

TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING ON TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2011
FROM:	JEFF FIELDING CITY MANAGER
SUBJECT:	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TASK FORCE - UPDATE

RECOMMENDATION

That, on the recommendation of the Managing Director, Corporate Communications, this report **BE RECEIVED**.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER
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At its [January 18, 2010 meeting](#), Council resolved that “Civic Administration BE REQUESTED to report back to the appropriate Committee with respect to a review of public consultation processes and recommendations for improvements to the same.”

At its [July 26, 2010 meeting](#), Council received an update that outlined the steps taken to date and the proposed timeline of six to eight months to continue the internal and external consultations prior to a draft corporate Policy on Citizen Engagement being developed for Council’s approval.

At its [December 20, 2010](#) meeting, Council resolved that “Civic Administration BE REQUESTED to report back with draft terms of reference for a Citizen Engagement Task Force.”

In its [final report](#), the Governance Task Force identified citizen engagement as one principle of good governance and made three separate recommendations related to engagement.

At its March 30, 2011 meeting, Council approved [terms of reference](#) for the Community Engagement Task Force.

BACKGROUND

The Community Engagement Task Force (CETF) was established to build on and continue the work that City staff had already undertaken to improve the way we engage with Londoners. The CETF has been mandated to “research, review, and assess the work already undertaken and engage the public. The task force was then asked to work collaboratively with Civic Administration to develop and recommend to Council a policy on community engagement.”

After Council approved the terms of reference for the Community Engagement Task Force (CETF), citizens, stakeholder groups, and City staff were recruited for the task force in April. Over 150 individuals signed up to be members of the task force at that time. Seven meetings have been held since May 2011, producing over 20 hours of working time to date. Currently, a core group of approximately 80 members (including City staff) continues to be actively involved in the work of the task force.

DISCUSSION

Draft Policy

Since the inaugural meeting of the CETF on May 14, 2011, task force members have been working on developing a draft Community Engagement Policy. The draft Policy, attached as Appendix A, represents the collective work of task force members as well as the results of a broader public consultation process. The task force members who have attended a majority of meetings are listed in the attached Appendix B.

The draft Policy affirms the right of citizens and stakeholder groups “to be involved in a timely, meaningful and appropriate manner as part of a clear and transparent process”. Further, the draft Policy affirms a commitment by the City and by citizens to foster an “inclusive community engagement process to ensure quality communication, citizen involvement and community participation across a spectrum of options” as a means of achieving stronger community engagement. The draft Policy recognizes that City staff currently use a range of engagement tools and strategies to engage Londoners, from informing to consulting, collaborating, and, finally, empowering citizens to be leaders and decision-makers.

In addition to an internal review of current policies and practices, an environmental scan of other jurisdictions and academic literature revealed several themes and best practices in the area of community engagement. Cities across the country are working to improve how they engage the public. Jurisdictions reviewed include:

- City of Edmonton
- City of Guelph
- City of Vancouver
- City of Toronto
- City of Montreal
- City of Waterloo
- City of Calgary
- City of Hamilton
- Government of Scotland
- City of Halifax
- Government of New Brunswick
- City of Victoria
- Government of Ontario

The environmental scan revealed that most successful engagement initiatives include the following in their policy or strategy:

- A definition of engagement;
- A set of principles to guide their engagement efforts;
- A description of the different ways of engaging;
- Online calendar of events, meetings, and opportunities for input; and
- Tools and training for staff involved in engagement efforts.

Building on these best practices, the task force has defined community engagement as a **“process of meaningful dialogue and participation in forming decisions that affect the community and enhance quality of life. The community engagement process is transparent, responsive, inclusive and empowering and is based in realistic expectations and mutual trust.”** This definition drives the overarching direction of the draft Policy and is supported by seven guiding principles that are intended to shape the implementation and action resulting from the policy. The guiding principles are: **mutual respect; accountability; realistic expectations; shared responsibility; transparency; flexibility; and responsiveness.**

Working from the current policies and practices of the City and incorporating the best practices learned from other jurisdictions, the task force has been focused on creating a community engagement framework that details types of engagement, the responsibilities of the City and the community, potential tools and strategies for each type of engagement, and considerations for decision-making about the way in which each type of engagement is practiced.

As the task force analyzes the information gathered through the public consultation process, the community engagement framework and draft community engagement policy are expected to be refined and solidified and then brought back to Council as a final report and Policy.

Public Engagement Initiatives

Working from best practices in other jurisdictions, various public engagement strategies have been undertaken by members of the task force in order to incorporate input on the draft policy from a diverse range of Londoners.

The public engagement process initiated by the CETF occurred from October 1, 2011 to October 21, 2011. This process included the following six strategies:

- **Kitchen Conversations:** task force members were encouraged to host “Kitchen Conversations” on the topic of community engagement. These sessions were intended to reach out to smaller groups of citizens in order to seek their input through an informal dialogue. Seven Task Force members acted as host to a total of 68 participants from the community who attended these kitchen conversations.

- **Public Open House:** held October 5, 2011 from 7-9 p.m. at Museum London, the Public Open House was designed to offer Londoners the chance to speak with members of the task force and contribute their ideas about community engagement in an interactive and informal manner. This event was very successful, generating a significant amount of public input from the approximately 60 people (including members of the task force) in attendance. The Public Open House was complemented by two internal City Staff Open Houses, held October 13, 2011 from 1-3:30pm and at Market Tower on October 18 from 11:30 – 3:00. Approximately 30 staff attended the two sessions.
- **Virtual Town Hall with the Mayor:** Task Force members Tammy Lee Marche and Kevin Van Lierop participated in the Virtual Town Hall with Mayor Fontana on October 13, 2011 at 7:30 p.m. Task force members and the general community were invited to watch the Town Hall and join the conversation.
- **Focus Groups:** Two focus groups were held, one with participants drawn from the general London population and one targeting immigrants and newcomers through the LMLIP (London-Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership Council). A total of 13 participants attended the two sessions which were facilitated by an independent facilitator.
- **Online Survey:** An online survey ran parallel to the other consultation strategies for the duration of the three-week public consultation process. We received 59 completed surveys, including responses from several paper surveys completed at the Public Open House on October 5.

The Task Force is currently working to analyze the information gathered through the public engagement process and incorporate the results into the draft Community Engagement Policy.

CONCLUSION

Council had previously requested Civic Administration to review engagement and consultation processes and develop a corporate policy on community engagement. The first phase of this work was conducted by a staff Working Group from April 2010 to March 2011, who researched and reviewed best practices, conducted internal consultations and training sessions, and prepared the Terms of Reference for a Community Engagement Task Force.

The second phase of this work involved establishing and building a working relationship with the Community Engagement Task Force. Since May 2011, the Task Force (including City staff members) has been working to draft a Community Engagement Policy. This report highlighted the activities of the Task Force to date and reviewed the current status of the draft Policy.

Next Steps

In order to fulfill the requirements of their mandate, the CETF will be working through November and December to complete the following tasks:

- Analyze information gathered through the public engagement process and incorporate it into the draft Policy;
- Review and finalize strategies, tools, and techniques for engagement and finalize the Community Engagement Framework; and
- Finalize the draft Community Engagement Policy and report to Council.

It is expected that the final report and draft Policy will be brought back for Council's approval January 2012.

Implications

The work undertaken by the CETF highlights several key implications and benefits for the City. When an Engagement Policy is successful, it can lead to many benefits for the City and for citizens, including, but not limited to:

- Increased citizen participation;
- Increased civic pride;
- Increased understanding about how City Hall works;
- Better, more informed decisions;
- Increased role in some decision-making processes for citizens; and
- Earlier identification of citizens' issues and concerns.

The ultimate test of an Engagement Policy is in its implementation. The benefits of a successful and fully realized Engagement Policy are produced by taking a long-term approach to engagement and building trusting relationships between City Hall and citizens. In pursuing the creation of an Engagement Policy, the City is prioritizing community engagement as a critical element in the work of Council and staff, and is committing to inviting citizens into the decision-making processes in appropriate and meaningful manners.

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