

## Financial and Information Technology Services



Financial and Information Technology (IT) Services provides technical support and strategic direction related to the financial and technology needs of the Corporation. The Director of Financial Services / Treasurer is responsible for the legislated duties of the Treasurer which are focused on serving as the primary overseer for all financial affairs of the Corporation. Services in the finance department also include risk management, investment portfolio management, financial record keeping and reporting, payroll and benefit administration, procurement, information technology and geographical information systems. The combined expertise in the Financial and Information Technology Services department ensures the Corporation's compass remains aligned with Council's strategic goals and objectives.

### Level of Service Statement

Financial and IT Services provides support to the five (5) primary services provided by the County: Community Services, Sun Parlor Home, Emergency

Services, Infrastructure and Planning Services and the Essex County Library. By providing strategic, financial, procurement and information technology advice and supports, the department acts as part of the administrative backbone for the Corporation. In the two-tier municipal system, County staff in the Department also strive to be a regional resource to peers at the local level, strengthening intergovernmental relations and sharing ideas and best practices.

## 2022 Achievements and Challenges

The Financial and IT Services department experienced significant change during 2022. A number of staffing changes, combined with increased ministry reporting requirements and demand for departmental services across all divisions made for a challenging year.

### Accounting and Financial Reporting

Led by the Manager of Accounting – Administration / Deputy Treasurer, the Accounting and Financial Reporting division continued their modernization efforts to streamline processes and eliminate paper. The division's Clerk/Bookkeepers worked to leverage technology to increase processing efficiencies in the accounts payable and bank reconciliation functions while two team members transitioned to new roles as a result of a Clerk/Bookkeeper retirement. The division's Financial Analysts worked diligently to support departments in completing additional reporting requirements arising from receipt of provincial transfer payments and rallied to cover workload at the height of the budget season when one analyst resigned to take employment at another municipality. The increased complexity of operations and reporting requirements across the larger departments necessitated the addition of a fourth Financial Analyst in order to maintain service levels. It is anticipated that this position will be filled by the end of 2022. In collaboration with the Director of Financial Services, more formal internal financial reporting tools were established and quarterly projection review meetings were held with department heads and managers. The goal of these meetings was to increase the financial skill of departmental leaders and increase awareness of the budget process.

### Information Technology and GIS

Information technology is integrated into every aspect of work at the County. Similar to the last two years, 2022 saw added pressure on the IT division to address remote computing needs of staff during mandated work from home periods earlier in the year. The high volume of staff turnover across the Corporation required IT team members to process numerous IT Change Forms and configuration requests. A number of large capital projects

were completed during the year including a phased upgrade of camera equipment at all EMS bases, scheduled equipment and hardware replacements and phone system software upgrades. Security and risk management were a high priority for the team. Significant advancements in network monitoring and protection were completed including the installation of Microsoft System Center Configuration Manager (SCCM), multi-factor authentication and ongoing end user phishing testing and training. The long term leave of a member of the management team required the appointment of an interim IT Manager and Network Administrator. In GIS services, the annual aerial photograph project was completed to update GIS mapping and the GIS Technician continued to support the mapping needs associated with various ISP projects, most notably the official plan update, CWATS plan and transportation master plan.

### Payroll and Benefits

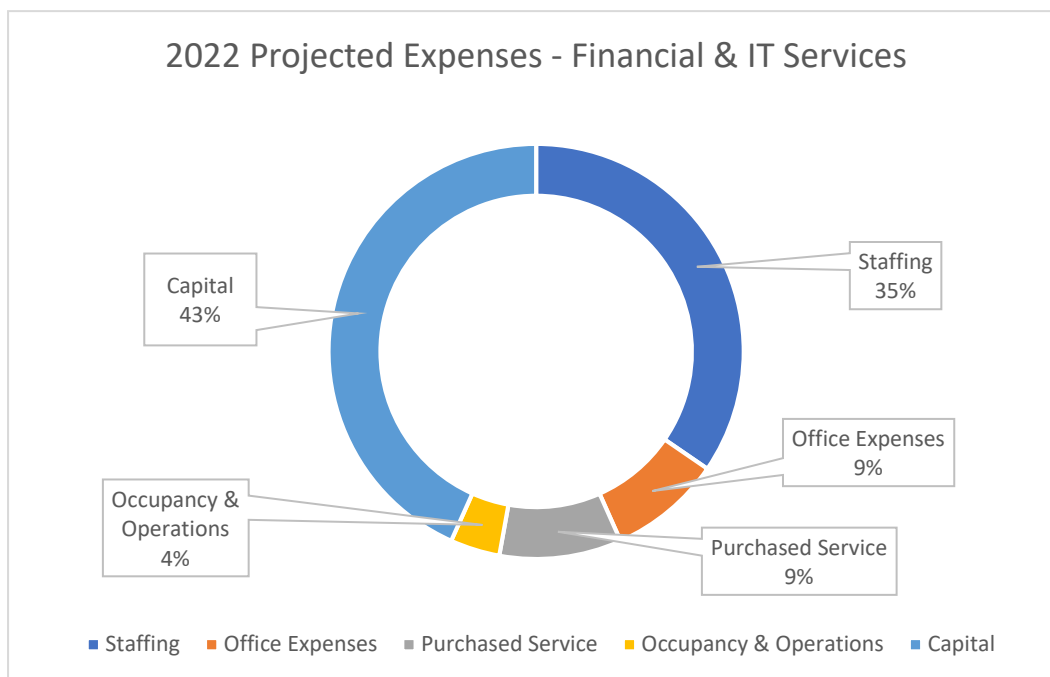
The HRIS software conversion project, that began in 2020, continued to experience challenges due to vendor resource constraints. To ensure the payroll function continued without interruption, the decision was made to pivot to an alternative software platform mid-year on a temporary basis. Payroll Clerk/Bookkeepers efficiently transitioned to the alternative platform while also dealing with ever-evolving wage enhancement legislation and collective agreement changes. The division also worked through significant staffing challenges this year. Two of the four Payroll Clerks retired mid-year and the Payroll Supervisor resigned. The Manager of Budget & Administration, who also oversaw the payroll division, transitioned to a Clerk/Bookkeeper role as part of a future retirement plan. These staffing changes provided an opportunity to re-examine the distribution of duties within the department and the reporting structure of Clerk/Bookkeepers. In the fall of 2022, recruitment commenced to replace the Manager of Budget & Administration and Payroll Supervisor positions with a new Manager of Accounting – Operations position. The Manager of Accounting – Administration / Deputy Treasurer's role was also reviewed to better balance the workload between the two resulting Manager of Accounting positions. Going forward, budget administration will be completed by the Manager of Accounting – Administration / Deputy Treasurer, freeing up capacity in the Manager of Accounting – Operations role to assume the daily transactional services of the department including accounts receivable, payable and payroll and benefits.

### Procurement and Compliance

Since 2018, when the division was created, the Procurement and Compliance team continues to increase the transparency, accountability and defensibility

of the procurement function. At the beginning of 2022, all competitive bidding functions were centralized in the division. The Manager of Procurement and Compliance, along with the Procurement Officer and Clerk/Bookkeeper worked to improve awareness and understanding of the procurement function through one-on-one meetings and education and training events. Working closely with the County Solicitor, improvements were made to various templates and standard contracts for use by all departments. Regional support continued as well with the team sharing best practices, policies and templates with peers at the local level.

The graph below illustrates the key areas of spending in Administrative and Financial Services for this past year (projected to December 31, 2022).



### Opportunities and Challenges for 2023

With recruitment and staffing changes expected to be complete by the end of 2022, the department looks forward to settling in with new team members and moving forward with departmental workplans. The Service Delivery Review, originally planned for 2022, will be initiated and completed in 2023 and a resumption of the HRIS conversion project is expected after year end balancing work is finished.

The Asset Management Plan update will be presented to County Council in 2023 and work will continue to meet the next legislative reporting deadline looming in 2024. Strategic long-term financing plans will also require review

and updating to respond to unprecedented growth pressures facing the region that will undoubtedly impact our infrastructure and expansion plans.

Corporate wide, all departments are facing increasing provincial reporting burdens. Numerous team members in Financial and IT Services will be needed to support the ongoing data tracking and financial reporting needs of other departments.

The current economic climate will also impact the department's work. Procurement services will work to ensure the highest value for money in a constrained market for goods and services, IT services will continue to manage supply chain issues, Accounting and Financial Reporting services will monitor spending and impacts of inflation and Payroll and Benefit services will respond to legislative and contractual wage changes.

### Proposed 2023 Budget Plan

The proposed budget includes funds to address potential outcomes of the Service Delivery Review, particularly in the IT division. For a corporation of our size and in recognition of the number of devices and users we support, it is anticipated that additional resources will be required to support IT services. The budget includes funding to support the addition of one full-time team member mid-year after the conclusion of the Service Delivery Review as well as a temporary Co-Op Student position for one term.

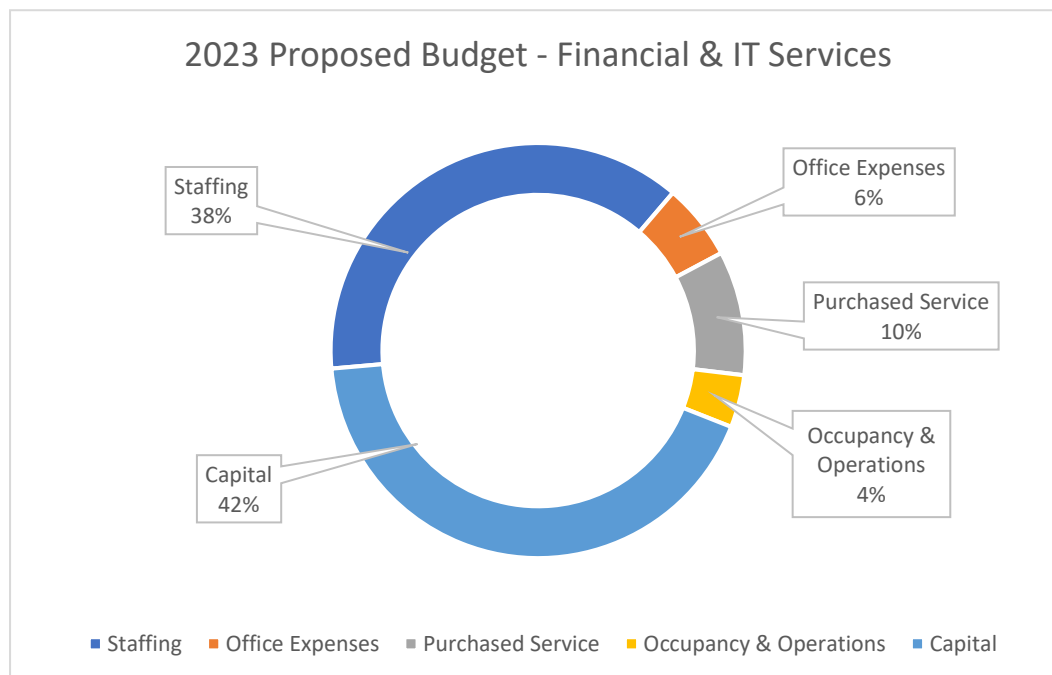
Server and Software Maintenance costs are budgeted to increase in 2023 to address the growing number of applications in use by departments and their associated support costs. Also included in this budget line is funding to support an upgrade of our records management software. This software services the County as well as the local municipalities. The proposed budget includes funding from the Safe Restart Reserve to defray the financial impact to the locals and in recognition of the need to rely on electronic documentation to support remote work and paperless information exchange.

Included in Consulting Fees are funds to develop an integrated cloud migration plan. On premise software solutions are declining in availability and forcing businesses to move to cloud-based solutions. Given the highly integrated nature of our business and processes, a subject matter expert in cloud conversion is recommended to assist the Corporation in the navigation process.

The renovation of the Civic Centre will require furniture and fixture replacements. The capital budget includes funds and a corresponding transfer from reserve to fully cover these costs.

The Corporation owns certain EMS bases. The initial capital costs are budgeted for in the Financial Services department budget. Included in the proposed budget are funds to complete the construction of the new EMS station in Kingsville as well as provide for funding for possible land acquisition to address station services in LaSalle.

The graph below illustrates the key areas of proposed 2023 Budget spending in Financial and Information Technology Services.



Overall, the 2023 Budget for Financial and Information Technology Services, net of recoveries, totals \$3,116,120 (an increase of \$28,020 (0.91%) over the 2022 Budget of \$3,088,100).