



PRAJA'S
URBAN
GOVERNANCE
STUDY
KERALA CONSULTATION



• List of Attendees

Sr. No.	Name	Organization
1	Ajaya Ghosh	Ex-Superintending Engineer, Kochi Municipal Corporation
2	Aji Francis	Councillor, Kochi Municipal Corporation
3	Anil Kumar	Former Councillor, Kochi Municipal Corporation
4	C K Peter	Councillor, Kochi Municipal Corporation
5	D Dhanuraj	Chairman of board, Centre for Public Policy and Research
6	Dominic presentation	Ex MLA, Kochi Municipal Corporation
7	Gopakumar	Kumar Group, Kochi
8	Gopinath	Engineer, Kochi Municipal Corporation
9	Gracy Babu Jacob	Councillor, Kochi Municipal Corporation
10	Gracy Joseph	Chairman, Standing Committee for Development, Kochi Municipal Corporation
11	Guruprasad Kamble	Project Officer, Praja Foundation
12	K V P Krishna Kumar	Chairman, Standing Committee for Tax Appeal, Kochi Municipal Corporation
13	K.J. Sohan	Ex- Mayor, Kochi Municipal Corporation
14	Meghna Bandelwar	Project Officer, Praja Foundation



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Sr. No.	Name	Organization
15	Milind Mhaske	Director, Praja Foundation
16	Nirmala Padmanabhan	Associate Professor, St Teresa's College
17	Nissa	Project Officer, Kudumshree
18	Nitai Mehta	Founder Trustee, Praja Foundation
19	P M Harris	Councillor, Kochi Municipal Corporation
20	Pankti Dalal	Project Officer, Praja Foundation
21	Rajan Chedambathu	Director, Centre for Heritage, Environment and Development
22	Renuka	Cochin Smart City Mission Limited
23	Sahil Sasidharan	Technical Expert, GIZ, Kochi
24	Shiny Mathew	Chairman, standing committee for town planning, Kochi Municipal Corporation
25	Simon Mathew	Engineer, Kochi Municipal Corporation
26	Sunny George	Professor, Kerala Institute of Local Administration
27	Tarun Sharma	Co-founder, Nagrika



• Summary of discussions by Roundtable participants

Summary:

The Roundtable facilitated discussions in understanding the key problems facing cities in Kerala and possible solutions surrounding these issues. It was agreed that city governments need to be empowered for efficient service delivery. Funds, functions and functionaries should be also devolved to the city government and interference of the state government needs to be reduced. The participants also discussed the need for improvement in the decentralized governance model of Kerala. The themes covered in the discussion were Organizational Structure, Resources and Municipal Finance. Presented below are summary of the views of various urban governance stakeholders that were a part of the Kerala State level consultation.

1. Organisational Structure

Kerala is recognized as one of the decentralized urban governance systems in India along with active public participation forums. The session discussed the current status of decentralisation and public participation and the need for changes to enhance Urban Governance in Kerala.

1.1 Mayoral System

Kerala has a strong Mayoral System with tenure of 5 years or until the Mayor enjoys majority. The participants advocated for a directly elected mayor with some parameters to ensure accountability. The secretary (commissioner) reports to the Mayor. The council also has the power to remove the secretary.

1.2 Role of Councillor

The council members in Kerala are a part of at least one of the standing committee which ensures active participation of the councillors. It was agreed that the councillors require guidance and training in order to perform their duties efficiently. Thus, expertise is necessary in the council.



• Summary of discussions by Roundtable participants

1.3 Ward Committee

Ward sabha and Jankeyasutram used to work effectively when it was introduced. The attendance of people have reduced. The discussions in these platforms focus on only ward level issues. The issues that come forward are beyond the ambit of the corporation since all the functions are not devolved to the city government. Stakeholders also agreed upon the need to encourage youth participation in Urban Governance.

1.4 Development Plan

The Development Plan for Kochi is prepared by the State Authority. The development plan has not been completed and updated till date. The stakeholders discussed the need to transfer the Urban Planning function to Municipal Corporation and appoint experts for the same.

1.5 Multiple agencies

Multiple agencies continues to be a problem that inhibit efficient service delivery. The stakeholders discussed about overlapping institutions and difficulty in management and coordination. Possibility for a unified body with managerial role was discussed.

1.6 Urban Reforms

New Urban reforms such as Smart City adding to the complexity managing the service delivery was observed. The city government do not have any say in the Smart city project. Therefore, recommendations for the city government having 51% stake in the SPV were put forth. The possibility of corporation should have control and coordination role for the projects implemented by different agencies was discussed.



• Summary of discussions by Roundtable participants

2. Resources

2.1 Manpower

The power to employ and dismiss is with the State government in Kerala. The need to devolve this power to the City governments was agreed by the stakeholders. The city government lacks manpower in number and required skilled staff. The options of outsourcing for small projects and tasks was explored during the round table discussion. The procedure to employ staff was observed to be very lengthy and time consuming resulting in delay of appointment of staff. Suggestions to give Mayor the power to appoint within fixed parameters such as the rights are not violated were discussed. The possibility of having permanent people at key posts was explored so as to make the system strong and implement projects efficiently within the stipulated time frame. Participants expressed need to make corporation more powerful by appointing experts in the council.

3. Municipal Finance

3.1 Budget

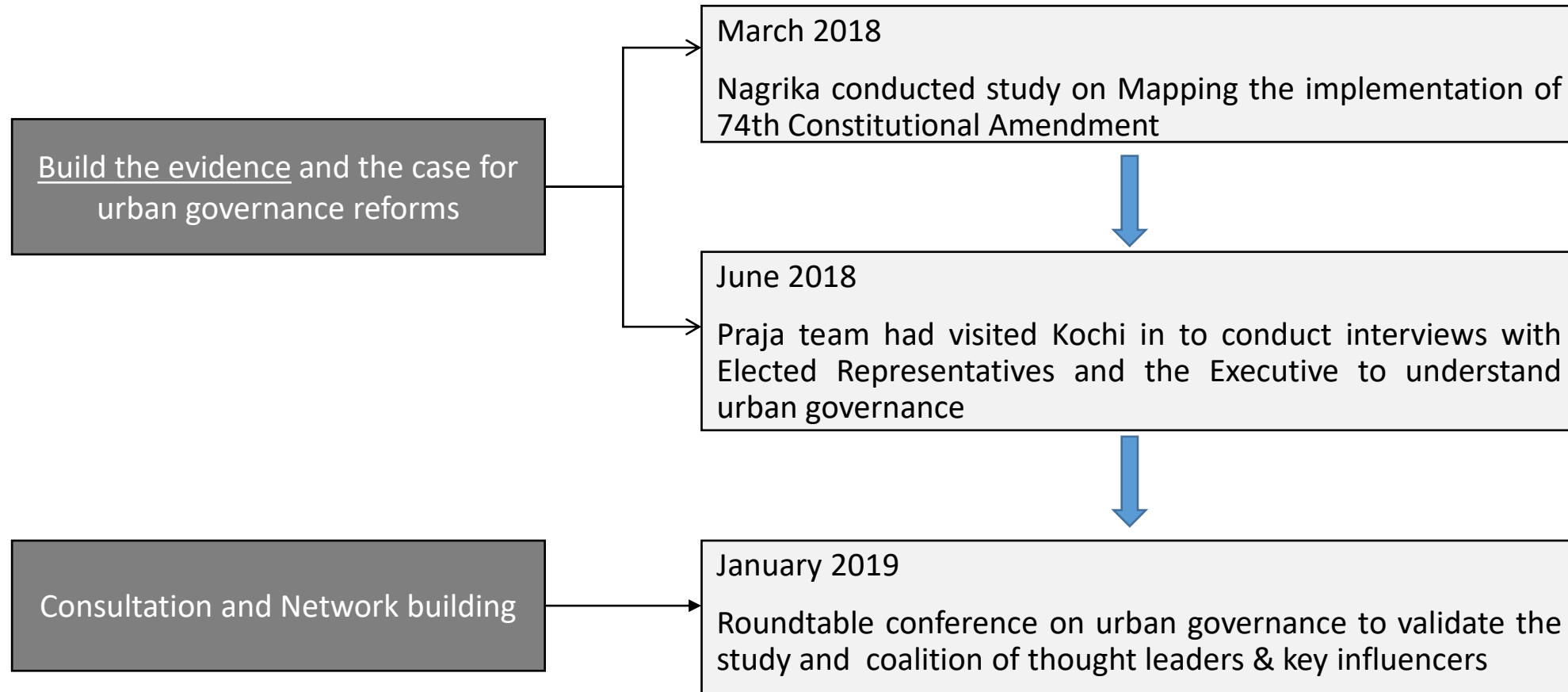
The stakeholders observed that the funds city government receives are not in the same area that it needs. Therefore, the city governments should be consulted before allotment of funds. Also, the funds allotted under the National Schemes do not consider the regional and geographical constraints and requirements. The sectoral division for allotment of funds in Jankeyasutram has not been changed since its inception and needs revision. The stakeholders also expressed need for city governments to have more control over the expenditure decisions.

3.2 Sources of revenue and Tax rates

The tax rates are decided by the State government and the revenue of city governments suffer which is not compensated. Suggestion of council being in authority to decide tax & service rates was given. The online revenue collection system exists in Kochi but the manpower is lacking to monitor and process it.



The timeline of the study



No.	Functions listed in 12 th Schedule	Kerala
1	Urban Planning including town planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Master Planning by Town and Country Planning
2	Regulation of land-use and construction of buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land use planning is with TCP department Approval of certain buildings is with the city government.
3	Planning for economic and social development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development Plans to be formed by city government and approved by DPCs In house agriculture, industries and fisheries officer
4	Roads and bridges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only municipal roads under city governments
5	Water supply- domestic, industrial and commercial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water supply is primarily carried out by the Kerala Water Authority. However, the Municipal Corporations provide water connections, public taps and build suitable tanks.
6	Public health, sanitation, conservancy and WM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of Primary healthcare centres. / Hospital equipment support to State Govt. Hospitals (Salaries from the State Govt.) / Disease Control SWM / STP / WTE
7	Fire services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fire Services are provided by the State while the city government is only involved
8	Urban forestry, protection of environment and ecology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beautification and greenery, including the maintenance of a reserve (Manglavana) in Kochi, conservation done under HarithaKerala. Other forested areas are with the State Forest Department.
9	Safeguarding the interests of weaker sections society including the handicapped and mentally retarded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rehabilitation of beggars, Working Women's Hostels, Old Age homes ST/ ST Welfare programmes run. Mainly provided by the Social Justice department in collaboration with Child Development Projects and the State SC Officer

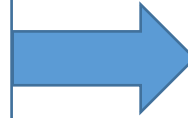
10	Slum improvement and upgradation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 17 Notified slums and 15,000 houses to be built. Housing under Central (RAY/PMAY) as well as State (LIFE) govt. schemes
11	Urban poverty alleviation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Combined with Housing under a Project Officer, also to provide food and medical provisions in time of disaster Livelihood centres, Ayengarathi Employment Project, NULM implementation Working Women's Hostels, SHGs, Kudumbashree projects
12	Provision of urban amenities and facilities- parks, gardens and playgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parks / Gardens maintenance carried out. Fresh up centres provided
13	Promotion of cultural, educational, and aesthetic aspects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools from class 1-12 are maintained by the Govt. Teachers are paid by the State Govt.
14	Burials and burial grounds, cremations, cremation grounds and electric crematoriums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electric and traditional sanatoriums provided.
15	Cattle pounds, prevention of cruelty to animals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not cattle focused. However, veterinarians present for ABC.
16	Vital statistics including registration of births and deaths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carried out by the Health department using the Online software Kevana.
17	Public amenities including street lighting, parking lots, bus stops and public conveniences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electricity provided by KSEB but street lights maintained by respective corporations. 9 Public toilets operated in Trivandrum.
18	Regulation of slaughter houses and tanneries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulated by the Health Section. Provision in the case of Kochi.

City control		Multiple agencies		State Control	
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KEY TAKEAWAYS

1.1 Mayoral System

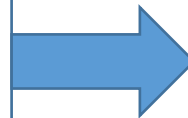
- Tenure of mayor is 5 years.
- Indirectly elected
- Mayor is head of the corporation
- The commissioner in Kochi is known as Secretary and accountable to council headed by Mayor.
- Earlier the mayor would change every one year, however the state government consciously amended the act to bring in Kerala Municipality Act (1994), to empower the elected head of local bodies.



- 1. Empowered mayor – Administrative & Executive Powers. It includes power to suspend any officials from the service other than secretary in the corporation**
- 2. Mayor is the head of the corporation**
- 3. Municipal Stability as mayor’s term is for 5 years**

1.2 Role of a Councillor

- Total 74 councillors in Kochi.
- There are around eight standing committees headed by councillor.
- Each councillor of the city is part of particular standing committee.



- 1. The role of a councillors is to bridge the gap between corporation and citizens.**
- 2. Councillors look after basic services to be provided to people.**
- 3. Councillors raise issues of people in respective standing committee or even directly in the council.**
- 4. Rapport with administration is good.**

1.3 Ward committee

- Every ward has ward committee in Kochi.
- The ward committees are decentralised at the level of area Sabhas.
- Ward committee meeting happens once in three months. The mayor can ask for a ward sabhas in addition to this.
- The ward committee meeting in Kochi is held like a Sabha where RWA, civil society & other stakeholders participate and express their complaints & recommendations for the development of Wards.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. **Ward committees are active in Kochi**
2. **Ward committees provide decentralised platform for public consultation** - RWAs actively participate in ward committees, and serve as important link with citizen demands
3. **Corporation does not have authority to give final approval to the Proposals of ward committees through Jankeyasutram. It is DPC (District Planning committee) who is final authority to approve it.**

1.4 Development Plan

- Jankeyasutram' (People's Plan) is the lowest level at which development plans are initiated. The People's plan campaign was launched in 1996.
- The plans are submitted by councillors each year, they form as a part of the planned fund given by the state, and these 1 year plan form a part of the 5 year planned fund.



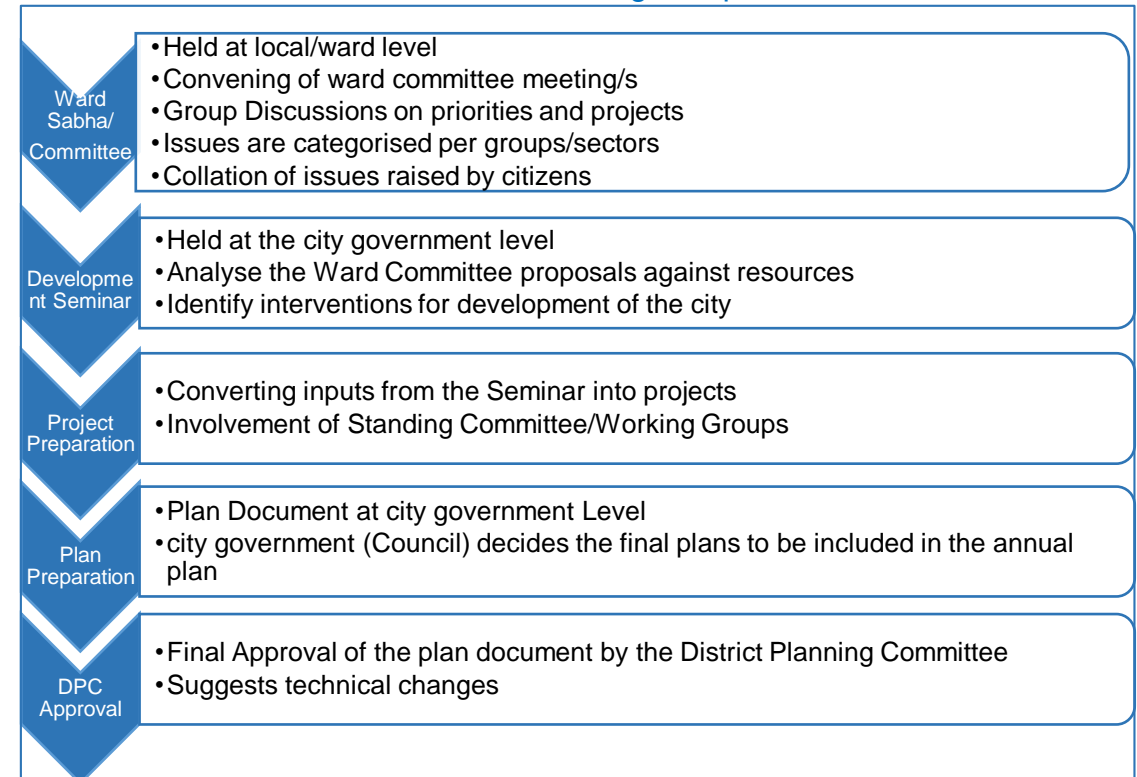
1. **Good example of Bottom-Top approach**
2. **People's suggestions and proposals are taken into consideration**
3. **No active participation of people who are not part of RWA or any associations**

Only 50% marks can be given to the "people's plan". The plan is not fully practical as envisaged in the Act, People are not interested, that's the problem. When it was implemented, in villages people used get some gifts or incentives to attend, but you can't keep encouraging like that.

MLA

4. **Ward committee does not give final approval and DPC has final say.**

Decentralized Planning: People's Plan

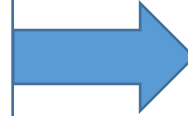


KEY TAKEAWAYS

1.5 Multiple Agencies

Along with Kochi Municipal corporation there are following agencies involved in service delivery

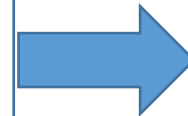
- KWA (Kerala water authority)
- KSEB (Kerala state electricity board)
- PWD (Public works department)
- TCPO (town and country planning organisation)
- RBDCK(Roads and Bridges Development Corporation of Kerala)



1. Mayor acts as a nodal officer on behalf of corporation and calls for meeting with all agencies whenever required.
2. Good coordination with state government, regular follow-ups and meetings.
3. Whenever necessary councillors directly approach agencies like Kerala Water authority.
4. Sometimes there are disputes and corporation face challenges due to multiple agencies as it delays the work

1.6 Urban Reforms

- Smart city mission is ongoing urban reform in Kochi
- Kochi is a part of the smart city mission, an SPV has been created.
- The Mayor and the municipal secretary are on the SPV board as representatives of the corporation.



1. 33% elected representatives believed that the corporation had no say in the decisions made by the SPV under the smart city mission

"The smart city project is being directly governed by the state government, the corporation has got hardly any role in that."

MLA

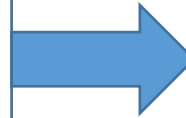
2. SPV is not accountable to the Corporation and has become parallel body to the corporation.
3. Focus on only few wards
4. Local demands are not taken into consideration as Public consultation does not take place



KEY TAKEAWAYS

2.1 Manpower

- Recruitment authority is with the state government under the urban director.
- Two Executive Engineers control three Zonal Officers, and each Zonal Officer is assisted by one Assistant Executive Engineer.
- Each Assistant Executive Engineer leads 2-3 Assistant Engineers, and each of them oversee 2-3 Building Inspectors.
- clerical wing has Lower Division Clerks, Upper Division Clerks, and Superintendent.
- Their administrative control is under the Additional Secretary of the Corporation, and duty allocation is under Superintending engineer



1. **Shortage of staff** - 89% of the elected representatives and 60% of the administration, highlighted the issue of inadequate manpower.
2. **Insufficient sanctioned positions** - There is no IT officer on full time role with the city governments.

Manpower is insufficient in the sense that one AEE (Assistant Executive Engineer) has to look after 11 divisions, thus his/her availability is low to work in all divisions.

Councillor

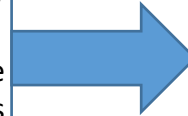
3. **Regular transfers** –It affects efficiency in providing services.
4. **Old staffing norms of 1967 are followed**
5. **Underqualified Staff** - there is lack of skilled staff. Training is not given on a regular basis.
6. **Lack of Positive Approach towards work-** Staff does not act as trouble-shooter, which is why productivity is less.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

3.1 Budget

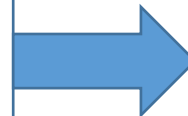
- Total budget is about 970 crores, around 500 crores, is the corporations own revenue, rest is dependent on state grants and aids.
- In addition there is general fund, in case of big project or emergency councillors can apply for it.
- Each standing committee prepares estimates of the budget with the help of administrative departments that come under it. Secretary gives proposal to finance committee based on recommendations
- Council gives final approval to budget



1. **Budget is inadequate**
2. **Dependency on State Government for funds**
3. **Councillors are able to participate in budget making process.**
4. **Councillors get 50-60 lakhs per year as development of ward called as 'division fund'.**
5. **Public participation in budget making does not take place.**

3.2 Sources of Revenue & Tax Rates

- The property tax, Professional tax, licensing & Building on rent are the major sources of revenue for Kochi municipal corporation
- Approximately 35% of Kerala State government planned resources are earmarked for local bodies, amounting to almost 1500 crores, which is given to the corporation.



1. **State government has control over deciding tax and service rates** - 89% of the elected representatives highlighted that control of corporation over deciding the tax and service rates was limited, and it was largely state controlled
2. **No revision of Tax rates since long time** - Last revision took place in 1992.
3. **Inefficiency in Revenue collection**- all shops need to renew license every year

"The area for getting revenue is unlimited for the corporation. The problem is they are not collecting efficiently. if Rs.100 has to be collected they collect only Rs.35-25."

MLA

4. **Increase in corporation expenditure** - Officials feel that corporation income has not changed significantly over a period of time whereas administration expenditures have increased rapidly.
5. **Impact of GST on revenue collection**

Summary of reflections on reforms needed:

Unified Body

1. There should be single authority to deliver 18 services as listed in the 74th constitutional amendment in the jurisdiction of the city.

Urban Reforms

1. Urban reforms like introduction of smart city mission, should have a stronger representation of the municipal government, and a higher stake in deciding projects that adhere to local demands.

Resources

1. The corporation should have control over recruiting and deciding their own staff.
2. Need for revising the manpower and estimation of Strength.
3. Need of Qualified and experienced staff as per requirement.
4. Capacity building and regular training is required.

Municipal Finance

1. The city government should have complete control over taxation. List of local taxes to be incorporated in the act.
2. Revenue collection is not done efficiently there is need to revise tax and service rates and focus on efficient collection
3. Corporation should have financial freedom and more control over the way they spend.

Grievance Redressal Mechanism

1. There is a need for a strong centralised complaint mechanism that covers all services

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