

Corporate Policy and Procedure



Policy	Terms of Reference for the Planning, Environment and Water Advisory Committee of Council
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.

Mandate and Purpose

The Planning, Environment and Water Advisory Committee contributes strategic input and advice on a variety of environmental issues while also fulfilling the statutory requirements of the Planning Advisory Committee (Section 8 of the Planning Act).

Advisory Committees of Council (ACOC), 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 Planning, Environment and Water Advisory Committee brings diverse public expertise and knowledge with respect to the growth management and environmental issues in City of Guelph. Their mandate includes:

- land use planning;
- protecting Natural Heritage System (NHS) features and areas in a manner consistent with the City of Guelph Official Plan that maintains, restores, and

improves the biodiversity, connectivity and ecological functions of the City's NHS;

- sustainable communities and circular economy development;
- reducing greenhouse gas emissions throughout the community;
- adapting the community to climate change impacts; and
- ensuring the ongoing protection of local water resources.

The mandate of Planning, Environment and Water Advisory Committee is to provide City Council with advice, input, and perspectives on high-level and strategic planning policy initiatives, plans and studies, including, but not limited to:

- Provincial Plan and Policy Conformity;
- Official Plan Reviews/Updates;
- Land Use Planning Studies including Secondary Plans and Block Plans;
- Official Plan Amendments and Zoning By-law Amendments with City-wide Impacts;
- The Natural Heritage Action Plan;
- The Urban Forest Management Plan;
- Sub-watershed Studies;
- Water and Wastewater Master Planning, including Water Efficiency and Demand Management Strategies and Programming;
- Solid Waste Resources Master Planning, Strategies and Programming;
- Public engagement for bylaw development/updates and public education campaigns;
- Guelph's Race To Zero Carbon Emissions goal; and
- Other City-led initiatives that could impact growth management and environmental issues.

Strategic Plan Alignment

City Building – 6. Improve housing supply

6.1 - Meet our housing pledge;

Environment – 9. Be a leader in climate action

9.1 - Establish a resilient and sustainable city by investing in climate change actions;

9.2 - Reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions;

9.3 - Mitigate the impacts of climate change by increasing tree canopy coverage;

9.4 - Protect Guelph's water supply by advancing the Stormwater Management Master Plan; and

9.5 - Reduce Guelph's carbon footprint by investing in zero emissions vehicles for our fleet

Environment – 10. Empower the community to help create a sustainable city

10.1 - Encourage community participation in Race to Zero; and

10.3 - Conserve and protect Guelph's drinking water.

People and Economy – 11. Grow Guelph's Economy

11.2 - Grow the circular economy by creating and implementing the circular economy framework

All ACOCs also align with the Foundations pillar of the Future Guelph Strategic Plan:

Foundations - 5. Provide excellent service

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

Membership and Composition

The Planning, Environment and Water Advisory Committee shall consist of 11 members appointed by Guelph City Council as per the Public Appointment Policy.

Committee members will bring a mix of lived and professional expertise, knowledge and interest related to:

- urban planning including provincial policy and legislation, land use concepts and processes and community planning;
- architecture or landscape architecture;
- development industry such infrastructure, industrial development, sustainable development, etc.;
- ecological and natural heritage;
- environmental sciences;
- energy conservation and greenhouse gas emissions reduction;
- adapting to climate change impacts;
- municipal water and wastewater systems, water demand management practices and/or associated programming.

The Planning, Environment and Water Advisory Committee'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.

Many of the various initiatives and projects brought to the Planning, Environment and Water Advisory Committee will include other opportunities for public engagement including engagement events, surveys, online content, etc., which are organized by other departments and teams from the City of Guelph. These channels

will continue to serve as significant sources of feedback for City staff and City Council from residents with professional and/or lived expertise on Planning, Environment and Water Advisory Committee-related topics.

Quorum

50 per cent + 1 of the current appointed members, to a minimum of three.

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 Planning, Environment and Water Advisory Committee will meet monthly, as required, on the second Wednesday of each month at 6:00 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.
- Planning, Environment and Water Advisory Committee meetings shall not conflict with meetings of City Council or its committees, where possible.

Staff Liaison(s)

There are four Planning, Environment and Water Advisory Committee staff liaisons.

Policy Planner

- acts as the Planning Department representative to the Committee;
- provides planning recommendations to the department head, Council, and the public on strategic land use and Natural Heritage System planning initiatives and development projects including secondary plans, block plans, policy and land use studies, and zoning reform.

Water Services Division Manager

- acts as the Water Services representative to the Committee;
- develops water-related bylaws and planning policies to support utility operation, source water protection and water infrastructure management and explores new sources of water supply for the City.

Solid Waste Resources Division Manager

- acts as the Solid Waste Resources representative to the Committee;

- develops waste-related bylaws, planning and policies to support operations, community sustainability including waste reduction and diversion, and waste infrastructure management.

Energy and Climate Change Manager

- acts as the Energy and Climate Change representative to the Committee;
- develops policy and initiatives to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions from municipal operations, informed by evidence, data and community engagement.

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

Chair and Vice-Chair

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
- 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(s)

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
- 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 bylaws
- 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 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.