



Staff Report

Report To: Council
Report From: Michele Harris, Chief Administrative Officer
Meeting Date: October 1, 2024
Subject: Consideration of Shared County Planning Model

Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of staff report 'Consideration of Shared County Planning Model', council directs staff to provide comments and feedback to the County of Grey on the proposal for a shared county planning model based on Council's feedback.

Highlights:

- Grey County hosted a joint meeting of all nine member municipalities on August 8, 2024, to discuss a proposal for shared planning services centralized at Grey County.
- The proposed service model would see local planning staff join a reorganized Grey County planning department. Local municipal decision-making authority would be unchanged and operational efficiencies would be expected at the administrative level.
- On September 12, 2024, County Council requested feedback on the potential centralized planning service model from all nine member municipalities.

Previous Report/Authority:

None.

Analysis:

On August 8, 2024, all nine Grey County member municipalities met to discuss potential shared services for the delivery of planning services. The proposed service model would see local planning staff join a reorganized Grey County planning department. Local municipal decision-making authority regarding planning decisions would be unchanged and operational efficiencies would be expected at the administrative level.

Grey County and local municipal councils are reviewing a shared-service model for a few reasons. There have been several changes to the provincial planning legislation in recent years. Staff have been engaging with developers and collecting feedback to understand their needs and challenges. Grey County and local municipalities have an ongoing goal of optimizing service delivery for all parties involved in supporting the development of new homes and new or expanded businesses.

The County is seeking comments and questions on the centralized planning service delivery model. A municipal decision is not required at this stage, but rather the County is seeking input on the following from member municipalities:

- Questions about service delivery and customer service;
- In-person office hours and location of staff;
- Impact on other municipal departments and staff (i.e. building, bylaw, etc.);
- Commentary on other roles served by municipal planners, beyond development application processing and policy review (i.e. heritage permits, community improvement plan applications intake, etc.);
- Questions on the development application process, and reporting to municipal councils and committees;
- Financial, IT (software), legal, or human resource matters;
- Municipal record keeping;
- Municipal agreements (i.e. site plan, subdivision agreements);
- Timelines or transitional considerations;
- Communications and reporting between County and municipal staff;
- Future memorandum of understanding considerations; or
- Any other feedback or questions.

Once feedback is collected from all nine member municipalities, an evaluation report is expected to be considered by Grey County Council and local municipal councils in the coming months. In the subsequent County report, staff will respond to the comments and questions received as well as provide more detail on the financial, human resource, IT, and transitional considerations regarding how a centralized planning service delivery model could be implemented.

In preparation for the next report, County staff are also collecting and assessing information regarding planning department application fees, staff salary and benefits, municipal planning application processes, examples of other county-municipal service delivery memorandums of understanding, and planning department software.

The follow-up County staff report will be shared with both County and municipal councils, and it is at that stage that formal direction will be sought on the model.

Financial Implications:

Financial implications of the feasibility of a centralized planning service model will be provided in the follow-up report prepared by County staff.

Communication Plan:

Grey County shared this information with the public via a media release on August 21, 2024. Additionally, this information was posted as part of Grey County's September 12, 2024, Committee of the Whole meeting agenda.

Consultation:

Grey County Planning Department.

Attachments:

None.

Recommended and approved by:

Michele Harris, Chief Administrative Officer

For more information on this report, please contact Michele Harris, CAO at cao@westgrey.com or 519-369-2200.