage in external advocacy on behalf of the City

4. Procedural Fairness and Appointment Provisions
What We Heard
• Strong concern was raised regarding language permitting Council to revoke appointments “for any reason, at any time” • Participants noted that while Council’s legislative authority is acknowledged, the phrasing may create perceived vulnerability for dissenting or equity-based perspectives and weaken advisory independence
How the Feedback Informed the Framework
• Retained Council’s legislative authority over appointments • Refined language to clarify accountability context • Identified need for transparent processes and escalation clarity within implementation tools

5. Roles, Responsibilities, and Escalation Processes
What We Heard
• Administrative Liaisons and committees requested clearer operational guidance regarding: ◦ Managing Chairs ◦ Member conduct and escalation processes ◦ Evaluation ownership ◦ Administrative Liaison authority boundaries ◦ Councillor Advisor role as conduit to Council • Participants emphasized the need for governance support beyond high-level framework language
How the Feedback Informed the Framework
• Clarified high-level roles and responsibilities in the framework • Identified implementation supports (templates, training, guidance materials) to follow Council approval • Reinforced shared responsibility between Committee, Administration, Office of the City Clerk, and Council

6. Accessibility and Equity in Governance Practice
What We Heard
• Accessibility Advisory Committee participants emphasized that interpretation standards are structural requirements for participation, not accommodations • Questions were raised regarding quorum timing, attendance expectations, and equity-based participation barriers • Equity-mandated committees requested integration of an equity lens within lifecycle evaluation
How the Feedback Informed the Framework

- Clarified attendance expectations with flexibility recognizing volunteer realities
- Reinforced equity and accessibility principles within governance practices
- Recognized need for accessibility guidance within Terms of Reference templates

7. Administrative Burden and Proportional Reporting

What We Heard

- Participants expressed concern that cumulative reporting requirements (Terms of Reference, Two-Year Work Plan, Annual Report, Membership Report, End-of-Term Review) may create disproportionate administrative burden for volunteer committees
- Some committees noted evaluation criteria appeared to measure compliance and activity rather than advisory impact or influence on Council deliberations

How the Feedback Informed the Framework

- Streamlined reporting into two-year work plans with annual progress updates
- Clarified that reporting cycles build on existing practices rather than adding new layers
- Recognized qualitative advisory contributions within evaluation language

8. Membership Structure, Term Limits and Recruitment

What We Heard

- Questions were raised regarding:
 - 8-year term limits and phased implementation
 - 15-member cap implementation
 - Use of alternates versus full recruitment processes

○ Alignment between staggered appointments and two-year work plans ○ Formal leave-of-absence provisions for caregiving or medical circumstances ● Participants emphasized the need to protect institutional knowledge and volunteer sustainability during transitions
How the Feedback Informed the Framework
● Reduced appointment terms from four years to two years to increase flexibility ● Clarified attendance expectations ● Identified need for phased implementation and recruitment guidance following Council approval

Perspectives Heard Throughout Engagement

Engagement reflected a range of governance perspectives that informed refinement of the Governance Framework:

- **Council Committees** emphasized continuity, advisory independence, institutional knowledge, and sustainability of volunteer participation.
- **Administration** emphasized governance clarity, role definition, consistency, and alignment with Council priorities.
- **Council** perspectives highlighted the need for clearer mandates, reduced duplication, periodic evaluation of committee value, and structured lifecycle governance.

The Governance Framework integrates these perspectives into a balanced governance model.

Feedback Not Incorporated

Some feedback was not incorporated where it conflicted with Council's governance authority, legislative authority under the Municipal Government Act, or broader governance principles. Examples include:

- Requests to eliminate evaluation processes

Attachment 6

- Requests to remove Council authority to restructure or sunset committees
- Requests to expand committees' advocacy authority beyond advisory scope
- Feedback related to funding or staffing models outside the scope of governance

Conclusion

The Governance Framework reflects extensive engagement and incorporates key themes heard across governance and mandate review processes. It strengthens governance clarity while maintaining flexibility, continuity, and sustainability for Council Committees operating within Council's governance structure.