

REPORT

Office of the Chief Administrative Officer

To: Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council
Date: August 28, 2023

From: Lisa Spitale,
Chief Administrative Officer
File:

Item #: 2023-539

Subject: Community Advisory Assembly Draft Terms of Reference and Next Steps

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council endorse the draft Terms of Reference for the Community Advisory Assembly, and refer the draft to the Assembly for discussion, feedback and revisions once the group is established; and

THAT Council endorse the next steps as outlined in this report.

PURPOSE

This report and attachment provide the draft Terms of Reference for the new Community Advisory Assembly group that the City is currently working to establish, as well as next steps and associated timelines to establish the Assembly.

BACKGROUND

Initiated as part of Council's strategic planning process, Council asked staff to explore potential changes to the structure of the City's advisory committees. Staff have researched other potential approaches to advisory committees, and several options, along with pros and cons, have been considered and discussed with Council. Current advisory committee members were also consulted and their feedback has been shared with Council. Previous reports on this topic were brought to Council on May 8, June 12 and June 26, 2023.

At a Council workshop on June 26, 2023, Council directed staff to proceed with next steps to establish a new Community Advisory Assembly as a pilot project. Rather than the City's previous practice of multiple advisory committees each focused on one of Council's strategic priorities, this new model includes one larger group of residents established to provide advice to Council and the City on a variety of projects, plans and topics. Importantly, the City's goal is for membership of this group to be a representative cross-section of residents, reflecting the diversity of the overall New Westminster community.

The Community Advisory Assembly will replace advisory committees that were focused on Council's previous strategic plan, with the exception of the Economic Development Advisory Committee. On June 26, Council directed staff to continue this group with the addition of arts and culture to its focus areas, under a new name of the Arts, Culture and Economic Development Advisory Committee. Council also directed that the City's three grant committees will continue. City advisory committees and commissions that are required by legislation, were established by Council bylaw, or exist to further external relationships will also remain unchanged.

DISCUSSION

Staff have been working to advance the next steps outlined in the June 26, 2023 Council report. Current committee members have been informed of the new Advisory Assembly model, and what next steps are expected.

Draft Terms of Reference have been developed by staff for the Community Advisory Assembly and are included as Attachment 1 to this report. The draft document specifies that the Assembly group will be established as a pilot project, and that the Assembly members will be asked to help shape the Terms of Reference once the group is established. Therefore, the Terms of Reference will remain in draft form until they have been updated based on input from the Assembly. An updated Terms of Reference will come to Council for review and consideration of approval following this review process (anticipated in early 2024).

The Terms of Reference were developed based on public engagement best practices and with the support of a consultant who is an expert in equitable engagement practices and deliberative democracy processes such as citizens' assemblies. The consultant, Elodie Jacquet, is providing research support and advice to the City on a range of aspects for the Community Advisory Assembly. The consultant's fees will be paid out of the approved 2023 budget for the Public Engagement Division.

Additional next steps required to establish the Assembly include preparing for recruitment, establishing a Steering Committee to help guide the group's workplan and process, securing a dedicated facilitator to lead the group, developing a detailed evaluation plan, and other activities. Additional details are included in the Next Steps section.

Staff intend to launch recruitment for the Assembly in late September / early October and recruitment is expected to run for approximately 6-8 weeks, followed by member selection and confirmation. Staff are working towards holding a dinner event with Assembly members and City Council in early December. This event would serve as the launch of the Assembly process, with a focus on relationship and trust building among the Assembly members and between the Assembly and Council.

Staff anticipate that additional time for recruitment could be required in order to conduct additional targeted outreach to some under-represented demographic groups. If additional time for recruitment is needed, the dinner launch event would be scheduled for early January.

NEXT STEPS

Planned next steps and associated estimated timelines are outlined below. Many of the steps will take place concurrently. Again, timelines may be adjusted if additional recruitment efforts are needed to achieve a representative cross-section of the community for the Assembly membership.

Develop Assembly Recruitment Plan and Materials – August-September 2023 (underway)

- Develop website content, advertising / promotions content, and communications plan for recruitment
- Develop Assembly meeting schedule for first six months to include in recruitment materials
- Develop application form
- Launch recruitment in late September / early October, including targeted outreach

Develop Evaluation Plan for Assembly Pilot – August-September 2023 (underway)

- Determine details for evaluation of the Assembly pilot project, including evaluation process and questions (evaluation will include Assembly members, Council and staff)

Establish Steering Committee – September-October 2023

- Identify and invite steering committee members (will include representatives from City Council, City staff, resident(s) who are current or former members of City advisory committees, and one expert on deliberative processes)
- Steering committee onboarding and discuss potential topics to bring to Assembly (in consultation with the lead staff of each of Council's strategic priority areas)
- Steering committee review of evaluation plan

Conduct RFP Process to Retain Assembly Facilitator – September-October 2023

- Develop budget estimate for facilitator fees and other anticipated Assembly costs

- Retain contract facilitator for 12-18 month term to lead the group for the full pilot process

Member Selection, Confirmation and Coordination – November 2023

- Random / blind selection process based on applicant demographic information provided through application details
- Contact selected members to confirm their participation and provide a welcome package
- Coordinate launch dinner

Launch Dinner with Council – early December 2023 (tentative)

- Goal to build relationships and trust among Assembly members and between members and Council

Assembly Term Begins and First Official Meeting – January 2024 (tentative)

- Onboarding meeting to focus on Terms of Reference review, and co-creation of meeting guidelines to ensure respectful and productive discussions

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial implications related to the draft Terms of Reference and next steps as outlined include hiring a contract facilitator for a 12-18 month term, child care and/or elder care stipends for Assembly members who require this support, compensation for Assembly members who face financial barriers to participation, reimbursement of any direct expenses incurred by Assembly members to attend meetings (i.e. transit fare, parking, etc.), and event costs for Assembly meetings such as catering.

Staff will include a budget request for the Assembly as part of the 2024 budget process.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL LIAISON

Staff from across the organization have been involved in the process to develop the new committee model. Staff from the Office of the CAO and Human Resources have reviewed the Draft Terms of Reference for the new Community Advisory Assembly.

OPTIONS

The following are options for Council's consideration:

1. That Council endorse the draft Terms of Reference for the Community Advisory Assembly, and refer the draft to the Assembly for discussion, feedback and revisions once the group is established; and

2. That Council endorse the next steps as outlined in this report.
3. Provide alternate direction to staff.

Options #1 and #2 are recommended.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - Community Advisory Assembly Draft Terms of Reference, August 2023

APPROVALS

This report was prepared by:
Jennifer Miller, Manager of Public Engagement

This report was reviewed by:
Peter DeJong, Corporate Officer

This report was approved by:
Lisa Spitale, Chief Administrative Officer