

Report CAOR-CC-04-15

To: Warden Eccles and Members of County Council
From: Sharon Vokes, Acting Chief Administrative Officer and Members of Senior Management Team
Meeting Date: July 7, 2015
Subject: **Corporate Operating Plan – Second Quarter Update**
Status:

Recommendation

THAT County Council hereby receives for information purposes the Corporate Operating Plan – Q2 2015 Update report dated June 30, 2015, as recommended by the Acting Chief Administrative Officer in her report CAOR-CC-04-15.

Background

The County's mandate is to provide a range of services to its citizens and businesses. It is easy to become engrossed in the daily operations and issues that arise from time to time rather than focusing on policy development. In order for the region to not just survive in the future, but rather to thrive, looking ahead and aligning resources strategically is imperative.

In 2012 Council endorsed its first Corporate Strategic Plan. The Plan has been kept alive and goals and objectives realized through the creation of the Three Year Corporate Operating Plan and supporting three year departmental plans.

It is important to understand that the Corporate Operating Plan is specifically tied to the "change" agenda of the Corporation and does not include items related to the routine, but still very important, day to day operations. Each year it is updated and rolled ahead one year to keep it current.

While there are six strategic goals in the Corporate Strategic Plan, the desired outcomes can be described in three general community building outcomes:

Enable Economic Opportunity and Growth:

Wealth generation and the creation of work are the basic building blocks for livable, healthy communities where human initiative and stable families can flourish. Opportunities for entrepreneurial initiative, business expansion and training for jobs that offer upward mobility are critical to this success.

Foster Community Sustainability:

A community that is vibrant, strong and offers hope to its residents is a community in which neighbourhoods are safe, the environment is clean, housing is affordable, social support services and cultural/recreational opportunities are accessible and where civic spirit is nurtured by participatory decision-making, innovative design and celebration.

Strengthen Community Partnerships:

Economic opportunity and social/cultural development rely on broad community participation, both at the individual level and at the institutional level. Engaged individuals, governments and the private and not-for-profit sectors working together to provide relevant, accessible and coordinated programs and services that build towards the community's strategic direction.

Discussion

The Three Year Corporate Operating Plan is broken down into the six goals within the Corporate Strategic Plan. The Corporate Operating Plan outlines the many varied initiatives and projects which have been undertaken, are underway, or contemplated over the next three years. It is a useful tool for gauging where the corporation is with respect to working towards its goals. The use of these plans has helped Council and staff focus resources to be more visionary than reactive. A copy of the updated Three Year Corporate Operating Plan is attached.

A review of the second quarter update of the Corporate Operating Plan clearly identifies that great strides have been made and neither Council nor staff have let the Corporate Strategic Plan languish on a shelf.

While some projects have been delayed or stopped for various reasons, many others are on pace or have been completed.

Some observations of interest:

Broadband – Just Get It

Technology is now intrinsically woven into the everyday fabric of our lives. It is no longer something that is novel, or nice to have, and the need for high speed, reliable and affordable broadband to all of our residents is crucial. The County's consultant for the Economic Development Action Plan said it bluntly: "broadband, just get it". Broadband is not just about being able to access Netflix and emails. It has everything to do with a wide range of things that are imperative to the County, its residents and businesses today and into the future. To compete locally and globally, high speed access is needed. As an example, more and more, health care is being delivered through technology and technology plays a key role in the current aging at home strategy. Additionally, businesses, including agriculture, need reliable high speed for their day to day business. These are just a few of the areas in need of reliable and affordable high speed access.

Grey County has been in the forefront of this issue both at the elected official level and staff level. Geoff Hogan, Director of Information Technology, has been the technical staff lead on the Southwest Information Fibre Technology (SWIFT) project which is led by the Western Ontario Warden's Caucus. The demands of this project have put a strain on the County's Information Technology Department, but sometimes in the name of the greater good, that is necessary.

Grey County is moving ahead in several other separate, but complimentary ventures in support of broadband. A study is planned for 2015 to look at how to leverage getting broadband accelerated in Grey County in concert with the SWIFT project. In an effort to show Council's commitment to the providers on this subject, \$1 million has been set aside in reserve for this purpose. The Communications Coordinator has also been seconded to the end of 2015 to work on the SWIFT project and connected county initiative.

Infrastructure

Not that long ago, the federal and provincial governments owned 70 to 75% of the public infrastructure. This has now changed to municipalities owning approximately 60%. This change in ownership hasn't come with a new funding model and the property tax already under stress will have further difficulties as the infrastructure continues to age.

The County has done what it can to mitigate what we know will be rising costs. Building condition assessments have been undertaken and annual funding embedded in the Five Year Capital Forecast which will be presented to Council in the third quarter.

The rebuild/renovation of Rockwood Terrace and the addition to the administration building are significant expenditures that Council has begun to prepare for through the utilization of space being freed up from paid up debentures and annual budgeted transfers to reserve.

That being said, there are significant capital needs with respect to the County's roads, bridges and social housing stock. This is not a Grey County problem alone though and one that is shared across the province. The solution will likely be multi-pronged consisting of innovative approaches and potentially alterations to levels of service.

Healthy Communities

The heading Healthy Communities has been chosen, in part because it is becoming an emerging trend in municipalities, and partly because it captures so much of what the County does. Where we work, live and play is vitally important to the quality of our lives. It is also recognized that there are multiple factors and conditions which impact our quality of life such as social status, literacy and affordable housing. In essence, all the aspects of a healthy community are captured in the three general community building outcomes identified at the beginning of this report.

More specifically, there are five key building blocks to a healthy community approach:

1. Community/citizen engagement
2. Multi-sector collaboration
3. Political commitment
4. Healthy public policy; and
5. Asset-based community development, which is looking at a community from the standpoint of the assets it has and building on them.

The qualities of a healthy community include:

- Clean and safe physical environment
- Peace, equity and social justice
- Adequate access to food, water, shelter, income, safety, work and recreation for all
- Adequate access to health care services
- Opportunities for learning and skill development
- Strong, mutually supportive relationships and networks
- Workplaces that are supportive of individual and family well-being
- Wide participation of residents in decision-making
- Strong local cultural and spiritual heritage
- Diverse and vital economy
- Protection of the natural environment

- Responsible use of resources to ensure long term sustainability

Momentum is growing to use a healthy community lens or approach when analyzing whether a certain approach will support or enhance a healthy community or negatively impact it.

While historically county government was somewhat out of sight and out of mind and focused primarily on hard services, there has been a gradual shift for the County to be more focused on services to the vulnerable sector. This is demonstrated by the fact that 48% of the 2015 levy is focused on people services. This now places the County in the forefront for using a healthy community lens approach.

It's obvious that the County's support through affordable housing and social assistance fits this approach, but so too do such things as the County's funding to Georgian College for the Marine Emergency Duties Training Centre, its new Economic Development Action Plan, support for reliable and affordable high speed connections, land use planning policies, Rural Transit study and active transportation recommendations within the Transportation Master Plan.

Collectively, the County sits at a myriad of community partner tables involved in ensuring that we live in healthy communities. Some new partnerships with Georgian College and Grey Bruce Health Services have also been forged. Often, the County is the common partner at the table. On the health care front Grey County is in the forefront with the introduction of community para-medicine which is improving the lives of those served and reducing reliance on formal health care services.

While it is exciting to be in such a unique position to support the creation and maintenance of healthy communities more holistically, there is also the danger that some partners and agencies may turn to the County to own the projects. While the County has been, and should continue to be, a leader at these tables, it doesn't need to lead the projects.

Cultural and Natural Resources

Grey County is blessed with abundant natural resources that not only are beautiful to behold but also form the backbone of our economy. Whether it's the rugged escarpment with sweeping views of Georgian Bay to our agriculture and aggregate resources, all play key roles in our lifestyle and economy.

The County plays a significant role in supporting culture and natural resources both directly through services and indirectly through policy development. Examples of County services are the County's own trail systems, forest management, and support

for Grey Roots Museum and Archives which is dedicated to telling Grey County's rich history and financial support to Grey County Agricultural Services.

A significant project in 2015 which will leverage the County's cultural and natural resources for visitors and residents alike is the way finding and tourism signage study. The study is currently underway and a report should be before Council by the end of the third quarter.

A natural resource which is identified in the County's Strategic Plan is support for revitalization of the Owen Sound harbour. It's well known that the harbour is in need of dredging. This harbour is of county wide significance as a world class recreational jewel as well as a working commercial/industrial harbour. Recently it would seem it may even become a tourism destination to dive for shipwrecks. The loss of its use as a commercial/industrial harbour is a threat to the economy of the County. At this time, the County's support for the Owen Sound harbour has been one of advocacy. It is anticipated that discussions on the future of this harbour will become more active over the coming years.

Organizational Development

Regular organizational reviews are critical to ensuring that staff resources remain aligned and organized in an efficient and effective manner and in keeping with the ongoing evolution of county services. This is usually best achieved through an objective external review. Initially, a departmental review of the Finance Department had been planned for 2015. This is being held off until at least 2016 pending the hiring of a new CAO.

Work continues though in 2015 with two smaller reviews. The Information Technology Department is embarking on a process to establish a more formalized process for reviewing information management and technology requests that come forward. Currently the demand exceeds capacity and decisions must be made on how to establish priorities and monitor progress.

The second study will be an organizational review of the children's services division of the Social Services Department. There have been a number of changes in child care including a declining number of youth in the County and changes in Provincial direction both in the ministry responsible for child care programs and provincial philosophy. An organizational review will ensure that the County's resources are aligned to meet current and future needs and opportunities.

Previous organizational reviews, most notably Transportation Services and Housing, while complete, have not become documents on the shelf. Recommendations flowing

out of these reports continue to come forward to the respective committees and administrative best practices are being embedded in the departments. All change is somewhat difficult though, so change management processes and patience have been constant factors.

Additionally, a staff wellness plan has been on the radar for some time and hasn't gained the momentum that it should, mostly as a result of changing CAO's. While not prominent yet, the concept has come forward in 2015. Earlier this year, Council requested that staff look at ways of mitigating the increasing costs of benefits. Led by the Director of Human Resources, the Senior Management Team has been tasked to look at this issue. In doing so, it makes sense to look at the subject in a more holistic manner and include staff health and wellness as well. A kick off meeting to initiate discussions on this matter was held in June.

Financial / Staffing / Legal / Information Technology

Considerations

The tendency is to continue to add more projects and more initiatives to the corporate plate without taking something off the plate. Using the strategic management framework effectively gives Council and staff a tool by which this tendency can be managed to ensure that the corporate plate does not get heaped to overflowing.

Strategy is a matter of setting and executing priorities. More often than not it needs to be about what we don't do or discontinue, in order to focus time, energy and money on what is more on point.

Link to Strategic Goals / Priorities

See above.

Attachments

[Corporate Operating Plan 2015-2017 Q2 June Update.docx](#)

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Senior Management Team,

Sharon Vokes, Acting Chief Administrative Officer