

**New Accountability and Transparency Policy****Report Purpose**

To provide Council with a report on the development of a new accountability and transparency policy that addresses Council transparency and accountability as well as disclosure requirements.

**Recommendation**

THAT policy GOV-001-034 Accountability and Transparency be approved.

**Council History**

July 5, 2016 – Council approved the following motion: “That Administration work with the Governance Advisory Committee (GAC) to prepare, by the end of Q1 2017, a draft policy for Council’s consideration that would deal with Council transparency and accountability, including disclosure requirements.”

**Strategic Plan Priority Areas**

**Economy:** n/a

**Governance:** Increasing and supporting Council accountability and transparency is critical to governance strategic goals since it enables the development and maintenance of strong relationships with neighbouring municipalities and civic organizations and since it enables and encourages public involvement and communication on the County’s future.

**Social:** n/a

**Culture:** Accountability and transparency are useful in defining and strengthening the community’s identity and heritage since a strong accountability and transparency framework helps to foster a strong shared community identity and sense of pride for Strathcona County.

**Environment:** n/a

**Other Impacts**

**Policy:** This new policy references a number of policies that help to contribute to Strathcona County’s overall framework of accountability and transparency. The policy also strengthens the framework by addressing a number of gaps and articulating the principles by which Strathcona County’s Council is guided on matters relating to accountability and transparency.

**Legislative/Legal:** A municipality is subject to the duties it imposes on itself as a matter of policy (MGA, section 5(b)).

**Interdepartmental:** This new policy has connects to the work of several administrative departments such as Legislative and Legal Services, Financial Services, Corporate Planning and Intergovernmental Affairs, Communications, as well as the Office of the Elected Officials and the Office of the Mayor.

**Summary**

Council’s interest on developing a policy on accountability and transparency arose out of a discussion on how best to distribute the Mayor’s and Councillors’ activity (Ward) reports. Rather than address this issue in an ad hoc way, Council expressed a preference for having a policy that would provide accountability and transparency principles and guidelines to address such questions. In light of this conversation, Council directed Administration to

work with the Governance Advisory Committee (GAC) to prepare a draft accountability and transparency policy for Council's consideration.

The GAC, supported by Administration, reviewed the approaches to accountability and transparency in various Alberta municipalities as well as municipalities in other Canadian provinces. They also looked at the various changes to the Municipal Government Act (i.e. those changes introduced by Bill 20 and Bill 21) which were related to issues of accountability and transparency. The GAC considered the County's existing bylaws, policies and procedures or practices that are most directly connected to supporting municipal accountability and transparency and examined a number of municipal approaches to such a policy. A copy of September 7 GAC report on Accountability and Transparency is provided as Enclosure 2.

Once research was completed and some initial feedback on key considerations was provided by the GAC, Administration prepared a draft outline of the policy. The GAC subsequently reviewed the outline and provided feedback. Administration drafted the policy which was once again reviewed and refined. Developing this policy was an iterative process and required consultation across a number of internal departments.

Ultimately, the GAC and Administration aimed at achieving the following objectives in developing the draft Accountability and Transparency policy:

1. Ensuring that the policy is comprehensive by providing a good overview of the County's accountability and transparency framework.
2. Addressing the identified policy gaps in accountability and transparency (e.g. distribution of Councillor activity reports, openness of Council meetings, availability of certain records, etc.).
3. Having clearly articulated governance principles (see policy statement).
4. Being well-organized and user-friendly so that the guidelines are grouped together according to broad accountability and transparency themes.

### **Communication Plan**

If approved, the policy will be included in Strathcona County's Municipal Policy Handbook which is available on the County's public website.

### **Enclosure**

- 1 Proposed GOV-001-034 Accountability and Transparency Policy
- 2 Governance Advisory Committee Report: Strathcona County Governance Policy on Accountability and Transparency (September 7, 2016)