

APPENDIX A

Council Service London Team Three-Year Implementation Plan

Overview

The City of London has a corporate mission to be “At Your Service: A respected and inspired public service partner.” This mission statement reflects Council and Administration’s shared desire to improve the way services are provided to citizens, and to ensure that that the organization is effectively, efficiently, and economically delivering results that make a difference in the community.

Members of Council play an essential role in achieving this mission. Citizens rely on their Mayor and Ward Councillor to assist them with specific issues, support community activities, respond to inquiries, provide information and serve as a conduit to the decision-making process. Elected Officials play an important role in keeping the public informed and engaged in local government, and likewise benefit from interaction with constituents in order to receive their ideas and insights.

The effective administration of constituency work requires adequate support for Council Members. Across all levels of government, Elected Officials have dedicated staff resources to assist them with their duties. In the municipal context, Council Members have individual and/or shared supports (see attached Appendix B).

This document details a three-year plan which aims to balance the unique needs of each Member of Council, while achieving the following objectives:

1. improve and increase the supports available to Council Members to enhance administration of constituency work, while providing flexibility in how these supports are accessed;
2. leverage existing resources and expertise, both internal and external to the organization;
3. create learning opportunities for local graduate-level students studying fields relevant to the work of municipal government, while enhancing existing partnerships with Western University and the London Public Library; and
4. maintain the overall effectiveness, efficiency and economy of the Elected Officials.

Current State

London City Council consists of a Mayor and 14 Council Members. On an annual basis, Council Members attend over 100 meetings related to Council business. These meetings alone represent an average 12 hour per week time commitment, not including meetings of local boards, commissions and agencies, meetings with local organizations or constituents, community events, and other engagements.

The Councillors’ Office alone receives approximately 450 phone calls per month, and Members of Council can each receive upwards of 150 emails per day. These statistics do not include visitors, inquiries made through social media, contact through personal channels or other forms of communication.

This workload demands a high level of organization and access to appropriate support resources. Currently the Councillors’ Office is staffed by three permanent full-time employees and one temporary employee, shared by 14 Council Members. Some Council Members use a portion of their discretionary budget to contract part-time assistance, in addition to the full-time staff.

Council Member Supports

Research on resources provided to Elected Officials in other municipalities, as well as a review of the current workload for London's Members of Council, suggests that Council Members may benefit from five specific types of support:

1. Administrative support – maintaining calendars, scheduling meetings, organizing mail and other communications, filing, responding to routine inquiries, etc.
2. Technical support – assisting with software use, ensuring adequate access to systems, maintaining hardware, providing technical troubleshooting, etc.
3. Communications management – assisting with social media, drafting newsletters and other public communications, assisting with document design, editing letters, etc.
4. Information base – accessing documents, locating information, maintaining archived records, complying with records retention requirements, etc.
5. Policy and research support – researching best practices, developing policy options, providing briefing notes on specific proposals or policies, surveying research reports, etc.

Access to each of these specific types of support could benefit Council Members in their work; however, the degree to which Council Members require each type of support will vary by individual, time of year, and other factors.

Recommended Approach

The general approach adopted in this Implementation Plan is that Council Members require the ability to access, as desired, support in each of the five identified areas. The most efficient way to provide access to these supports is through a shared resources model where all Members of Council have access to the same resources. However, Council Members have also identified a need for specific individualized support in one or several of these areas, and should continue to have the discretion to hire complementary, temporary supports as needed.

This Plan addresses both models – it offers an increase in the shared resources available to all Members of Council, as well as provides for the ability to acquire additional resources through an increase in individual financial allocation for each Council Member to \$15,000 (up from \$8,570).

Support Resources

Each type of support identified above requires a different skill set and experience. As such, access for Council Members to each type of support can be best accommodated through unique arrangements based on the expertise required. It is therefore recommended that the Council Service London Team be comprised of the following:

1. Administrative Support

Council Members require year-round administrative support with familiarity with the organization and the Councillors' Office environment and the ability to provide an immediate response to constituents.

For these reasons this support resource is best provided by full-time City employees, as is the current practice. The hours of work are consistent with the hours that the Councillors' Office is open to the public, and staff are able to cover for one another when one person is away from their desk.

Currently there are three full-time permanent employees in this role and one temporary employee. It is recommended that this complement of four employees be continued, all on a permanent basis. However, the job descriptions and scope of work of the four roles will change to better utilize the skill sets of employees and the benefits derived by Councillors from the positions.

One position will be transitioned into a Council Support Coordinator to manage the day-to-day provision of supports to Council Members. One position will become more focused on policy and research, and the remaining two positions will be fully dedicated to general administrative support. It is expected that these supports would continue to provide occasional support beyond normal business hours on Council and Committee meeting nights or during other key events, as required.

2. Technical Support

Council Members require technical support similar to the rest of the organization. Currently this need is accommodated through the Technology Services Division (TSD). Given the need for knowledge of existing systems, familiarity with the City's suite of technology tools and security considerations, this support is best provided by City employees. It is recognized, however, that the volume and type of need from Council Members warrants a designated key contact for Council Members from TSD. Consultation would be required with TSD to ensure effective implementation.

3. Communications Support

Similar to technical systems support, the unique communications support requirements by Members of Council warrants a dedicated resource, who is knowledgeable of the Corporation.

It is therefore recommended that a key communications contact be identified for the Councillors' Office, who reports to the Managing Director, Corporate Communications.

4. Information Management

Council Members require access to and organization of thousands of documents per year. Some of these documents are specific to a Member of Council (such as notes from a ward meeting); others are Corporate in nature (such as Council reports). Effective organization and management of these documents requires specific expertise.

The Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS) program at Western University equips graduate students with knowledge of theory and practice in library and information science. These students are trained to understand user needs, are aware of current practices for organizing information, have an understanding of information systems and technology and have an established standard of ethical and professional conduct, including confidentiality.

The recommended approach to provide Council Members with access to this type of support is to enter into a partnership with the MLIS program at Western University to utilize up to three co-op students per year to develop and maintain the Council Members' records and information. The London Public Library has also offered to support this partnership by supervising the students, and facilitating the knowledge transfer from year to year as new students begin this role.

The cost of support for these individuals may require some additional funding, once they are known. This partnership will also provide a valuable learning opportunity for local students.

5. Policy and Research Support

Council Members make thousands of decisions each year on a wide variety of topics and issues. In some cases Council Members may wish to access additional research or background information to support their decision making process; in other cases Council Members may seek data or best practices on a particular issue or topic. This policy and research support requires an understanding of local government, competence in research methods and data analysis, strong writing skills and the ability to develop reports and recommendations.

Western University offers the only Master of Public Administration (MPA) Program in Canada with an exclusive focus on local government. The Program equips graduate students with a solid understanding of municipal government including, the legislative environment, financial management, program evaluation, research methods and general municipal management. Many students in the program seek opportunities to gain hands-on experience in a municipal environment.

The recommended approach to provide Council Members with access to additional policy and research support is to develop a partnership with the Western University's MPA program to develop a co-op program. Up to four students per year could be brought on as temporary, part-time resources to assist with the research and policy needs of Council Members. The co-op students would be supervised by the City Clerk or designate.

Implementation Strategy

Should this Plan be endorsed by Council, providing access to the identified support resources would take place over the next three years.

Year 1 (2012)

The focus for the first year will be in establishing partnerships with Western University and the London Public Library to bring on the first round of co-op students, for information, as well as policy and research support.

The City Clerk's Office will finalize the co-op arrangement with the respective faculties and individuals in the Spring, with the goal of having the first round of students brought in during Fall and Winter 2012.

The City Clerk's Office will also work with Human Resources, Corporate Communications, and TSD to make arrangements to support the administrative, systems and communications needs of Council Members.

Additionally, the increased individual financial allocation will be made available to each member of Council to support the needs of their constituency work, within established policy. This allocation will continue going forward as a part of the base budget.

Year 2 (2013)

During the second year, the focus will be on transitioning internal resources. Four full-time administrative positions within the Councillors' Office will be filled and dedicated resources from Corporate Communications and TSD will be put in place.

The City Clerk's Office will also make the necessary changes to policies related to Council support to reflect the new model, and to more clearly define specific roles and responsibilities for support staff (for example, special requirements during election time).

During the first two years, the City Clerk's Office will continually monitor the effectiveness of the new Council Service London Team model, the volume of work for all roles involved, and generally assess the outcomes of this Plan against its objectives. This will include regular consultation with Council Members for input, as well as a more formal survey of Council Members and others involved in providing support to Council Members.

Year 3 (2014)

The focus for the third year will be to implement changes or adjustments, as needed, based upon feedback received and survey results. Additional structural or other changes may be proposed to Council at that time.

Service London Link

The establishment of a Council Service London Team represents an aspect of the broader Service London initiative. Service London is an umbrella of projects aimed to improve the delivery of customer services to citizens.

As part of this initiative, Administration is exploring opportunities to develop integrated service channels (phone, online, in person) and leverage technology to ensure efficiency in delivery and effectiveness in design.

This Three-Year Plan regarding the creation of the Council Service London Team addresses the support resource needs of Council Members; however, a number of other initiatives within the broader Service London project will also benefit this work. As an example, a corporate system to track customer complaints and ensure appropriate responses are received could be leveraged by the Council Service London Team. Improved access to information and services online would also be beneficial. This Plan focuses on providing the support resources required by Council Members, and will be reflected in the overall three-year Service London implementation plan.

Budget Impact

It is anticipated that a portion of the cost of implementing the Three-Year Plan can be accommodated within the approved Budget; that is, \$170,000 from the residual local government funding and one-time funding in the amount of \$200,000 from the \$2.3 million committed to Service London to cover expenses in 2013 and 2014. A source of financing for \$200,000 will have to be found in years 2015 and beyond.

Conclusions

The establishment of a Council Service London Team supports the corporate mission to be “At Your Service: A respected and inspired public service partner.” This mission statement reflects a desire to improve the way we provide services to citizens, and members of Council play an essential role in achieving this mission.

This Plan aims to improve and increase the supports available to Council Members to enhance administration of constituency work; leverage existing resources and expertise, both internal and external to the organization; create learning opportunities for local graduate-level students studying fields relevant to the work of the Councillors’ Office, while enhancing existing partnerships with Western University and the London Public Library; and maintaining the overall effectiveness, economy and efficiency of the Councillors’ Office.

To achieve these objectives, this Plan identifies a three-year process to ensure that Council Members have access to the types of supports required by their role: administrative support, technical support, communications support, information management, and policy and research support. Access to these supports would be provided through a shared resource model, supplemented by an increase to the discretionary funding provided to Council Members for expenses required by their role.

The approach recommended in this Plan, once implemented, will be continually monitored and evaluated to ensure that objectives are being achieved.