

Council Services



Essex County Council is comprised of the Mayors and Deputy Mayors of the seven (7) member municipalities of Amherstburg, Essex, Kingsville, Lakeshore, LaSalle, Leamington and Tecumseh. County Council is responsible for establishing the policies governing the operations of the County of Essex. Members of County Council represent taxpayers through participation in meetings, conferences, associations, boards, consultation opportunities and attendance at various events throughout the region. Their representative role ensures the voice of Essex County taxpayers are translated into services and programs that respond to those needs.

Level of Service Statement

The Budget for Council Services supports County Council in their roles and includes the remuneration for fourteen (14) members to participate in meetings of County Council, County Committees and External Boards. Expenses relating to Council member training, education, conferences and travel are also provided for in the Budget in accordance with established corporate policies.

In accordance with the *Municipal Act, 2001*, the Budget for Council Services also includes funding to support the contracted services of an Integrity Commissioner.

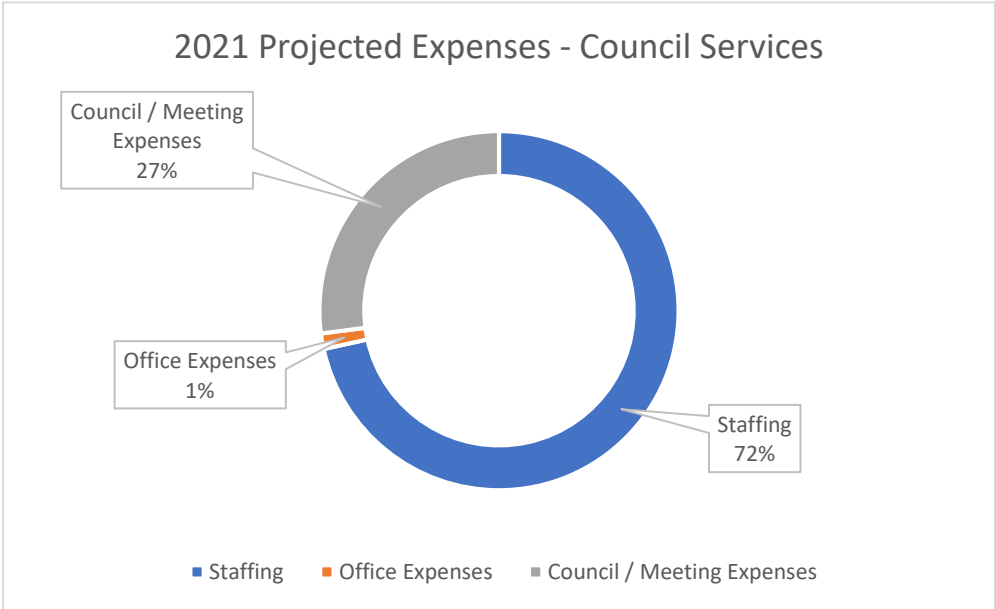
2021 Achievements and Challenges

The continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021 resulted in ongoing electronic Council meetings. In preparation of a return to partial, then completely in-person meetings, the audio-visual system in Council Chambers was upgraded in 2021, as well as the acquisition of Closed Captioning software. These expenditures were unbudgeted but their cost was supported by the application of provincial COVID-19 funding.

2021 expenditures for agency, board and committee meeting indemnities and travel, as well as conference expenses were under budget due to COVID-19 restrictions on gatherings.

Funds allocated for initiatives of the Essex County Accessibility Advisory Committee in the 2021 budget were utilized for the acquisition of two benches for the ERCA trails, identified as a need through the We Check the Trails project.

The graph below illustrates the key areas of spending in Council Services for this past year (projected to December 31, 2021):



Opportunities and Challenges Facing Council Services in 2022

Technology continues to evolve in Council Services. Additional features available through the electronic meeting management software provide an

opportunity to enhance Council's ability to electronically vote during meetings and annotate the electronic agendas. The next Municipal Election will be held on October 24, 2022 and it is the intention of Administration to install computers in Council Chambers for training and use by the Council Elect so everyone is able to utilize the meeting management software features. Ensuring residents and business owners in Essex County have access to County Council information in an accessible format, maintaining engagement with the public and ensuring an open and transparent municipal government are priorities.

Proposed 2022 Budget Plan

The primary increases in the Council Services budget for 2022 relate to the 2022 Municipal Election. Once again, the County of Essex will host and sponsor the municipal candidates' information session for the region. Events such as the Warden's Banquet, Inaugural Meeting of Council/Warden's Election, Council Orientation and recruiting new Committee members create increased expenditures during an election year.

Ongoing costs related to software that supports the electronic meeting management, including live streaming and closed captioning, is also reflected in the proposed 2022 Budget for Council Services. With the exception of modest increases in municipal association memberships, council related expenses not related to the Municipal Election are status quo for 2022.

Overall, the 2022 Budget for Council Services totals \$557,600 (7% increase over the 2021 Budget of \$522,150). The graph below illustrates the key areas of proposed 2022 Budget spending in Council Services:

2022 Proposed Budget - Council Services

