

Corporate Management



Service Delivery Promise

Corporate Management reflects the combined operations of the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and the Legislative and Legal Services Department.

Together, Corporate Management is responsible for the strategic leadership of the County with the CAO fulfilling the role of key advisor to Council and the Senior Leadership Team. The Legislative and Legal Services Department is tasked with ensuring the County is compliant with its legal obligations, is open and transparent, and that the County's message is being communicated to residents and stakeholders.

Level of Service Statement

Corporate Management provides support to all service areas of the County. By providing strategic, legislative, legal and communication advice and supports, these service areas act as part of the administrative backbone for the County's operations.

We strive to be a regional resource to peers at the local level, strengthening intergovernmental relations, sharing ideas and best practices, and working together to advance regional interests and initiatives.

Opportunities, Challenges and Risks for 2026

In 2025 there has been an increase in the level of resources required to respond to Freedom of Information requests, with resources from within the Legislative and Legal Services Department being reassigned, as needed, to ensure the timely response to these requests. The increasing complexity of the requests being made also requires collaboration with various internal departments to ensure all records are located and reviewed. Further, this has increased the level of dependence on support from the County's IT Department. It is anticipated that the demands to respond to Freedom of Information Requests and to continue to implement the County's Records Management Program will require further tools/software and a growing level of administrative resources in the future. These future supports will be essential to balance the protection of the County's information with the County's stated goal of being open and transparent, while also complying with statutory obligations.

The Legal Services division will continue to experience a heavy workload, as the County road network continues to expand, resulting in further property acquisitions being required. In addition, ongoing matters being dealt with before the Ontario Land Tribunal, administration of claims, the review of procurement contracts, tasks associated with insurance and risk management matters, and handling various other legal matters continue to require significant resources. With the addition of a Deputy County Solicitor in 2025, and the commencement of an articling student in the summer of 2026, there will now be supports in place to assist in addressing the rising demand on internal legal services and to manage any required external legal services.

Recruitment and retention of staff are ongoing concerns. Ensuring our workforce is engaged and informed is a continuous challenge for our Communications and Employee Engagement division. In addition to continuing to ensure the residents of the County are kept informed of the County's initiatives, ongoing road construction, and decisions of Council, this division will continue to take the lead on employee engagement in support of Council's goal of ensuring the County is "Being an Employer with Impact".

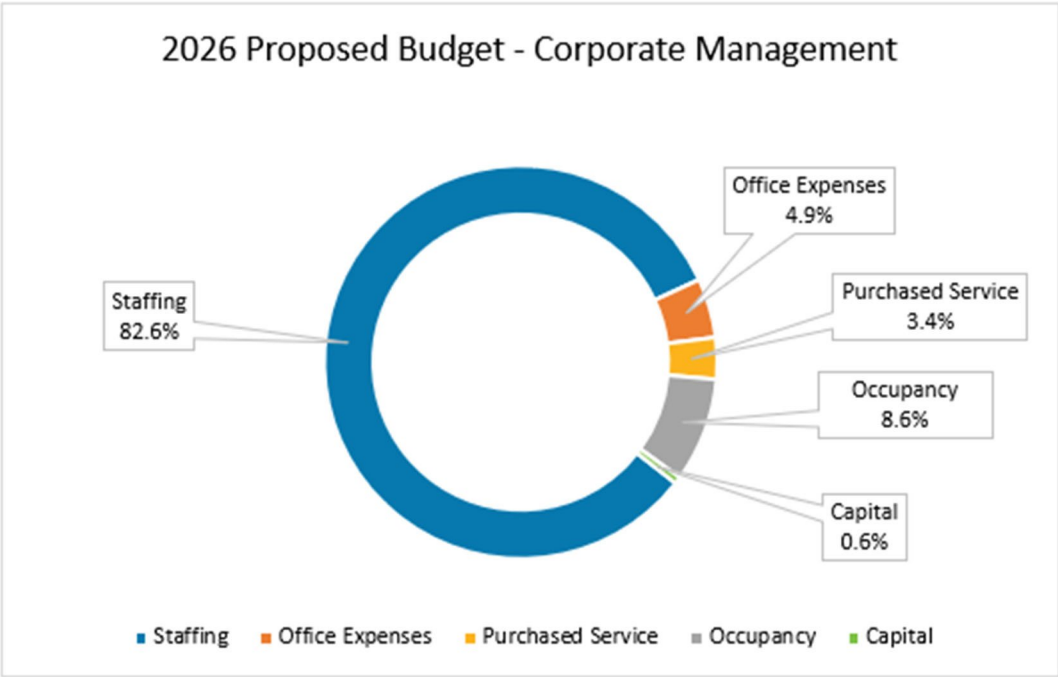
Ensuring the day-to-day needs of the County are being met and ensuring that the goals outlined in the County's new Strategic Plan are being implemented will continue to be key priorities for 2026 and beyond.

Proposed 2026 Budget Plan

Despite an increase in contractual wages and benefits, there is still an overall reduction in the budget for wages for 2026 due to a realignment of positions and job classifications. Inflationary pressures have subsided, with most of the costs projected to remain steady for 2026.

In 2026, Records Management will maintain the position of summer student, but Legal Services will transition from a summer student to an articling student. As the articling student position will not commence until the summer of 2026, there is limited impact on the 2026 budget for this new position, which was approved by County Council in 2024.

The graph below illustrates the key areas of proposed 2026 Budget spending in Corporate Management:



Overall, the proposed 2026 Budget for Corporate Management, net of recoveries, totals \$2,474,470 (a decrease of \$452,680 (15.5%) over the restated 2025 Budget of \$2,927,150). The decrease is primarily due to staffing realignment, and a new administrative cost recovery from other County Departments.

Alignment with Strategic Plan Initiatives

Focusing "Team Essex County" for Results

The CAO and the Clerk have a longstanding tradition of facilitating and participating in regional groups to address common needs and concerns. Additionally, the Clerk has taken the lead on efforts with the County's local municipalities to harmonize records management standards and ensure the County is continuing to work towards meetings accessibility requirements.

The Legal Services division has also recently initiated regular meetings between legal staff from the local municipalities, to enable discussions around shared concerns regarding risk management and common legal issues. The goal is to ensure that regular meetings are held in 2026 and subsequent years.

Being an Employer with Impact

The Communications and Employee Engagement division (Communications) will work with the CAO's office in 2026 to leverage the results of an Employee Engagement Survey conducted in late 2025 to refine and improve existing employee engagement initiatives at the County.

Further, the division will also spearhead the second annual Employee Excellence Awards, following up on last year's inaugural event, where 26 employees from various Departments at the County of Essex were honoured at a Council meeting for excellence in four categories aligning with the County's Strategic Plan: Innovation, Team Spirit, Service Excellence, and Empowerment.

Long-Term Service Pins will also be distributed for the third consecutive year. In 2025, 188 Long-Term Service Pins were distributed to employees with combined years of services totalling more than 3,000 years.

Finally, the division will also continue to manage and refine existing engagement initiatives like the Cheers for Peers recognition program and the Corporate Volunteering program while overseeing other staff appreciation events.

Advancing Truth and Reconciliation

Corporate Management is taking the lead on ensuring that local indigenous stakeholders are invited to participate in the development of a Truth and Reconciliation Plan for the County. Council and the public will be provided with an opportunity to participate in this process as well, and it is anticipated that further updates will be provided on the County's efforts with respect to Truth and Reconciliation during 2026.