



City of Guelph

Report:

CORPORATE ADMINISTRATION

TO: Mayor Farbridge and Members of Council

DATE: 2008/01/21

SUBJECT: Implementing the Strategic Plan: Council Priorities 2007-2010

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council adopt the attached list of priorities and that Departmental workplans be developed in accordance with these directions to facilitate implementation of the 2007 Strategic Plan goals.

That a policy be developed to ensure an annual priority setting process, reporting framework and means for addressing new priorities as they emerge.

SUMMARY:

In the fall of 2007, Council and staff undertook an interactive process to assess ongoing commitments, identify new projects and determine priorities that would best implement the goals of the Strategic Plan. With the community-driven Strategic Plan as the basis of discussion, over 200 ongoing initiatives and new ideas were openly reviewed through two information sharing and gathering meetings that took place. The meetings were followed by an electronic survey designed to validate input received and ensure a consistent preliminary priority selection process for final review by members of Council.

Survey findings, which are a direct outcome of the information received from Councillors, reveal a set of high and medium level priorities that support each of the Strategic Plan Goals. Once approved, the priorities will be integrated into Departmental workplans scheduled for completion in April 2008. Other priorities raised that relate to the high and medium priorities or are significantly underway will also be addressed in 2008 workplans. Taken together, all of the approved priorities will serve as the basis for 2009 priority setting and workplan development discussions. Council approval of priorities in support of the 2007 Strategic Plan serves as a significant step in the establishment of a more comprehensive strategic management system that will ensure more effective and accountable decision making and generate results by directly aligning the Strategic Plan with Departmental workplans and the budget.

BACKGROUND:

In July 2007, Council approved the new Strategic Plan with specific goals, strategic objectives and an inspiring vision - "to be the city that makes a difference." As a management tool, the Strategic Plan helps to set priorities, make decisions, and effectively manage operations. In order to effectively implement the Strategic Plan, and by extension, a comprehensive management system that directly aligns the strategic plan to workplan development and the budget process, it was recognized that a critical next step was to set strategic priorities.

Understanding that project work accounts for only 10%-20% of the city's resources and capacity while 80%-90% of the work, resources, and focus in the organization is dedicated to service delivery (including the work and processes that support service delivery), staff and Council set about determining which mix of project priorities, whether existing, pending or new, might best implement each of the Strategic Plan goals.

To that end, a process was developed that included two interactive and collaborative sessions with staff and Council. The first meeting took place on October 19, 2007. The purpose was to share comprehensive information regarding the ongoing project workload in the organization and to provide an opportunity for Councillors to ask any questions of Directors and Managers that would help their understanding of current organizational project commitments. The extensive project lists completed for each Strategic Plan goal were segmented into four categories:

- A. Regulated and/or Mandated projects
- B. Council Directed and Initiated projects
- C. Council Directed but not yet started
- D. Not Yet Directed by Council; identified or required

At the first meeting, Councillors individually identified those ongoing and new efforts that could serve as preliminary priorities for further discussion at a subsequent meeting. The framework suggested for making those initial selections included those priorities that in each Councillors' opinion would:

- best position the City to achieve a strategic goal(s)
- set a strong and balanced foundation for moving forward
- result in a measurable success

It was assumed that each undertaking was weighted equally in terms of importance and that the initial selections would be subject to further review, debate and discussion.

On November 23, 2007 Councillors and staff met a second time to review the feedback and information gathered from Meeting #1. This information (and new ideas raised) was openly reviewed and discussed to ensure a common understanding. To facilitate workload planning, further input was provided as to whether ongoing discretionary projects should be continued or deferred. At the end of the meeting, Councillors used a

point system along with the criteria above to help further determine key potential priorities from all the information presented.

Following Meeting #2, Councillors individually completed an electronic survey to validate the input received and ensure a consistent selection process for final review by members City Council.

REPORT:

The attached document includes the final findings on potential priorities for Council's further discussion, debate and approval.

CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN:

Implementation of the Strategic Plan through the establishment of priorities that are integrated into Departmental workplans and linked to the budget is part of a comprehensive strategic management system that includes: strategic planning to set organizational goals; the identification of priorities and development of annual work plans; alignment between the Strategic Plan, Departmental work plans and the budget; reporting, performance management and measurement systems to evaluate success in achieving the goals; and mechanisms to facilitate ongoing communication among staff, Councillors and the community. While this system will take time to fully implement, Council approval of priorities that support the Strategic Plan is a significant step - a key element of organizational effectiveness related to strategic objective 5.6 which calls for excellence in planning and management.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

With most of the potential priorities ongoing, related costs are within the current operating or capital budgets. If new costs arise over time, any adjustments will be reported and addressed through the regular budget process.

DEPARTMENTAL CONSULTATION:

Both Directors and Management staff were fully involved in the planning and delivery of both priority setting meetings. It is expected that staff direction and involvement will continue as the priority projects are integrated into the Departmental work plans for 2008 and as a policy is developed to ensure an annual priority setting process, reporting framework and means for addressing new priorities as they emerge.

COMMUNICATIONS:

The process undertaken to identify priorities necessitated a highly collaborative and communicative effort between Council and staff. The effort was unprecedented and highly successful in terms of identifying potential priorities for Council approval in support of the Strategic Plan. The 2007 community-driven Strategic Plan, founded on extensive public consultation and engagement was the primary driver behind Council priority discussion at both meetings.

ATTACHMENTS:

Appendix A - 2007 Priority Setting Findings

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