

Report CAOR-CC-02-15

To: Warden Eccles and Members of Grey County Council
From: Sharon Vokes, Acting Chief Administrative Officer
Meeting Date: April 7, 2015
Subject: **Updated Corporate Operating Plan for 2015-2017**
Status: Recommendation adopted by County Council April 7, 2015 per Resolution CC60-15;

Recommendation(s)

THAT Grey County Council receive the Acting Chief Administrative Officer's 2015-2017 Corporate Operating Plan Report, CAOR-CC-02-15, and hereby adopts an updated Corporate Operating Plan for 2015-2017, as recommended by the Acting CAO.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to:

1. Provide a brief overview of the County's Corporate Strategic Plan
2. Identify objectives within the Corporate Strategic Plan which are now complete
3. Outline upcoming initiatives and anticipated challenges for 2015, and
4. Recommend adoption of a revised operating plan for the 2015-2017 planning period.

Background

In 2012 Council adopted its first Corporate Strategic Plan aimed at guiding the organization for the period 2012-2015. The Strategic Plan contains six pillars which have guided Council's policy decisions. They are:

1. Expanding the prosperity base
2. Enabling healthy and resilient communities
3. Securing our place as Ontario's recreation jewel
4. Making connections
5. Listening and working together

6. Achieving excellence in governance and service

The Strategic Plan provides the framework to enable County Council and staff to set priorities, align available resources to focus on those priorities, and monitor performance against the stated objectives. The strategic plan outlines the desired objectives of County Council which have then been embedded into the organization through the alignment of an annually updated three year corporate operating plan with supporting departmental operating plans.

It is important to note that the Corporate Operating Plan, reflects only the change agenda of the corporation. The plan does not represent the day to day activities which are critical to the operation of corporation. Instead the focus is on the strategic objectives that Council has determined are necessary to improve program and service delivery.

The Corporate Operating Plan represents a three year time horizon which is revised annually and rolled ahead by one year. The alignment of three year departmental operating plans with the Corporate Operating Plan ensures that resources remain aligned with Council's objectives. The Corporate Operating Plan enables Council and staff to easily identify the progress being made on Council's strategic objectives. The 2015-2017 Corporate Operating Plan is included in this report.

Completed Objectives

While many actions within the strategic plan are either ongoing, or may not be tackled within the 2012 – 2015 timeframe, it's a pleasure to report that a significant number are complete and/or are now embedded within the day to day operations. The following have been removed from the Corporate Operating Plan for these reasons:

| Objective | Action |
|---|---|
| Strengthen Land Use Planning Program | One window development review service model initiated in 2014 to facilitate processing of applications. County planners continue to meet regularly with municipal counterparts to share information and problem solve any development process concerns. |
| Cultural Heritage Asset Strategy | Grey Roots is in the process of implementing recommendations out of a business plan completed in 2013. In addition, Grey Roots continues to sharpen its focus on building and strengthening community partnerships. |
| Sound Forest Management and County Trail Management Plan | Policies and practices for managing the County's forests and trails are embedded in corporate policies and departmental work plans and annual budgets. |
| Inter-Municipal Service Review Process | County Council adopted the County Collaborative Decision-making Framework in 2013 as policy. |
| Improved Communications with Municipalities | Enhanced methods of communications and engaging with local municipalities through such things as the Warden's Forum, sharing of agendas and reports, more quarterly meetings of senior staff, project |

| Objective | Action |
|---|--|
| | work, etc. embedded within corporate culture. |
| County Library Review | Review was undertaken at the direction of Council with the decision in 2014 to support the recommended action of no role for the County and encouragement of more collaboration by libraries. |
| County Governance Review | In 2013 Council supported recommendation of Task Force to not explore alternative governance models. |
| Political and professional engagement | Staff and members of County Council engaging in regional, community and sector organizations and initiatives is well embedded in corporate culture. |
| Strategic Management Framework | The strategic management framework introduced by the former Chief Administrative Officer, Lance Thurston, in 2011 is now embedded into the corporate culture through annual work plans which complement the Corporate Operating Plan and Corporate Strategic Plan. |
| Internal Communications | Enhanced communications and collaborations between departments. Work planning emphasizes team based decision making at senior management table. Expectations and practices embedded in corporate culture. Ongoing strengthening and reinforcement required. |
| Corporate Brand Refresh | New brand and logo approved by Council in 2013. Strategic roll out of policies and protocols across corporation in 2013 inclusive of documentation, business cards, vehicles, etc. New signage for administration building and three long term care facilities also completed in 2014. Entrance way, municipal, community and route marker signage on County roads mostly completed in 2014. |
| Organizational Development Plan – Paramedic Services | Review completed with staff and union in 2011. Internal process improvements made. Annual monitoring continues. |
| Corporate Asset Naming Convention | At the request of Council, developed and approved policy guidelines for naming corporate assets such as buildings, bridges, roads, etc. in 2013. |

The Road Ahead

Beyond the items above which are now complete, great strides have been made towards many others. Council will be familiar with many from the Council orientation sessions and meetings held year to date. In the year ahead, Council will need to make decisions on matters which will have a significant impact on the future social and economic health of Grey County.

The 2015-2017 Corporate Operating Plan included in this report continues on the path that was set in the Corporate Strategic Plan. As the writing of this report coincides with the end of the first quarter of the year, the plan also includes progress to date this year. The Plan includes some extensions to timelines (i.e. Transportation Master Plan) because of the municipal election falling in 2014. The following items are of particular note. For a full listing please see the 2015-2017 Corporate Operating Plan attached.

Goal 1: Expanding the Prosperity Base

This Strategic Goal is to enhance and diversify economic opportunities within the county, by becoming “investment-ready” and ensuring the foundation is in place for sustained success. Attracting development, enabling business growth and encouraging investment that creates jobs is all part of this goal. Support of economic development has been a central focus for County Council and this is echoed in the 2015-2017 Corporate Operating Plan. There are a number of interrelated and coordinated initiatives underway as follows:

Economic Capacity Building

Economic Development is a relatively new function of the County. The Economic Development Strategy has been guided by a steering committee comprised of councillors and stakeholders. Council had its first look at the draft strategy at its February meeting, along with an economic development 101 training session. The final Strategy will be before Council at its April session.

Once endorsed by Council, the work of identifying what actions to take, the recommended time frame and resources required will be considered. This Strategy will become the blueprint which will guide the County’s role in economic development.

As a point of interest, Youth Engagement and Newcomer Attraction, both goals within the Corporate Strategic Plan, are identified in the Economic Development Strategy.

Staff has already embraced recommendations within the Strategy and two “investment readiness” workshops were delivered in March.

Internet Connectivity

Accessible, low cost, ultra-high speed broadband internet connectivity and capacity is a building block of rural economic development and key to the County’s social and economic prosperity now and into the future. Rural Canada, and for that matter, Canada itself, lags behind many other nations when it comes to accessible and affordable high speed connections.

Grey County is attacking the problem using several different, yet coordinated approaches:

1. Champion of the Western Ontario Warden’s Caucus (WOWC) regional broadband project known as SWIFT (Southwest Integrated Fibre Technology);

2. Developing plan and funding to fast track implementation of fibre in Grey County,
3. The Southwest Economic Alliance (SWEA) Intelligent Region Initiative, and;
4. Launch of pilot project in Alpha Street Housing Units of free Wi-Fi and computer kiosks in common rooms with plan to implement in all 25 buildings within two years.

The SWIFT feasibility study is now complete and funding has been applied for through the Small Communities Fund (SCF) of the New Building Canada Fund. Approval of the funding should be known by the end of April. Most counties, including Grey County, have committed their funding of the project. In the case of Grey County, funding of \$216,000 was included in the 2015 budget and will be an ongoing cost for five years. A delegation was made to Minister Leal of Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) and Minister Duguid of Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure (MEDEI) on SWIFT at the OGRA conference and the concept was well received.

WOWC is currently in the process of working on a business case for the project and this should be completed shortly. It should be noted that others outside the members of WOWC have come to the table. The City of Stratford and Grey Bruce Health Services (GBHS) have provided funding while other municipalities, such as Barrie, Orillia and the Region of Waterloo are currently considering funding.

This has been, and continues to be a large project, drawing significantly on staff resources, particularly the Director of Information Technology, who is the staff technical lead on the project. It continues to be a large focus of the WOWC and the WOWC is establishing a steering committee comprised of an elected official from each member municipality to guide the process.

SWIFT is not a quick fix by any means. The first phase won't be complete until 2020, with the final build done by 2040. For this reason in 2015 the County will be moving ahead with either consultants or contract staff to determine best how to piggy back on the SWIFT project to move broadband forward at a faster pace within the County. This ties in nicely with work underway in the municipalities of West Grey and Southgate who have partnered on an SCF application with the view of developing a utility based fibre system.

In 2013 the County was a pilot project for launch of SWEA's intelligent community initiative. Since that time the County has continued to support and build understanding of what it means to be an intelligent community. In order to continue fostering dialogue and understanding the Communications Coordinator has been seconded for 2015 for community engagement on this initiative.

New for 2015 is an exciting initiative coming out of the Housing and Information Technology Departments that directly supports the intelligent community initiative.

A key philosophy of the intelligent community initiative is the support of all citizens, regardless of income level, the ability to access high speed internet. In 2015, the Alpha Street complex will become a pilot project with the launch of the provision of Wi-Fi and computer kiosks in the common room.

This will enable our residents to have access to free high speed internet and at the same time reduce staff costs as County Housing staff will be able to receive and print documents on site. Currently, under provincial regulation, many notices need to be in paper format which involves staff time and costs for mileage. It is hoped that this can be rolled out to all 25 housing buildings within two years. The Housing and Information Technology staff are to be congratulated on developing solutions which increase efficiencies that are fiscally responsible and work towards Council's goal of a connected community. Staff are committed to seeing the reality of the County being a connected community and the Information Technology staff have volunteered some time to see this come to fruition.

Goal 2: Enabling Healthy and Resilient Communities

This Strategic Goal is to pursue strategies and offer services that strengthen communities, put people first and improve quality of life opportunities.

Health Care Initiatives

Surprisingly to many, a significant portion of the County's resources are dedicated to health care through its involvement with long term care, paramedic services and public health. In addition to direct service costs, the County has a long standing history of supporting its local hospitals with capital grants.

The health care structure is evolving and it's important that the County continue to be actively involved in discussions on these subjects, and others such as aging in place, investing in healthy living strategies, primary care and keeping people in their own homes longer.

In the past the County did not have strong linkages with local hospitals. This has changed with Lance Thurston, former County CAO, now in the position of CEO of GBHS. In Mr. Thurston's six month Making the Transitions Report for GBHS he has identified many potential partnerships with municipal government. By partnering together better services can be provided to our residents.

The County is in the process of participating in a community paramedicine pilot project and initial reports are that the program is being well received by patients, doctors and our paramedics.

Long Term Care Review

The former Council undertook a review of long term care with the view of determining what the County's role in long term care should be. The decision was to retain the status quo of three facilities.

Rockwood Terrace was constructed in 1984 and is in need of significant upgrades to meet the changing needs of our residents. Doing nothing is not an option as the Ministry has set a mandate that all long term care homes that do not meet current provincial standards must participate in a capital renewal program. The Province has opened up opportunities for capital funding which staff are pursuing and will be reporting back to the Social Services Committee for further direction.

Affordable Housing Strategy

The Affordable Housing Strategy was completed in 2010 and was a partnership project between the Planning and Community Development Committee and the Social Services Committee. The strategy had a primarily planning lens in that it provided a definition of what is affordable housing, defined how much affordable housing is available in the County and helped to define the level of development required for future development. An internal review of this strategy is scheduled for 2015 which will include updates to the County's Official Plan for Council's consideration. An update to the Housing Study data will occur in 2015 to ensure that the affordable housing data and targets are accurate.

Related to Affordable Housing is implementation of the Ten Year Housing and Homelessness Plan. Municipalities are mandated to have a ten year plan that covers homelessness to home ownership. The County's initial Plan was completed in 2012, two years ahead of the provincial mandate. Going forward, an implementation plan needs to be developed which will serve as a blue print for the County and community agencies in creating responsive strategies to address the countless issues related to homelessness and suitable affordable housing opportunities. The Grey Bruce Poverty Task Force is an important vehicle to help establish the implementation Plan. There is a requirement to update the Ten Year Housing and Homelessness Plan every five years.

Like the County's roads and bridges, the County's housing stock is aging. A long term strategy needs to be developed so that existing Grey County Housing can be supported into the future.

Living Wage Policy

New for 2015 is the review of the impact of implementing a living wage policy for the County and for all vendors who service the County. Certainly the concept in and of itself makes sense. If people earn a living wage then there is less need for the social supports of government such as Ontario Works and social housing. This then frees up precious funding for other municipal needs. Most things aren't as easy as they may seem though and staff, at the direction of Council, will be researching and reporting back on the impact of such a policy.

Goal 3: Securing the County's Place as Ontario's Recreation Jewel

This Strategic Goal is to support and promote the exceptional natural assets that make Grey County a four-season recreation destination for residents and visitors alike.

Tourism Destination Development Action Plan

It is well known that tourism is an anchor for economic development in Grey County. The County's role is well established and many partnerships have been developed over the years which have served the region well. The last Tourism Destination Action Plan was developed in 2009 and is in need of a refresh and this will be undertaken in 2015. It should be noted that two industries received special mention for the County's attention in the Economic Development Strategy and they are agriculture and tourism.

The County is fortunate to have a Tourism Advisory Committee, primarily composed of stakeholders, to help shape and guide the County's efforts in Tourism. The Committee will be an invaluable resource as the County embarks on an update to the Tourism Destination Development Action Plan.

County Signage Program

Updated County signage was a priority in 2014 and entrance way, municipal; community and route marker signage is largely complete. Protocols for historical community signage were approved by Council in 2014 and implementation will take place in 2015 once a report is submitted on the recommended communities after consultation with the member municipalities. A study is currently underway to determine best practices for way finding and tourism signage. Once complete, Transportation Services' staff will develop a consolidated signage policy and procedures based on Council's decisions.

Goal 4: Making Connections

Goal 4 is directed to improving the physical, operational and virtual connections between Grey County's communities and areas beyond.

Transportation Master Plan

The Transportation Master Plan is a significant project that has been underway for some time. Implementation recommendations were delayed as the previous Council was of the view that as its term was ending, decisions which could have such a significant impact on both the County and its member municipalities should rest with the incoming Council. Community engagement of both the public and member municipalities took place in March. Council's direction on a Priority Action Plan is anticipated later in 2015.

Investment in Technology

Under the surface, many varied and complicated software programs drive the corporation. Some are by choice such as our software for records management, finance and patient care, and others like SAMS in Social Services and ICON for POA are dictated by the Province.

One of Grey County's strengths is the dedication of staff to regularly review and analyze business processes with the view of finding better solutions, often through use of technology, to bring more efficiencies and effectiveness to the services that the County delivers. In truth, this quest for innovation can result in project lists which can be daunting.

Of significance, the County will soon launch a new tourism website and work is underway to implement a new HRIS in Human Resources and Staff Schedule Care across the corporation. Staff are currently researching options for the management of the County's electronic records. Electronic records management is critical to the organization and is now embedded in the County's culture and processes. That being said, difficulties have arisen with the ability to open links on Apple devices in the current system which needs to be rectified.

The Information Technology Department is guided by the IT Strategic Plan. It is currently in need of a refresh and this is planned for 2015.

Administration Accommodation

The work of the Space Needs Task Force is now complete with the recommendation to Council to build an addition to the County Building which will provide better staff accommodation and bring the POA function into the main

building. A new addition will rectify health and safety concerns, accessibility issues and the uneven temperatures that currently exist in the Administration Building. Firmer estimates are required for Council to determine next steps.

Goal 5: Listening and Working Together

The purpose of Goal 5 is to engage residents and stakeholders in decisions that affect them and to work together to achieve mutually desired outcomes.

Assisted Transportation

A transportation study was completed in 2014 examining ways to better coordinate low cost transportation services provided by a variety of agencies for people requiring assistance throughout the County. The intent is to assist all those in need which includes the traditional markets of the disabled and elderly and expands to also include our youth and low income residents who may not have access to transportation, The study was received by the former Council with the recommendation that staff develop recommendations for implementation for the new Council to consider.

In the interim, an opportunity presented itself to apply for a grant from the Ministry of Transportation for coordination of existing services using software for centralized access, scheduling and dispatch. It has recently been announced that the County has been successful in its grant application and will receive \$100,000 towards this project. Staff will be reporting further on this matter over the coming months.

Goal 6: Achieving Excellence in Governance and Service

The purpose of Goal 6 is to foster a culture and structure that facilitates exceptional public service delivery.

Staff Wellness Plan and Review of Benefit Costs

These two matters have been combined together as the two are interrelated. The staff wellness plan has not started as early as originally planned and in fact is being delayed further with the changeover in the CAO's Office. The concept of finding ways to mitigate the rising costs of benefits is a direction of this Council.

These are complex matters but well worth the effort. Staff wellness programs are standard in many organizations and have been proven to improve the health and wellbeing of staff. Workplace wellness programs promote health, prevent disease and reduce injuries. There are demonstrated benefits to staff wellness programs.

Employees are happier and healthier while employers realize the benefits of reduced benefit costs, reduced sick leave, decreased absenteeism and increased productivity.

There are a number of initiatives underway in the corporation working towards this goal but they are ad hoc in nature and not coordinated. A consistent corporate policy approach to work place wellness is needed and the policy needs to then become embedded in the corporate culture.

Operational Reviews

Over the course of the last five years departmental reviews have been routinely conducted. These reviews are healthy for the organization and a sound business practice. These reviews consider how departments are organized and ensure the services are aligned with the corporate goals. Funding for these reviews is included in the annual budget.

The Finance Department was to be reviewed in 2015. It is recommended that this review be delayed until 2016 because of the changeover in the CAO's Office.

A smaller review of the children's services program within the Social Services Department will be completed in 2015.

Corporate Strategic Plan

The Corporate Strategic Plan was designed to guide the corporation for the period of 2012-2015 and is nearing the end of its life. The world we live in changes rapidly and it is important to step back once each Council term and reflect on what Council's priorities are for the future. An important component of this review is community engagement. It is recommended that the Corporate Strategic Plan be updated in 2016 using the services of a consultant to guide the process.

Other

One thing that is not on the Corporate Operating Plan as it hasn't been recommended by Council yet is the question of how to update the County's policies and procedures. The corporation relies on approved policies and procedures to ensure that services are provided in accordance with Council's direction. These policies and procedures provide the guidance to manage a myriad of responsibilities and mitigate risk for the corporation. Policies and procedures exist in every department of the County. Some, such as the Human Resource policies, need to be completely overhauled. In other cases, such as corporate policies or those of Transportation Services, are dealt with on an ad hoc basis as time permits. Staff will be reporting back to Council with recommended options for tackling these outdated policies and procedures.

Financial / Staffing / Legal / Information Technology

Considerations

Each item within the Corporate Operating Plan may include any of the above considerations and are dealt with on an individual basis as each proceeds through the committee and Council approval process.

Link to Strategic Goals / Priorities

The reporting and updating of the Corporate Operating Plan ties in to Goal 6.1, which is the alignment of all departmental work/operating plans with the Corporate Strategic Plan over a multi-year period.

Attachments

[Corporate Operating Plan 2015-2017](#)

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Vokes
Acting Chief Administrative Officer