

TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS CORPORATE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING ON MAY 28, 2013
FROM:	BRITTA WINTHER, CONSULTANT AND CATHY SAUNDERS, CITY CLERK
SUBJECT:	COUNCIL SERVICE LONDON TEAM

RECOMMENDATION

That, on the recommendation of B. Winther, B. Winther Consulting and the City Clerk, the City Clerk BE GIVEN DIRECTION with respect to how the Municipal Council wishes to proceed regarding the Council Service London Team.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER
--

- Item #21 - Board of Control - December 14, 2005
- Item #10 – Board of Control - May 29, 2007
- Item #19 – Board of Control - July 11, 2007
- Item #14 – Finance and Administration Committee – May 18, 2011
- Item#3 – Finance and Administration Committee – June 15, 2012
- Item #2 – Finance and Administration Committee – November 2, 2011
- Item #12 – Finance and Administration Committee – April 16, 2012
- Item #16 – Finance and Administrative Services Committee – July 16, 2012

BACKGROUND

Background

During the recent review of corporate communications services, many of those Members of Council who met with the consultant expressed the view that the current Council Service London Team model does not meet their needs in serving the public and suggested that an independent model should be given some further consideration.

Over the years, there have been ongoing discussions and several reports to Council presenting various support options. Clearly, there is no perfect solution to technology and office support, and it is unlikely that any model will completely meet the requirements of each individual Councillor.

Civic Administration is committed to providing the Municipal Council with its preferred model. This report provides an overview of the existing model and alternative models for both office and technical support. Variations of these models exist in municipalities across Ontario, with different levels of funding.

The greatest challenge in providing support to Councillors is meeting the diverse needs and expectations of Councillors. Equitable sharing of the resources is challenging, and timely access to support can be an issue. Some Councillors have abandoned using the existing corporate resources, or are in the process of moving toward more independent support. Social media has further increased the demands on Councillors' time, resulting in the need for more sophisticated and timely interaction with the public.

Current Proposed Council Support Model

The current model was recently enhanced with the addition of graduate students to provide research support and to establish and maintain an information and research base model for the Councillors. Councillors expressed concern that any turnover of students or staff adds a further challenge due to the knowledge and training required to be productive.

The current model originally proposed that a Research Specialist be retained on a full-time basis to provide policy-related research guidance and advice, including: conducting research, evaluating and monitoring developments on emerging trends, legislation, governmental policies and procedures; developing comprehensive reports, policy papers and briefings; reviewing, investigating and coordinating stakeholder input; establishing and maintaining relationships with counterparts in federal, provincial and municipal government and related municipal associations and networks; and attending City-related meetings outside normal working hours and/or at venues outside the Councillors' Office. However, during the 2013 Budget deliberations, the funding for this position was not approved and as a result this resource is not available to the Councillors.

In addition, the current model originally proposed the retention of a Receptionist to handle day-to-day phone calls, emails and drop-in public visits in order to permit the remaining staff to focus on providing Councillors with more one-on-one support. The funding for this position was also not approved as part of the 2013 Budget.

Technology Support

The current model also originally contemplated that a designated Information Technology employee be provided to the Councillors to assist Councillors with the existing technology systems. Due to the need to be familiar with the City's suite of technology tools and security considerations, it was determined that a City employee would be the most appropriate source of support. A designated Information Technology employee has not yet been put in place.

Communications Support

A dedicated communications support person was also to be provided under the proposed current model in order to provide social media assistance and to assist with media communications. This function will be discussed in a separately-submitted report.

Semi-Independent Council Support Models

In response to the comments provided by Council Members with respect to the current Council support model, including the suggestion that a more independent model should be reviewed more closely, the Civic Administration reviewed the support models in place at the City of Hamilton, the City of Ottawa and the City of Mississauga.

City of Hamilton

In Hamilton, Councillors are provided with a budget to retain their own Administrative Assistants. There is one position in the Councillors' Office (the Receptionist) that reports through the City Clerk's Office. There is no dedicated Technology or Communications staff. Councillors and their Administrative Assistants do have Information Technology (IT) assistance through the IT Help desk. The Councillors' Offices are located in City Hall.

City of Ottawa

The City of Ottawa's Council support consists of a Manager and two full-time staff. The Councillors are provided with a Receptionist who answers calls from the public and also advises the Councillors when they have members of the public in attendance. The Receptionist also provides some photocopying assistance and monitors the finances of Members of Council. The City Clerk's staff monitor invoices from the Councillors' Office and provide quarterly updates to each Councillor to advise them of their financial standing. The Councillors are responsible for retaining contract assistance from their budget allocation. Information Technology assistance is provided to Councillors when purchasing computer hardware, software and cell phones from their budget allocation. Councillor's offices are off-site from City Hall.

City of Mississauga

The City of Mississauga provides a similar model to Hamilton, where Councillors' offices remain at City Hall. Each Councillor is provided with funds to retain a contract assistant, whose contract ends at the end of the term of the Councillor, if the Councillor does not return to office. The contracted assistants are provided Information Technology and Communications support by Civic Administration. The City Clerk provides overall administrative direction to the Councillor's Office, but does not supervise the contract assistants. The salaries of the contract assistants are provided for in the overall budget for the Councillors' Office.

Independent Model

A third option is to provide Councillors with a budget to rent an office off-site, retain contract staff, and purchase technological equipment. No resources would be provided to the Councillors from Civic Administration.

From a technological perspective, an independent model may provide Councillors with more flexibility. Under this system there would be the protection of communications between members of the public and their elected representatives. Whereas, under the current model, e-mails on the City's computer system may be subject to the provisions of the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (MFIPPA). Councillors and their hired assistants, who are not employees of the Corporation, would not have access to the City's internal systems.

Conclusion

Members of Council should consider their options and reach a majority decision on a preferred model. Subject to direction of Council, the City Clerk's Office will then report back with a proposed implementation plan and identification of the associated costs.

RECOMMENDED BY:	RECOMMENDED BY:
BRITTA WINTHER CONSULTANT	CATHY SAUNDERS CITY CLERK