

# Corporate Policy and Procedure



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Policy	<b>Terms of Reference for the Accessibility Advisory Committee of Council</b>
Category	Corporate
Authority	City Clerk’s Office
Related Policies	Advisory Committees of Council - Meeting Procedures Advisory Committees of Council - Public Appointment Policy A Governance Framework for Advisory Committees of Council (Full Version)
Approved By	City Council
Effective Date	March 25, 2025
Revision Date	Click or tap to enter a date.

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## Mandate and Purpose

The Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) contributes strategic input and advice to City Council and City staff on matters outlined in the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act](#) (AODA). The Act includes the [Integrated Accessibility Standards](#) and awareness of the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#). In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, the AAC shall advise and assist the City on the requirements within the AODA and related legislation. The AAC can advise on promoting and facilitating an inclusive and equitable community that is universally accessible. This aim shall be achieved through the review of municipal policies, programs and services and the identification, removal and prevention of barriers faced by persons with disabilities.

Advisory Committees of Council (ACOCs), while not the City’s only form of community engagement, are one mechanism for residents to offer advice to City Council. Within its advisory mandate, the ACOC cannot direct City Council or City staff. However, the City of Guelph is committed to taking each ACOC's advice seriously and adhering to the mandate and legislative requirements for operating the ACOC.

The AAC performs various functions specified in the AODA, including:

- advise Council about the requirements and implementation of accessibility standards and the preparation of accessibility reports and such other matters for which the Council may seek its advice within this section;
- review in a timely manner the site plans and drawing described in section 41 of the Planning Act that the committee selects; and
- perform all other functions that are specified in the regulations.
- be prepared to advise Council on their duty to:
  - seek advice from the committee on the accessibility for persons with disabilities to a building, structure or premises, or part of a building, structure or premises;
  - that the council purchases, constructs or significantly renovates;
  - for which the council enters into new lease; or
  - that a person provides as municipal capital facilities under an agreement entered into with the council in accordance with Section 110 of the Municipal Act, 2001.

Further, the AAC plays a crucial role in advising on, and promoting, accessibility within the municipality. Through partnerships with staff, the AAC effectively carries out its mandate, helping the City build a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable community for everyone.

## **Strategic Plan Alignment**

### **Foundations - 5. Provide excellent service**

5.3 - Remove barriers by integrating Guelph's Equity Lens into everything we do

The AACs advice has the potential to impact all departments within the City, ensuring that every aspect of Guelph's work is inclusive and equitable.

## **Membership and Composition**

The AAC shall consist of 11 members appointed by Guelph City Council as per the Public Appointment Policy.

The majority of the members (minimum of six) shall be persons with disabilities (Please refer to the definition of [disabilities in the Ontario Human Rights Code](#)).

The remaining positions (maximum of five) may be filled by individuals who do not have a disability. These members may include:

- parents representing children with disabilities;
- members from organizations involving persons with disabilities;
- members interested in issues related to persons with disabilities and accessibility issues and policies.

The AAC's composition should also reflect demographic diversity, including ethnicity, gender, disability, etc., to ensure that the committee's advice to City Council reflects Guelph's diverse community, with a focus on engaging those who are underrepresented in local policy making.

## **Quorum**

50 per cent + 1 of the currently appointed members, to a minimum of three members; additionally, of the members present, 50 percent shall have a disability.

## **Meeting Schedule and Format**

The City Council will benefit from ideas and advice generated through a deliberative process among ACOC members. Participating in committee meetings allows members to learn about the policy topics important to the ACOC's mandate, while also learning from one another.

- The AAC will meet monthly, as required, on the third Tuesday of each month at 3:00 p.m., excluding August.
- The date and time for meetings will be reviewed by ACOC members and City staff at the beginning of the term and any changes to the date and time noted above shall be agreed upon by the ACOC and City staff.
- All meetings will be conducted in a hybrid format, where possible.
- The length of meetings will typically not exceed two hours.
- AAC meetings shall not conflict with meetings of City Council or its committees, where possible.

## **Staff Liaison(s)**

There are two AAC staff liaisons.

## **Manager, Equity and Community Investment**

- supports the Accessibility Services team in their responsibilities;
- provides oversight to subsidy programs, community investment programs, and other equity related work of the City.

## **Supervisor, Accessibility Services**

- responsible for ensuring compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) within the municipality;
- responsible for overseeing the implementation of AODA requirements across all departments at the City, reporting compliance to both the organization and the province, and providing guidance on human rights topics related to accessibility;

- serves as the primary liaison all levels of government with regard to accessibility.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

Everyone who participates in an ACOC is committed to fulfilling their roles and responsibilities, collectively contributing to the City's public engagement objectives. They share a mutual commitment to advancing the ACOC's deliberative process by engaging in thoughtful, respectful dialogue and carefully considering diverse perspectives to comprehensively address the ACOC's mandate.

## **Members**

ACOC members are resident volunteers who advise City Council and City staff. They engage in thoughtful deliberations, exchanging substantive insights and perspectives across key areas of municipal governance. They draw on all aspects of their lived and professional expertise when providing advice about the topics being discussed by the Committee. These volunteers contribute meaningful policy recommendations through rigorous dialogue, while maintaining a commitment to open-minded and respectful discourse that values diverse viewpoints.

General:

- Be well-prepared to attend and participate in meetings.
- Attend mandatory training.
- Understand the role and expectations of members and relevant City policies.
- Help to evaluate the successes and challenges of the committee, including by contributing to the development of the committee's self-assessment tool as required by the [ACOC Governance Framework](#) and by providing feedback about your experiences.

During meetings:

- Contribute skills, knowledge, and experience with respect to the ACOC mandate and objectives.
- Be curious and flexible in discussions, valuing and encouraging diverse viewpoints.
- Bring forward expertise that align with ACOC's mandate.
- Follow the agenda with focus on the topic at hand.
- Understand and respect the roles and expectations of all participants.
- Actively participate and contribute to the work of the ACOC.
- Participate as an active voting member, asking questions and seeking clarification through the chair.
- Propose agenda items for consideration to the chair and the staff liaison.

- If necessary, ask questions and/or request more information from City staff for discussion and/or better decision making.
- Ask and receive questions for the agenda items.

## **Chairs and Vice-Chairs**

Chairs and vice-chairs are ACOC members who have been selected by the ACOC. The chair and vice-chair will take on additional tasks to facilitate ACOC work and meetings and ensure that all members have an equal chance to participate and engage.

General:

- Collaborate with staff liaisons on the preparation of agendas for meetings, ensure the agenda will allow ACOC members to learn about the topics and have meaningful deliberative discussions.
- Collaborate with staff liaisons to re-prioritize and re-arrange agenda items if meeting volume limits deliberative discussions.
- Ensure inclusive discussion and a welcoming environment.
- Invite members to propose agenda items.
- Approve agendas before public posting and distribution.
- Actively understand the roles and responsibilities of City Council and City staff related to ACOC policy topics.

During meetings:

- Lead the ACOC through agenda items, maintain order, call votes, and make procedural rulings as needed.
- Engage with ACOC members, facilitate deliberative discussions, and resolve conflicts to ensure sufficient opportunities to engage members in deliberative discussions.
- Understand and allow for member accommodation as outlined by the Liaison.
- Manage meeting time including by encouraging members to express themselves succinctly on issues.
- Ensure members can share their lived and professional expertise on agenda items.
- Ensure all members have opportunities to express their views and comments on agenda items.
- Ensure members can engage without feeling pressured or coerced.

At City Council meetings:

- The chair shall act as a representative of the ACOC to present at meetings of City Council to share ACOC advice and/or resolutions as desired.

## **Staff Liaison**

The staff liaison(s) are City staff with strategic responsibilities who contribute to policy making at the City of Guelph. They play a critical role in collaborating with the City Clerk's Office to support and coordinate the activities of the ACOC, such as by helping to set agendas, liaising with other City staff who wish to present to the ACOC, etc. Staff liaisons also provide direct support to the chair and vice-chair of the ACOC by offering guidance on managing difficult situations and offering support to help advance the work of the ACOC. Staff liaisons should identify opportunities for the ACOC to contribute to strategic policy and planning discussions.

### Strategic roles:

- Advise on high-level decision-making and bring deep knowledge regarding the strategic goals and priorities of the City.
- Communicate and collaborate with members and other City staff to ensure ACOC contributions are sought early in policy and planning discussions.
- Facilitate communications between City staff, chairs, vice-chairs, and members and maximize the value of the ACOC to inform the strategic goals and priorities of the City.
- Identify opportunities for the ACOC to contribute to strategic policy and planning discussions.
- Invite and support ACOC member(s) to request accommodations to participate in committee meetings.
- Engage the ACOC in identifying the goals and purposes of the ACOC, to inform the development of the self-evaluation tool.
- Provide opportunities for members to learn technical terms, knowledge and skills related to the ACOC's mandate.
- Identify other learning opportunities for the members to improve the effectiveness of the ACOC.
- Practice facilitation, conflict management, consensus-building and related skills, as well as awareness of how inequities can be perpetuated even through deliberative approaches.
- Understand and value the benefits of the diverse opinions provided by ACOC members for advancing the City's strategic priorities and high-level policy directions.

### Administrative roles:

- Clearly communicate with the ACOC.
- Facilitate the future development of, and revisions to, the ACOC's terms of reference.

- Prepare agendas and consult and obtain approval from the chair prior to finalizing the agenda in accordance with the terms of reference and other relevant policies.
- Coordinate the attendance of City staff, delegates, and other invited guests at meetings.
- Ensure other City Staff are briefed so that they clearly understand that their role is to stimulate and support discussions among the participants, not to lead or direct them.
- Provide ACOC mandate and subject area orientation to new committee members with support from the City Clerk's Office.
- Fulfill reporting and communication functions between the ACOC and City Council (for details see [Communication with Council](#)).
- Respond to member requests for information and data.
- Advise the City Clerk's Office of vacancies resulting from leaves or resignations.

During meetings:

- Attend meetings to provide professional and technical inputs for the ACOC.
- When required, respond to inquiries, and provide information on policies, plans, initiatives, technical terms, and knowledge pertaining to the ACOC's mandate?
- Provide professional inputs to the City Clerk's Office when necessary, e.g., drafting resolutions.

## **City Clerk's Office**

The primary responsibilities of the City Clerk's Office include providing administrative and procedural (legislative) support to the ACOC, leading recruitment efforts, engaging with members to foster strong working relationships, and planning and arranging training for members and City staff.

General:

- Ensure that members are well-informed regarding meeting procedures and rules for participation.
- Coordinate meetings, including communicating and finalizing dates, times, and locations to all relevant parties.
- With the assistance of the staff liaison, provide secretariat and technical support including the preparation, publication and distribution of meeting agendas and minutes in accordance with the terms of reference, other relevant policies, legislation, and by-laws.
- Ensure there are sufficient human resources to support the ACOC.
- Facilitate and support the recruitment and appointment of ACOC members.

- Facilitate chair and committee members' presentations at City Council meetings.
- Develop training materials, and organize and coordinate orientation and standardized training sessions for ACOC members and staff liaisons, including the Procedure By-law, Code of Conduct for Council and Local Boards and other relevant legislation/policies.
- Ensure all committee members have attended mandatory training provided by the City Clerk's Office
- Understand and value the benefits of the diverse opinions provided by ACOC members for advancing the City's strategic priorities and high-level policy directions.

During meetings:

- Attend meetings to provide procedural and legislative advice as well as administrative support.
- Check and report quorum to the chair prior to the start of meetings.

## **Communication with Council**

Clarity and transparency regarding the sharing of information between ACOCs and City Council, including how recommendations from ACOCs are incorporated into staff reports, is important to realize the full potential of ACOCs. The ACOC should adopt the following communication procedures, which have been approved by the City Council as an important part of the [Governance Framework](#):

- Staff reports must clearly articulate the recommendations of the ACOC as well as whether and why these recommendations are being advised by City staff or not.
- Staff reports must also include other factors that influenced/informed City staff recommendations such that ACOC members can clearly see what other priority/factors were considered.
- Staff reports that contain advice/recommendations from a particular ACOC must be sent to that ACOC at the same time as they are provided to City Council and the public.
- When staff reports are provided to ACOC members, the accompanying message must explain to members when the report will be discussed at City Council, and how committee members can participate in the meeting (to affirm their support or convey dissent), including that committee chairs are invited to present at Council and are not limited by the regular 5 minute limit placed on delegates.