



Council Report

Report Number:	CAO2021-006
Meeting Date:	June 15, 2021
Title:	City Service Innovations and Enhancements
Description:	Response to the COVID-19 pandemic required changes to municipal service delivery and processes. This report provides an update to Council on some of these changes.
Author and Title:	Ron Taylor, Chief Administrative Officer

Recommendation(s):

That Report CAO2021-006, **City Service Innovations and Enhancements**, be received; and

That the CAO continue to review service levels and changes with departments, and recommend service reviews, changes and efficiencies to Council in Q1 2022.

Department Head: _____

Financial/Legal/HR/Other: _____

Chief Administrative Officer: _____

Background:

At the Council Meeting of January 28, 2021, Council adopted the following resolution:

CR2021-016

Moved By Councillor Veale

Seconded By Councillor Richardson

That the Memorandum from Councillor Veale, **regarding a Review of Service Levels by the CAO**, be received; and

That the CAO review service levels in light of operational changes and changing service demands, recommend efficiencies and service enhancements and report back in Q2, 2021.

Carried

This report addresses that direction. The above-noted memorandum is provided in Appendix A to this report.

Rationale:

Response, Recovery, Reset

The City's response to the COVID-19 pandemic required immediate changes to the delivery of certain municipal services. The changes were made to comply with various provincial and local directives and orders, with the priority being public and staff health and safety.

Some programs and services were suspended entirely, altered and/or changed. We continue to operate most of our traditional municipal services and programs, but in a very different way. Specific service changes also varied over the 15-month lifecycle of the pandemic, and we are still operating in a "response" mode.

While we remain vigilant with continued focus on pandemic response and health and safety, we are readying and beginning to transition into a pandemic "recovery" phase.

As the City returns to more traditional operations, and provincial and health restrictions lessen, we will be better positioned to measure service changes, demand for service(s) and identify recommended efficiencies, innovations and service enhancements.

Through our ongoing review and analysis, Council and the administration will be best positioned to formalize service changes, and "reset" programs and services in 2022.

Operational Changes, Innovations and Efficiencies

Attached as Appendix B to this Report is a listing of 100 department process improvements and innovations accomplished during the pandemic. This is not an exhaustive listing of all service changes, innovations and efficiencies, but rather a snapshot of many accomplishments. Some themes are emerging, and will be further reviewed and pursued to accomplish greater efficiencies.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Departments have acquired needed PPE and made all required work space adjustments to comply with health and safety orders, and protect staff and the public. Much of this equipment, retrofits and processes will continue to be utilized post-pandemic.

Technology

Reliance on electronic technology for interactions and transactions increased dramatically during the pandemic. New technology and software will continue to be utilized throughout our operations, and have resulted in savings, efficiencies, streamlined customer service and public participation. We will continue to review and improve where required, while capitalizing on positive changes.

Staff

As our services changed over the pandemic lifecycle, various staff were temporarily laid off, redeployed, relocated and/or “restructured” (doing different and/or reprioritized work). A significant number of staff maintained essential and critical functions and service delivery. We will continue to review our job descriptions and utilize unique staff skillsets as needed and where available and appropriate.

Some staff were required to work-from-home. Initially, many workarounds and gaps in service were exposed. As we learned and progressed through the pandemic, work-from-home was an essential practice, and quite efficient in many ways. We are continuing to review work-from-home arrangements, and anticipate a permanent policy being developed to support and accommodate this practice. Cost avoidance for future work space construction alone is a substantial forecasted net savings.

Facilities and Spaces

Demand for certain facilities and spaces decreased dramatically as facilities were ordered to close. Until we are able to monitor and return to service in some portfolios, demand cannot be measured. We will continue to monitor usage of facilities and report back when appropriate.

Public Access to Service and Participation

Throughout the pandemic, heightened communications were demanded, and we were forced to leverage technology and electronic mediums to communicate. Public participation seemed to be at an all-time high, when measuring attendance and interactions through our Jump In site, and observing council and committee meeting recording views. We will continue to review these efficiencies, and anticipate recommending permanent electronic mediums for public participation.

The pandemic also forced staff and the public to more appointment-based interactions. This theme will also be reviewed further, as efficiencies in staff resources and better customer information and response was observed.

Other Alternatives Considered:

Council could choose to direct staff to review certain programs and services, and report back on recommended changes, efficiencies and innovations. If that option is desired, then the following resolution should be passed:

That staff be directed to review (*insert program or service*) and report back by Q?, 202? on recommended changes and/or efficiencies.

In this report, staff is recommending a follow up report to Council in Q1 2022 on recommended program and service efficiencies and innovations.

Alignment to Strategic Priorities

Reviewing and modernizing municipal programs and services supports Council's priority of "good government" by increasing efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery. We will accomplish this by, among other things, promoting continuous improvement to Make it Better in all service areas.

Financial Impacts:

Ongoing financial savings and efficiencies are difficult to measure, as our response resulted in a decrease in certain revenues, increases in certain expenditures, but overall a net decrease in expenditures.

Some revenues were waived to assist with economic and community recovery, while other revenues were simply lost due to closure of certain programs, services and facilities.

Most new expenditures were associated with acquiring PPE, retrofitting workplaces and spaces and increasing cleaning and certain services. Many traditional services were suspended and/or reduced, resulting in a net savings.

Also skewing our financials are significant pandemic relief funds provided by the Provincial and Federal governments to assist in municipal response and recovery (or within certain service portfolios already partially funded by the Province). Obviously these funds are “one-time” and focused on pandemic relief.

At the June 15 Council meeting, staff will present the 2020 budget surplus. The City also achieved a 2019 budget surplus, and council prudently invested that savings into economic and community pandemic recovery efforts. It is likely that our service delivery will remain somewhat reduced and different for the remainder of 2021. We will continue to work towards a 2021 balanced budget, with savings to reinvest back in future year projects, programs and services.

2019 Surplus

Consultations:

All City Departments

Attachments:

Appendix A – Memorandum from Councillor Veale, dated January 12, 2021



Appendix A – Memo
from Councillor Veale

Appendix B – Listing of Department Innovations and Process Improvements



Appendix B -
Service Improvements

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Department Head: Ron Taylor, CAO