

Mid-Term Governance Review White Papers Summary #2

Proposals regarding the Budget Process

White Paper #3 states: "There is general agreement that the current budget process does not work. Councillors have indicated a desire to be more directly involved in the development of a draft budget."

For the 2009 budget, Council established a Budget Challenge Working Group process. Membership in these Working Groups usually included three Members of Council and three Senior staff along with Finance staff. The mandate of the Groups was to ensure that staff budget estimates provided relevant and reliable data required by Councillors to make decisions. The Working Groups also ensured that budget numbers had been sufficiently analyzed, challenged and vetted. There was no opportunity for the public to comment on the draft budget as considered by the Budget Challenge Working Group.

Options for Change:

One proposal is to establish a specific Budget Committee of Council. If a Finance and Audit/Oversight Standing Committee is established, a Budget Committee could be a Sub-Committee of this group. If there is no Finance and Audit/Oversight Sub-Committee, it could be a stand-alone special Legislative Committee set up specifically for the budget process.

White Paper #3 also notes: "While considering the 2009 Budget Process, Council endorsed the notion that Standing Committees would have a greater role in reviewing service changes in advance of the budget process. The process would see proposals for significant service changes, program additions or reductions, considered and endorsed by the appropriate Standing Committee, with opportunity for public input, and later subject to confirmation during the budget process."

Questions/Issues:

How would we best ensure meaningful public input in a process that includes a special Budget Committee? How would the Advisory Committees fit into this process?

How might the placement of a Budget Committee under a Finance and Audit/Oversight Committee effect the manner in which it works?