

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.

2022 Achievements and Challenges

The continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2022 resulted in the ongoing electronic Council meetings for the first half of the year. Upgrades were made to the audio/visual equipment in Council Chambers to allow for the option of hybrid meetings, meaning most members of Council are physically present in Council Chambers, with the option, under defined circumstances, for some members of Council and/or delegations to attend virtually.

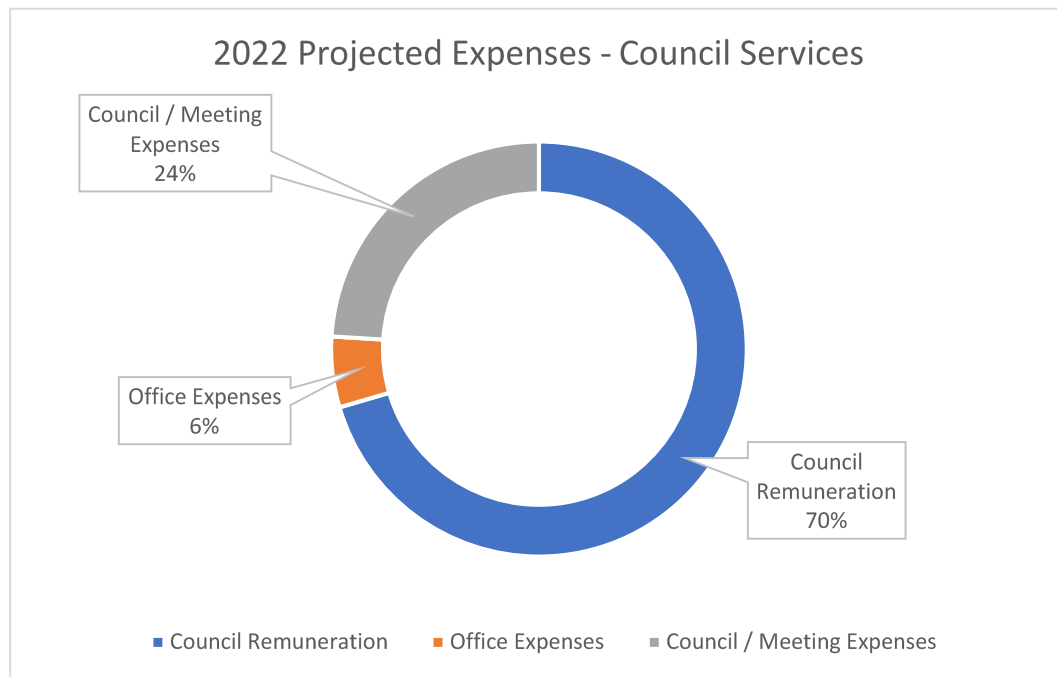
Additionally, to allow for the implementation of electronic voting by County Council, dedicated devices were acquired for Council Chambers as well as an App through the electronic meeting management software to facilitate the ease of use of the software by Council.

2022 expenditures for agency, board and committee meeting indemnities and travel, as well as conference expenses were under budget due in part to the continuation of electronic meetings for part of the year and the resignation of one member of County Council in July which left some vacancies.

The Essex County Accessibility Advisory Committee was able to offer virtual speakers for one of their initiatives in 2022, as well as continuing the acquisition of more benches required for the ERCA trails, identified as a need through the We Check The Trails project.

Additional expenditures in the final year of the term of Council were realized for Council Candidate Information Session, Councillor/Committee member recognition, Councillor Training, Warden's Banquet and the Inaugural meeting/Warden's Election and Reception. Additionally, a Regional Councillor Orientation session was organized and funded by the County through Council Services, which was an unbudgeted expenditure.

The graph below illustrates the key areas of spending in Council Services for this past year (projected to December 31, 2022):



Opportunities and Challenges for 2023

Providing the newly elected Council with training opportunities and resources will be the focus of 2023 for Council Services, while recognizing that electronic or hybrid meetings will be an ongoing necessity.

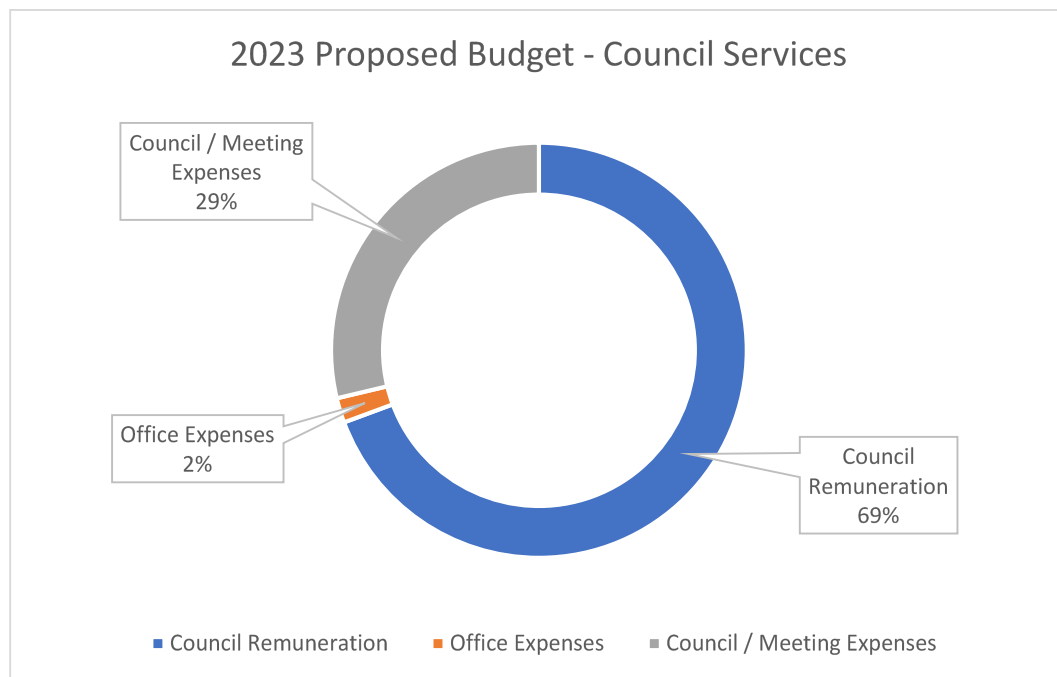
Ensuring residents and business owners in Essex County have access to County Council information in an accessible format, maintaining engagement with the public and ensuring an open and transparent municipal government are priorities.

Proposed 2023 Budget Plan

The 2023 Council Services budget has an overall increase of 0.36%. A number of expenditures related to the final year in the term of Council in 2022, are not applicable in 2023, reducing the overall level of expenditures. In accordance with the County Procedure By-law, Council salaries were recalculated, seeing an average increase in Council salaries and meeting indemnities of 5%. These rates will be in effect for the first two years of this term of Council.

Ongoing costs related to software that supports the electronic meeting management, including live streaming and closed captioning is also reflected in the proposed 2023 Budget for Council Services. Anticipated modest increases in municipal association memberships are reflected in this budget.

The graph below illustrates the key areas of proposed 2023 Budget spending in Council Services:



Overall, the 2023 Budget for Council Services totals \$559,600 (an increase of \$2,000 (0.36%) over the 2022 Budget of \$557,600).