

Report CAOR-CC-03-14

To: Warden Milne and Members of County Council
From: Lance Thurston, Chief Administrative Officer
Meeting Date: March 4, 2014
Subject: **County Library Services: Facilitating a Local Dialogue**
Status: Recommendation adopted by Council Council March 4, 2014 per Resolution CC35-14;

Recommendation

WHEREAS at its meeting on February 11, 2014 the Corporate Services Committee endorsed Report CAOR – CS-01-14 of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) recommending that Grey County not proceed further with a collaborative county library feasibility study;

AND WHEREAS the Committee requested the CAO to prepare a report on the cost and resource implications of facilitating discussions between lower tier municipalities and their public library boards toward a county-wide solution;

NOW THEREFORE County Council hereby receives Report CAOR-CC-03-14 of the Chief Administrative Officer for information.

Origin

At its meeting on March 4, 2014 County Council is considering the following two recommendations of the Corporate Services Committee concerning county library services:

1. *WHEREAS* County Council directed the Chief Administrative Officer to undertake a preliminary assessment of the merits of proceeding with a comprehensive study into the feasibility of creating a county library system or a county-wide library card system;

AND WHEREAS the CAO has met with municipal officials, the CEOs and Chairs of local library boards in Grey County, representatives of the Southern Ontario

Library Service, reached out to neighbouring counties for information and insights, and conducted independent research;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Report CAOR-CS-01-14 of the Chief Administrative Officer be received and the recommendation not to proceed with a county library feasibility study be endorsed;

AND FURTHER THAT County Council encourages local municipal councils and their public library boards to work together towards a shared integrated information management partnership to improve the scope of and access to library services available to residents across the County.

2. *THAT staff be directed to prepare a report on how to facilitate the conversation between lower tier municipalities and public library boards as well as projected costs of the facilitation.*

Background

County Council asked the Chief Administrative Officer to review and make recommendations concerning a request from the Municipality of West Grey for the county to consider creating a county-wide library system. The CAO's findings and recommendations are contained in Report CAOR-CS-01-14. That report was considered by the Corporate Services Committee and is included in the background package to the March 4th County Council agenda. The Chief Administrative Officer will be presenting the findings contained in that report to County Council at the March 4th meeting.

In Grey County the responsibility for delivering public library service is shared between local municipalities and their public library boards. The county level of government is not involved in any way. The County CAO's review found that there is no strong desire or demonstrated commitment among local councils or their library boards to examine county-wide options for integrated access to or delivery of services. The CAO concluded that in the absence of a broad consensus of need and demonstrated leadership on the issue at the local level, there is no purpose or value in the County pursuing the matter further.

The Corporate Services Committee endorsed the recommendation of the CAO not to proceed with further consideration of the matter and to decline the request of the Municipality of West Grey. The Committee did however ask the CAO to provide information on the cost and resource implications, should the county wish to facilitate further dialogue between the local councils and library boards towards greater service integration.

Collaborative Decision making Framework

The request from West Grey is being considered by County Council in the context of the Collaborative Decision-making process adopted as policy by Council on March 6, 2013. As explained in the previous CAO Report, the framework is an effort to structure the terms of reference and process of engaging the County and other municipal organizations wishing to explore a shared approach to a specified service challenge or potential new service arrangement.

Step 1 of the Framework, which is the subject of report CAOR-CS-01-14, is the County CAOs assessment of the merits of proceeding with a more fulsome library service review. If Council agrees to proceed with such a review, then Step 2 in the process would be as follows:

Step 2: Creating a Plan of Action – The Project Charter

1. The County Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) will engage the CAOs or administrative heads of the other parties that will be engaged in the process to prepare a DRAFT Project Charter. The Charter will set out the terms of engagement for all parties involved, including but not restricted to the following:
 - a. Operating principles, objectives and constraints of the review
 - b. Governance structure of review
 - c. Expected outcomes
 - d. Identities of the main stakeholders
 - e. In scope and out-of-scope items (what the review is and what it is not)
 - f. A high-level risk management plan
 - g. Communications plan
 - h. Community engagement plan
 - i. Expected benefits - outcomes
 - j. High level budget and spending authority
 - k. Staffing and resource commitment
 - l. Deliverables
 - m. Performance measures – soft and hard metrics
 - n. Dispute resolution mechanism
 - o. Process for attaining approvals

2. The CAOs Groups will recommend a draft Project Charter for adoption by County Council, local municipal councils and the governing bodies of other organizations engaged in the review in accordance with the approvals processes in place within the respective organizations involved. In the case of the County, County Council will consider the draft Project Charter based on a recommendation of its Corporate Services Committee.
3. Adoption of the Project Charter by council or board resolution of the respective parties is required to proceed to the next step in the process. If a party or parties decline further participation, then consideration must be given by County Council to the value of proceeding further with the remaining parties.
4. Unless otherwise specified, the County Corporate Services Committee will serve as the Project Steering Committee. Depending on the nature of the service being reviewed, it may be deemed appropriate to appoint others to the Steering Committee.
5. The CAOs and administrative heads of the organizations involved will serve as the technical committee for the review process and may appoint other staff as deemed necessary to support and assist the technical committee. The County CAO will serve as the chair of the technical committee.

Facilitation

The Corporate Services Committee recommendation to consider a facilitation process appears to be an attempt to continue some form of dialogue on integrated library services, but not engage the parties to the level contemplated by Step 2 of the Collaborative Framework. The purpose of Step 2 in the process is to secure commitment among the parties and to ensure clarity of purpose, expectations and outcomes. Similar clarity will be required even with a scaled down facilitation process.

It is important to establish at the outset what is meant by the word, facilitation. It can mean different things to different people and therefore to avoid conflict in expectations and disappointment in outcomes, a common understanding is required. For the purposes of this report, the term facilitation means enabling groups and organizations to collaborate and work towards inclusive and sustainable outcomes.

A facilitator must be a 'content neutral' party who does not take sides or advocate a particular point of view. The facilitator provides structure and process to the interactions of the group members. The facilitator's job is to support everyone to be involved, participate and do their best thinking.

Resource Requirements

A facilitator needs to be someone independent of any of the parties involved to ensure neutrality and the perception of neutrality. They also must have sufficient time to prepare for, conduct and follow up from meetings.

It is premature to suggest how a facilitation exercise would be structured for optimal outcomes in this instance. It is anticipated however, that there would be meetings with the entire group as well as meetings with individuals and smaller groups. Facilitator preparation time, participants at meetings, number and duration of meetings, follow-up from meetings, location of meetings are just some of the considerations that would need to be confirmed.

In the end, a facilitation process as suggested by Committee, if it is to be meaningful, would likely cover much of the same ground as set out in Step 2 of the Collaborative Framework. Failure to address the various elements outlined in Step 2 as part of the facilitation would likely result in less than satisfactory results.

Commitment to Dialogue

If greater integration of library services across municipal boundaries is the desired outcome, then it follows that any effort towards that end, to be successful, must involve all local councils and all public library boards in the county. Yet the CAOs review concluded that there is no broad consensus among local decision makers to pursue this idea. In fact, one municipal council is on record as not supporting any efforts to work towards a county-wide system.

So, the first step in any facilitation effort must be to secure a commitment from those parties wishing to participate. The question is, how many of the local municipalities and library boards should be involved for such an effort to be meaningful? The Public Libraries Act stipulates that in order to create a county library board in Grey County, at least six municipalities must be supportive.

Financial / Staffing / Legal / Information Technology

Considerations

Operating Plan

County Council has adopted an operating plan for the county corporation for 2014 (copy attached). Facilitating a public library services dialogue is not included in the plan and

therefore it would need to be amended. In doing so, consideration should be given to what other projects will be displaced on the work plan or whose timelines will need to be adjusted to accommodate a library facilitation project.

The County CAO is not in a comfortable position to undertake a meaningful facilitation project of this nature, for two reasons:

1. Time commitments related to the already slated projects, including the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus Regional Broadband Project, are already stretching available time and resources; and
2. The County is not necessarily seen as a neutral party in these discussions. As noted, a facilitator must be and must be perceived to be neutral by all parties.

Therefore, if the decision is made to proceed, then consideration should be given to hiring professional facilitation services. The cost for such services, as noted earlier, is difficult to estimate at this time. A range of \$2,500 (for one meeting, including preparation time) to \$25,000 (for a series of meetings over a period of several months to a year) would seem to be a good, albeit conservative, starting point for discussion. Securing facilitation services would be subject to County purchasing policy.

In addition, it is to be expected that issues would be identified in the course of the facilitated sessions that would require additional research by staff or others. These costs would have to be determined at the time and funded accordingly.

Money to fund this initiative, if solely funded by the County, would come from either any year-end operating surplus or from an appropriate reserve.

Link to Strategic Goals / Priorities

While no strategic objective of the Plan speaks directly to the issue of county library services, two objectives at least have some general bearing, namely:

Objective 4.1 Continue to work collaboratively with local municipalities to define service and program responsibilities between the upper and lower- tier municipalities.

Objective 5.3 Explore innovative ways to more effectively and efficiently deliver services and programs, including consideration of partnerships

Attachments

The Grey County Strategic Operating Plan 2014-2016

[Corporate Operating Plan 2014-2016.docx](#)

Respectfully submitted by,
Lance Thurston, C.A.O.