



TOWN OF OKOTOKS

SUMMARY OF COUNCIL & COMMITTEE CHAIR INTERVIEWS

OVERVIEW OF WHAT WE HEARD

- Some committees are working well while others lack direction and influence.
- Generally, committees could use more clarity about their roles, function, and mandates and regular assessments would help with this.
- Some committees feel supported by Council while others do not. Committees generally feel supported by staff.
- Some Council members feel staff influence committees too much while others feel that too much burden is placed on staff and Council needs to provide more leadership and guidance.

OVERVIEW OF COMMITTEE CHAIR INTERVIEWS

- Mixed opinions, some committees feel they are serving their purpose and their input is valuable while others do not at all
- Few committees regularly review their functions/mandate; those who don't feel this would be helpful to keep them focused and retain members
- Mixed opinions on support and guidance from Council, some feel very supported while others do not at all
- Staff support generally seems to be good

OVERVIEW OF COUNCIL INTERVIEWS

- Mixed opinions, some committees serving their purpose while others just receive information and don't have a chance for real input or influence
- Mixed opinions about whether committees help Council to better understand issues; when they work well it is helpful but sometimes input isn't detailed enough, is too driven by staff direction, or just approved and not used in depth.
- Mixed opinions about whether committees provide value; generally worthwhile but they need to be assessed regularly and given clear direction and focus as well as more freedom to discuss and engage with the community

- Mixed opinions on whether Council effectively guides committees; some feel that Council reps are very useful while others think too much is pushed to staff and Council needs to provide more leadership as well as more clarity and guidance.
- Members need better orientation to clearly understand their role and that final decisions are the responsibility of Council.
- It is good we are doing this process to make committees function better. We need to respect and appreciate them and it's up to us to make sure they work well.

SUMMARY OF COMMITTEE CHAIR INTERVIEW INPUT

1. Generally speaking, and from your experience, do you think that the committee you chair is serving its intended purpose?

- Yes, important for members of the public to provide input and make sure the community's needs are being met (2 comments)
- The public has no commitments and bring a fresh perspective while elected officials tend to stick to their election platforms
- Generally yes, Council and staff supportive and open
- Yes and no, working towards this but need to have more good discussions and push things through to Council
- Some apathy due to bad experience in the past – put a lot of work into a plan which wasn't considered or even mentioned in the annual strategy (lost a lot of members because of it although things are better now)
- No, feel the scope of discussion is too limited to feel like they have any influence (things are only brought to the committee once they've been to Council or a decision has already been made)

2. Do you feel that the work of the committee, and the information and input to council that it generates, assists Council to better understand key issues?

- Yes, feel that public input (and the variety of people on committees) provides a broader perspective for Council decisions (2 comments)
- Generally working well, no issues
- Having past councillors or Chamber of Commerce reps on committees helps to influence current Council and get ideas to the table
- Committees have much less power here than in other countries
- No, new committees/members need more training and discussion of what to focus on to be useful
- No, feel a very limited role and lack of influence (although culture is changing for the better with new CAO) – people want to feel like they are making a difference but feel like their hands are tied and can't get into meaningful discussions

3. Is your committee providing a worthwhile purpose and adding clarity to decision-making?

- Yes, most of the time feel like they have influence and provide good information (3 comments)
- Sometimes but need more discussion and collaboration across committees

4. Is the value and functionality of your committee regularly discussed/assessed?

- Yes, revisit functions, rules, and roles annually when new members join
- Discussions in progress and planning to meet with members to gain clarity /renew mandate and tighten up function and focus

- Not really but something is in the works
- Discussed on the side amongst committee members but not officially
- No but would be worth doing, should be a normal process
- No but feel it would help to keep things running smoothly and make people feel valued which would help with member retention

5. Does Council effectively guide committee responsibilities and processes in a meaningful way?

- Yes, working well and feel Council liaison really cares
- Yes, works pretty well and feels like committees have flexibility to bring their own ideas and topics too
- Okay but some concern about processes and decisions that don't involve committees (ie., closed-door meetings where they set priorities)
- No, feels too reactive, committee input taken as an afterthought and not meaningfully considered
- Council reps get moved often which reduces effectiveness
- No active guidance or direction from Council (only a written bylaw that defines what the committee does)

6. Does staff do this well?

- Yes, staff provide great support and are unbiased, helpful and prompt (4 comments)
- Need to be more proactive to get committees involved before Council decisions
- No active guidance or direction

COUNCIL INTERVIEWS

1. Do the committees serve their intended purpose?

- Generally yes, but depends on the committee (2 comments)
- Yes, think so, Council takes their advice and uses it or doesn't, committee members need to understand decisions rest with Council
- Definitely depends on the committee, some just receive info and there is frustration where there's no chance for real input or influence
- No, too driven by administration, often just information downloaded to them without much opportunity for discussion or contribution. Would function better with real projects and opportunities to provide meaningful input.
- No, not getting any feedback from them, committees aren't driving anything and Council provides no focus. There is no link between committee work and the strategic priorities and directions of Council.

2. Is the input focused on assisting Council to better understand key issues? Is Council confident that its decisions reflect the best available information?

- Yes, when committees work well (2 comments)
- Was really helpful when all committee chairs met with Council to discuss key priorities, let's do that again
- Yes, but occasionally there isn't time to involve committees and we have to make decisions anyways
- Mostly yes but committee input is generally just approved and not used in depth; however, if Council was to change their recommendations this would be a problem
- We get good info but too narrowly reflects staff direction
- This is the intent but not the reality, Council gets a report saying something's gone through committee but no detail - would like to hear more about what committees feel and to know that they've had a chance to talk it through to know it is a well-informed decision of the committee

3. Does the governance model support or hinder Council's decision-making?

- It's good we are taking a fresh look, if we don't know how it works elsewhere we don't know if we're getting the best results
- Neutral

4. Does committee input support or hinder Council's decision-making?

- Definitely (3 comments)
- Generally supportive, never hinder decisions
- Neutral
- Need clear communication with committee that final decisions rest with Council
- Not sure they do either as it is so filtered by administration

5. Are committees/task forces providing a worthwhile purpose and adding clarity to decisions? Is their value regularly assessed?

- Yes worthwhile, but we need to assess more than we are to use committees as efficiently as possible
- Generally, we get great ideas and enough input from committees and we do use some of it
- Yes they provide value
- No, not being assessed regularly and we need to be more responsive
- No
- We need committees to be more effective part of public participation, they need some direction but flexibility to decide how to gather info, let's loosen the rules and let committees do more engagement with the community

6. Does Council effectively guide committee responsibilities and processes in a meaningful way?

- Generally yes, having Council reps on committees helpful to both parties
- We give them enough responsibility but perhaps not enough clarity
- Committees should be reasonably independent and Council liaisons shouldn't be pushing things ahead
- Too much is pushed to staff, Council needs to provide more leadership and support to committees, more of a direct link
- We need to provide better orientation to members to be clear about their role and the overall mandate and direction of the Town
- Need to set defined and focused goals and deliverables for committees (2 comments)
- Sometimes confusion around different types of committees (ad hoc vs. standing) – sometimes people get upset when committees end if they feel there is more to be done

7. Final comments

- Would like to see committees function well to be a better conduit for public input to Council
- It's good we are reviewing, it's up to use to make committees change for the better
- We need to be positive, respectful and appreciative about committees, not berate members who are volunteering their time and effort