

Priorities Committee Meeting_Feb11_2020

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE AND UPDATE

Report on Task Forces

Report Purpose

To provide the Priorities Committee with a report on the use of Task Forces.

Our Prioritized Strategic Goals

Continuously improving the way we work, as one organization, in an agile and sustainable manner

Report

In July of 2019, Council directed Administration to prepare a report that outlines a proposal for a task force model for targeted public advisory roles and mandates.

A “task force” is one type of entity that may be established by a municipal council. Other common types include committees, boards, and commissions. All such entities are considered “council committees” under the *Municipal Government Act* (MGA). The MGA defines the term “council committee” to mean an entity established by a council under the MGA but excludes an assessment review board or subdivision and development review board since both those entities have their own specific sections of the MGA devoted to their establishment, powers, and requirements. The establishment of any type of council committee requires that council pass a bylaw that sets out the functions of the body and the procedures to be followed.

Strathcona County has several council committees. Over the last few years, the County’s practice has been to use advisory committees for broad issues that are ongoing or are expected to be continuing for a longer time period (e.g. 2-3 years or more). The County also establishes council committees that are quasi-judicial bodies required by provincial legislation or the county’s bylaws for providing a mechanism to facilitate a right of appeal or complaint related to a municipal matter. On occasion, Council has opted to use the term “task force” when it intends to form a council committee that has a more specific mandate or task that is expected to be concluded in a short to medium timeframe.

While the County’s practice is not codified in policy, the following chart summarizes the County’s current council committee makeup and general approach:

Advisory Committee	Task Force	Quasi-Judicial
<i>Established to provide advice and recommendations to Council on a broad subject area. These entities typically are ongoing for several years.</i>	<i>Established to provide advice and recommendations to Council on a specific and focused topic or issue within a specified timeframe. The timeframe is typically short e.g. 6 months to 18 months.</i>	<i>Established as an independent entity to hear appeals or complaints as provided in the respective entity’s bylaw. These entities are mandated by provincial legislation or County bylaw and are ongoing.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accessibility Advisory Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning and Development Red Tape Reduction Task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Assessment Review Board

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seniors Advisory Committee • Traffic Safety Advisory Committee • Youth Advisory Committee • Community Living Advisory Committee • Economic Development and Tourism Advisory Committee • Agricultural Services Board* 	Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subdivision Development and Appeal Board • General Appeals and Review Committee • Bylaw Enforcement Order Review Committee
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In terms of public engagement, establishing a task force allows for the collection of feedback from a group of individuals that may represent some of the views within the larger community or may represent a specific demographic. A task force has the advantage of being focussed and including perspectives from selected people who may have special experience or knowledge of the subject at hand. Other forms of engagement, such as surveys, public hearings, and open houses, typically provide engagement from a broader segment of the community and thus may be more effective in capturing diverse views.

The establishment and facilitation of a task force may also be valuable since the participants have the advantage of making recommendations with more context and information than they would in a survey setting. However, facilitating a task force would typically mean an increased cost over that of a survey or public hearing, since there are honorariums to be paid, along with the increased costs related to the administrative work to support the entity.

Another key consideration for achieving meaningful outcomes when establishing a task force is ensuring that there is clarity of purpose. A clear purpose is required for any form of public engagement but is especially relevant for a task force that is given a short time in which to meet, consider an issue, and provide feedback by way of report. A related consideration for effective task forces is ensuring that the issue that the task force is asked to address is not something that is already the responsibility of another committee or administrative department. The County has an effective administration with subject matter experts in several municipal areas and functions. Council may work with its administration to obtain research and reports as it deems necessary. Striking a task force to provide feedback on a matter that is the responsibility of administration may mean duplicated efforts and less effective use of resources.

When deciding on the advisability of striking a task force, Council may wish to consider the following questions:

1. What is the specific issue or matter to be addressed?
2. Is this something that should be addressed by directing administration to prepare a report?
3. Is this matter something that requires public engagement?
4. If the matter requires public engagement, what would be the most appropriate form of public engagement?
5. If the matter should be addressed by a council committee, should it be assigned to an existing committee or does it require the establishment of a task force?

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Ultimately, Council decides when to establish a task force; however, the above questions may be useful in supporting the decision-making process.

In terms of model for task forces for future targeted public advisory roles and mandates, the following guidelines may be of assistance. However, it should be noted at the outset that decisions about striking council committees are within Council's purview.

Establishment:

When Council believes that there is a specific issue that would benefit from targeted public engagement, Council may wish to direct Administration to prepare a bylaw for the establishment of a task force. The bylaw should set out the purpose, mandate, membership, terms, supports, reporting mechanism, etc. The County currently has a helpful template bylaw for the establishment of council committees.

Mandate:

As noted above, a clear mandate or purpose is critical to having a successful task force. Establishing a task force should be considered in conjunction with other public engagement options. Further, the mandate of a task force should be complimentary to any work already being conducted by Administration.

Timeframe:

Typically, a task force is used to address ad hoc matters. It may be appropriate to establish a task force for matters that are expected to be addressed within 6 to 18 months. The bylaw to establish the taskforce would include "sunset" provisions.

Membership Recruitment:

Membership recruitment can be targeted to certain individuals who have expertise. In some instances, Administration has worked with Council to identify potential members and in other instances task force members could be recruited as part of the annual public member recruitment for boards and committees. One caveat is that public member recruitment typically happens in the fall so the timing of the task force could be impacted if this option is chosen.

Council Participation:

As with other council committees that are advisory in nature, Councillors would typically be appointed as a liaison. It is also possible, and in some cases perhaps preferable, to consider not appointing a Council liaison, since a task force is typically a body of experts and their advice and recommendations ultimately go to Council by way or report.

Administrative Resources:

There is an administrative cost for establishing and running a task force. Most of the cost is related to staff time. Indeed, staff may need to set aside other priorities in order to address and support the needs of the task force especially since a task force tends to operate with a shorter timeframe. There are also costs associated with honorarium under the County's bylaw (34-2017), which is generally \$25 per member for each meeting. In addition, there may be costs for room rentals and some light catering expenses.

Council and Committee History

July 23, 2019 Council approved "THAT Administration provide a report to Priorities Committee that outlines a proposal for a task force model for future

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targeted public advisory roles and mandates.”

Other Impacts

Policy: n/a

Legislative/Legal: MGA s. 145 addresses the establishing of a council committee via bylaw. S. 146 addresses the composition of a council committee. S. 195 provides the meeting requirements for council committees. S. 196 provides the method of giving notice of a council committee meeting. S. 197 provides the right of the public to be present at meetings of a council committee. S. 203 addresses what may and may not be delegated by council to a council committee.

Interdepartmental: Legislative and Legal Services, Corporate Planning

Master Plan/Framework: n/a