

Committee: Policy & Resources Committee	Date: 16 March 2017
Subject: Appointment of Sub-Committee Chairmen	Public
Report of: Town Clerk	For Decision
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Summary

This report concerns the process for appointing chairmen of sub-committees. There is no hard or fast rule and Members felt that the rather ad-hoc approach taken by the various Committees would benefit from greater consistency across the board. In light of this, the Policy & Resources Committee decided that when a Chairman of a Grand Committee does not wish to be the chairman of a sub-committee, a convention is adopted whereby the Chairman submits his or her nomination for chairman of the sub-committee to the Grand Committee for approval. Where no specific Member is nominated by the Chairman of the Grand Committee, the selection process would be by election from all eligible Members of the Grand Committee.

This proposal was promulgated to the various Committees and was met with a mixed response. It was also discussed at the all-Member informal meeting on 9 February, with differing views being expressed. The Policy Chairman agreed that the issue should be reconsidered. To assist Members, set out are several options for Members to consider, including retaining the status quo, implementing the convention proposed by this Committee for Grand Committee Chairmen to nominate the chairman of the sub-committees, election of chairmen of sub-committees by the Grand Committee and election of Sub Committee chairmen by the sub-committee itself.

At the informal meeting of all Members in February, it was suggested that the introduction of term limits for chairmen of sub-committees should also be considered and the views of Members are sought on that matter.

Recommendations

It is **recommended** as follows:

- a) that further consideration be given to the implementation of a new convention for the appointment of chairmen of sub-committees, namely, when a Chairman of a Grand Committee does not wish to be the chairman of a sub-committee a convention is adopted whereby the Chairman submits his or her nomination for chairman to the Grand Committee for approval. Where no specific Member is nominated by the Chairman of the Grand Committee, the selection process would be by election from all eligible Members of the Grand Committee;

- b) that consideration be given to the introduction of term limits for sub-committee chairmen.

Report

Background

1. This report concerns the recent review of the process for appointing chairmen of sub-committees.
2. The current arrangements for selecting the chairmen of sub-committees is for that to be determined by the relevant Grand Committee and quite often it can be the Chairman of the Grand Committee who takes on the responsibility, depending on circumstances. If not, it is usual practice for the sub-committee to decide, most often by election from amongst its membership. There is no hard or fast rule and Members felt that the rather ad-hoc approach taken by the various Committees would benefit from greater consistency across the board
3. In light of this, in December 2016 the Policy Committee proposed the introduction of a convention for the selection of sub-committee chairmen to ensure consistency across all Committees. The convention provides that, when a Chairman does not wish to be the chairman of a sub-committee and wishes a specific member to be appointed, the Chairman shall submit his or her nomination for chairman to the Grand Committee for approval. A resolution to that effect was circulated to all relevant Committees asking for the convention to be endorsed.
4. The Policy Committee based its decision on the following principles:
 - it should be accepted practice for the Chairman of a Grand Committee to chair any Sub-Committee appointed by it;
 - where the Chairman of a Grand Committee does not wish to chair a sub-committee, the Chairman should be able to nominate another Member of the Grand Committee with the necessary experience and qualities, for approval to fulfil that role; and
 - where no specific Member is nominated by the Chairman of the Grand Committee, the selection process would be by election from all eligible Members of the Grand Committee.
5. The Chairman of the Finance Committee was particularly supportive of the P&R recommendation. Under his Chairmanship of Finance, he has been able to propose and to gain support for some significant changes in the way sub-committees operate and who chairs them. These changes have enabled more Members to play a more valuable part in, and to contribute to, the Committee's overall work, whilst also recognising that sub-committees should be servants of the Grand Committee's policies and priorities. Any changes should not get in the way of these two objectives.

6. It was noted at the informal meeting that the Policy & Resources Committee would take another look at the position. In addition, several Members asked for consideration to also be given to whether terms limits should be introduced for Chairmen of sub-committees, as they are for Chairmen of Grand Committees.

Options for Chairmanship of sub-committees

7. There are several options open to Members to consider for how Chairmen should be selected for sub-committees, including the following:
 - i) Retain the status quo. Currently, a Grand Committee has the option of choosing who should take the chair of a sub-committee that it appoints. In a number of cases that is the Chairman of the Grand Committee but not always. Grand Committees can also decide to leave such matters to the sub-committee who usually select their Chairman through a process of election. This has been the position for a number of years.
 - ii) Adopt the convention agreed by the Policy & Resources Committee in December, as described in paragraphs 3 and 4 above. This provides for a process whereby the Chairman of a Grand Committee does not wish to chair a sub-committee and has instead identified another Member for that role with the necessary experience and qualities. In those circumstances, the Chairman would submit his or her nomination to the Grand Committee for approval. Where no specific Member is nominated by the Chairman of the Grand Committee, the selection process would be by election from all eligible Members of the Grand Committee who would nominate themselves.
 - iii) Grand Committees to appoint all sub-committee chairmen. In this case, when sub-committees are appointed (which they are annually), the Grand Committee would be asked to decide at that stage who should take the chair. This could be the Chairman of the Grand Committee or by inviting eligible Members of the Grand Committee to nominate themselves, followed by an election if there is more than one candidate.
 - iv) Sub-committees to appoint their own chairmen. In this case, the question of chairmanship would be left entirely to the sub-committee to decide, usually by election. Whilst this is an option, it should be noted that there are a number of sub-committees where Members may consider it appropriate, because of the nature of the business ie: it is sensitive or strategic, for the Chairman of the Grand Committee to be the chairman. In those circumstances, imposing such a rigid rule may not serve the City Corporation's best interests as it does not allow for any flexibility.
8. It should also be noted that the Chief Commoner automatically chairs several sub-committees including the Privileges Sub-Committee.

Term Limits

9. At the informal meeting of all Members reference was made to the possibility of introducing terms limits for chairmen of sub-committees. Currently there are no restrictions on the number of terms (or years) that a Member can serve as chairman of a sub-committee as there are for Grand Committees (there are, however, conventions affecting the chairmanship of the Property Investment Board, Financial Investment Board and Social Investment Board, all of which report directly to the Court of Common Council). Standing Orders provide for the Chairmanship of most Grand Committees to be no more than three years with three exceptions - the Policy & Resources and Finance Committees where the term is a maximum of five years and the Police Committee where the term is no more than four years.
10. Members' views are sought on whether term limits should be introduced for chairmen of sub-committees and, if so, what the term should be eg: three years. If Members decide to introduce a term limit, it would be prudent, where the Chairman of the Grand Committee chairs the sub-committee, for any limit to correspond with the term of chairmanship of the relevant Grand Committee.
11. Members should bear in mind that in a number of cases sub-committees are appointed to give more detailed consideration to certain topics and, over time, chairmen can develop an expertise and considerable knowledge of the area. This does, however, need to be balanced against the need for others to be given opportunities to serve and to bring fresh skills and experience to the work of the sub-committee. The loss, through the imposition of a term limit, of an experienced chairman does not necessarily mean that individual and their knowledge of a particular topic need be lost to the sub-committee.

Conclusion

12. The proposed convention agreed by the Policy & Resources Committee for appointing chairmen of sub-committees has been met with mixed views and at the recent informal meeting of all Members it was noted that the Committee would look again at the matter. This report asks Members to review the position and sets out some options that could be considered. It also asks Members for a view on whether a term limit should be introduced for chairmen of sub-committees and, if so, what that term should be.

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