



Administrative Report

To: Warden MacDonald and Members of Essex County Council
From: Katherine Hebert, County Clerk
Date: Wednesday, March 5, 2025
Subject: Council/Staff Relations Policy Compliance Review
Report #: 2025-0305-LLS-R08-KH

Purpose

The purpose of this Report is to provide Council with an opportunity to review the Council/Staff Relations Policy (the "**Policy**"), in accordance with the Policy and Procedure Governance Framework as well as the requirement in the 2019 Policy (the "**Current Policy**") which states that the Policy shall be reviewed once in a four-year term. This review includes proposed changes that are intended to clarify some language within the Policy, and to align the Policy with current language in other governing documents and with the County's Strategic Plan.

Background

Section 270(1)(2.1) of the *Municipal Act, 2001* provides that a municipality shall adopt and maintain policies with respect to the relationship between members of council and the officers and employees of the municipality.

The **Current Policy** (a copy of which is attached hereto as **Appendix A**) was approved by Council at a meeting held on February 2, 2019, which is the last time the Policy was reviewed.

Administrative Report [2019-0220-CCS-R001-MB](#), briefed Council on the Current Policy and incorporated various Council conduct related policies and procedures into one document for ease of reference. In 2019 Bill 68 required that certain specific revisions to the *Municipal Act, 2001* regarding the complaint procedure and investigations by the Integrity Commissioner be included.

Since that time, the County has updated its Code of Conduct for Council Members and Members of Local Boards to align with the *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act* ("**MCIA**") and further has procedures in place with an Integrity Commissioner, to facilitate Accountability and Transparency. The proposed

revised Policy is attached hereto as **Appendix B**, which shows the marked-up version, as Council has previously requested to see any changes outlined. This version can be challenging to review, therefore a final draft version of the Policy without the markup has also been included as **Appendix C**.

Discussion

In 2024, the County adopted its first Strategic Plan, which provided, among other things, direction for Council's own decision-making and for the execution of the County's vision, mission, and values, through Strategic Goals, such as Working as Team Essex County, Growing as Leaders in Public Service Excellence, and Building a Regional Powerhouse. The Council/Staff Relations Policy fits within several elements of the Strategic Directions, namely 'Focusing "Team Essex County" for Results', 'Being an Employer with Impact', 'A Government Working for the People', and 'Promoting Transparency and Awareness' within the municipal services provided by the County. These goals have been considered in the edits proposed to the Policy.

Clear direction will support County Council, staff, and partners in advancing shared priorities:

The County's Strategic Plan is seen as an important opportunity for the County to enhance unity and collaboration between Council and between Council and staff, as all work towards a collective vision. Clear alignment and understanding among Council and staff regarding the County's vision and priorities will help Council and leadership effectively guide the organization through key decisions, such as how to best plan for growth and what the role of the County should be for the broader region. (Strategy Corp)

Administration has been in the process of reviewing and standardizing all of the County's policies, which has resulted in the review of the Current Policy, that had been slated for review sometime during this term.

Research and Comparison

Through the process of reviewing the Current Policy, Administration reviewed several Council/Staff Relations policies from other municipalities locally, and of comparable upper-tier municipalities in Ontario. It was determined through that research, that the County's Current Policy, although out of currency with some of the incorporated language references, was laid out similarly, and included many of the same components as comparator municipalities.

There are no significant changes being proposed to the Current Policy. Proposed changes included in the draft Policy appended to this Report relate primarily to language within the definitions of the Policy, to allow for greater transparency and clarity on the meaning of certain terms and definitions (See Section 3.0), as well as to the Responsibility section, which is now more comprehensive than in the Current Policy. Other changes are primarily related to quoted excerpts from other guiding documents.

The sections dealing with quoted references from the Codes of Conduct (see Sections 5.1 and 5.2) were updated to current language as was the language associated with the Harassment and Workplace Violence sections (see Sections 5.3 and 5.4). The County's Procedure By-law excerpt was updated as well (see Section 5.5).

The alignment of the complaint procedure for complaints related to members of Council was changed to ensure that the process involving the County's Integrity Commissioner is followed as outlined in the Code of Conduct for Council Members and Members of Local Boards, and removes the need to disclose complaints to the Clerk (see Section 6.0).

Further proposed changes in the draft proposed Policy relate to formatting to ensure the Policy aligns with a consistent approach for reviewing new policies within the County's established policy framework.

Policy and Procedure Governance Framework

In 2021 Council adopted the County of Essex Policy and Procedure Framework, which outlined the method to be used for the administration of policies and procedures as well as the approval authority for these important guiding documents.

As part of the reconciliation of the County's existing policies against this new Policy and Procedure Governance Framework, the Policy will be reviewed by Council on the prescribed cycle of every four years at minimum and certainly once per term of Council.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with the review of this Policy

Consultations

During the review and amending of the Policy, the following members of County Administration were consulted:

- David Sundin, Director, Legislative and Legal Services/County Solicitor
- Crystal Sylvestre, Manager, Records and Accessibility/Deputy Clerk

- Kyla Pritiko, Director, Human Resources
- Brady Boghean, Manager, Health and Safety

Strategic Plan Alignment

Working as Team Essex County	Growing as Leaders in Public Service Excellence	Building a Regional Powerhouse
<input type="checkbox"/> Scaling Sustainable Services through Innovation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focusing “Team Essex County” for Results <input type="checkbox"/> Advocating for Essex County’s Fair Share	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Being an Employer with Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A Government Working for the People <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Promoting Transparency and Awareness	<input type="checkbox"/> Providing Reliable Infrastructure for Partners <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting Dynamic and Thriving Communities Across the County <input type="checkbox"/> Harmonizing Action for Growth <input type="checkbox"/> Advancing Truth and Reconciliation

Recommendation

That Essex County Council receive report number 2025-0305-LLS-R08-KH, Council/Staff Relations Policy 2019-001 Compliance Review, and Approve the draft revised and updated Policy attached as Appendix C.

Approvals

Respectfully Submitted,

Katherine Hebert

Katherine Hebert, County Clerk

Concurred With,

David Sundin

David Sundin, BA (Hons), LL.B., Director, Legislative and Legal Services/County Solicitor

Concurred With,

Sandra Zwiers

Sandra Zwiers, MAcc, CPA, CA, Chief Administrative Officer

Appendix	Title
A	Current Policy (Approved February 20, 2019)
B	Revised Policy (with Markups showing)
C	Revised Policy (Clean Version for approval)