

Accountability and Transparency Policy

Approved by: County Council

By-law: 5050-19

Replaces: ADM-01-08

Date Approved: March 28, 2019

Last Revision Date: March 2019

Scheduled for Review by: 2023

Policy: G-GEN-005

Section: Governance

Sub Section: General

Policy Statement

The Corporation of the County of Grey acknowledges that it is responsible for providing good government for the community in an accountable and transparent manner by:

- Encouraging public access and participation to ensure that decision making is responsive to the needs of Grey County residents and receptive to their opinions;
- Delivering high quality services to residents;
- Promoting the efficient use of public resources

Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to comply with Section 270(1) of the Municipal Act, 2001 as amended (the Act) which requires all municipalities to adopt and maintain a policy/procedure for the manner in which the municipality will demonstrate that it is accountable to the public for its actions and that its actions are transparent to the public.

Scope

This procedure applies to the Corporation of the County of Grey as is required under Section 270 (1) of the *Municipal Act*, as amended.

Definitions

“Accountability” is the principle that the County will be responsible to its stakeholders for decisions made and policies implemented, as well as its actions and inactions.

“Transparency” is the principle that the County actively encourages and fosters stakeholder participation and openness in its decision making processes. Additionally, transparency means that the municipality’s decision making process is open and clear to the public.

Requirements

The principles of accountability and transparency apply equally to the decision making and administrative management of the County. The County has developed and approved policies, procedures and practices that contribute to creating an open, accountable and transparent public organization and comply with the County's obligations under provincial legislation.

Legislated Requirements

- *Municipal Act, 2001*
- *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act*
- *Provincial Offences Act*
- *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*
- *Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004*
- *Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, 1996*
- *Bill 168, Occupational Health and Safety Amendment Act (Violence and Harassment in the Workplace) 2009*

Financial Matters

The County will be open, accountable and transparent to its stakeholders in its financial dealings as required under the Act. Some examples of how the County provides such accountability and transparency are as follows:

- External audit and report of annual financial statements
- Long term financial planning
- Performance Management through Public Sector Accounting Board (PSAB) 3150 standards
- Asset management
- Municipal Performance Measures Program (MPMP)
- Purchasing/procurement by-law and reports
- Development Charges background study and by-law, annual Development Charges brochure
- Budget process and quarterly status reports-operating and capital

Internal Governance

The County's administrative practices ensure specific accountability on the part of its employees through the following initiatives:

- Performance management and evaluation
- Ontario Municipal Benchmarking Initiative (OMBI) and other performance and outcome measurements and reporting requirements
- General Employment Policies and Procedures
- Standards of Conduct for staff

- Computer Use Policy
- Internet and Email Policy
- Health and Safety
- Use of County Property

Accountability and Ethical Standards

The County ensures that it is open and accountable to its stakeholders through implementing processes outlining how, when and under what rules meetings will take place. The County's meetings will be open to the public when and as required under the Act, and members of the public will have an opportunity to make delegations as provided in the Procedural By-law. In addition, the County has adopted policies and procedures which ensure that participation by the public can be meaningful and effective, through timely disclosure of information by various means including print media, websites, etc. Some specific examples include:

- Procedural By-Law
- Council Code of Conduct By-law
- Council-staff Relations Policy
- Closed Meeting Policy
- Records Retention Policy
- Notice Policy
- Sale and Disposition of Land Policy
- Closed Meeting Investigator By-Law
- Delegation of Authority By-Law
- Publication of agendas and minutes
- Accessibility Policy
- Social Media and County website
- Open Data Portal
- Bruce Grey Data Information Sharing Collaborative (BGDISC)

Open Meetings

Grey County Council and Committee meetings are open to the public except as authorized by Section 239 (2) of the Municipal Act. The Closed Meeting Policy provides for best practices for Council and Committees to follow when considering confidential information in a closed meeting. This policy outlines practices which go beyond the Municipal Act's requirements to ensure that Grey County's business is conducted in the most accountable and transparent manner possible.

Application

This procedure applies to the actions or decisions to be undertaken or made by Council, all committees including sub committees and task forces, boards, staff and the Grey County and Owen Sound Housing Corporation, so as to increase the accountability and transparency of the municipal decision making process.

Council acknowledges that it is responsible to provide good government for its residents in an accountable and transparent manner by encouraging public access and participation to ensure that decision making is responsive to the needs of its residents and receptive to their opinions.

The provisions for accountability and transparency as contained in this procedure as well as related policies and by-laws are considered a minimum and may be exceeded at the discretion of the appropriate party.

Monitoring/Contraventions

The County Clerk will be responsible for receiving complaints and/or concerns related to this policy. Upon receipt of a complaint and/or concern, the County Clerk will notify:

- In the case of staff, the Director or Senior Manager responsible for the area and the Director of Corporate Services and CAO
- In the case of a closed meeting, the Meeting Investigator
- In the case of Council, the Head of Council

Updating Procedure

The County Clerk is hereby authorized to update this procedure with changes to by-law and procedure number references for those by-laws and policies listed in this procedure.