

Report



Report No. CSI 2016-03	To: Council	Prepared By: Samah Othman, Supervisor, Communications and Customer Service Marie Brissette, Executive Assistant Mayor & Council / Special Projects Coordinator
Meeting Date: January 13, 2016	Subject: Communications and Public Engagement Strategy Update and Work Plan	Motion # _____
Roll #:		R.M.S. File #:

Recommendation(s):	Requires Action <input type="checkbox"/>	For Information Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
---------------------------	---	---

It is recommended:

1. That Report CSI 2016-03 be received for information.

Background:

The importance and role of Corporate Communications within the Township of Oro-Medonte has evolved since it was identified as a priority initiative of the 2008-2010 Municipal Council.

A number of communications related policies and procedures were adopted by Council throughout 2010 and 2011. A comprehensive Communications Strategy along with a 2 year communications plan was unanimously adopted by Council in 2012.

The 2010-2014 Council identified the need to outreach to both our external customers and stakeholders (residents and business owners) and internal customers (staff) to assess their satisfaction with delivery of services. External and internal surveys were completed in 2014. In both cases, it was identified that enhancing communications should be a priority for future terms of Council. Specifically, a number of opportunities were identified with respect to how we communicate (methods and tactics), when we communicate (frequency), who we communicate with, and what we communicate about. There was also an expressed interest to explore options for enhanced two-way engagement.

Based upon this feedback, staff began the process of updating the existing Communications Strategy and Plan that includes the communications tactics being used. As part of the research undertaken, Township staff consulted with Council and the Senior Management Team in October and November of 2015 to solicit their input and feedback. It was validated that there was an opportunity to build upon the existing strategy and plan and evolve our activities and processes to better meet the needs of our customers.

Analysis:

As noted previously, the development and implementation of a municipal Engagement Policy to align with an updated Communications Strategy is an opportunity to enhance the municipality's interaction with our customers.

Cities such as Waterloo, Vaughan and Toronto, and other enterprises such as the Royal Victoria Hospital, to name a few, have also identified the importance of engagement and have developed policies and related toolkits which are incorporated into their Communications Strategy. The purpose of such policies and toolkits are to identify the various levels of engagement, and what is deemed appropriate recognizing that different levels of engagement depend on the needs and objectives of each individual project or service balanced against the available resources.

Levels can evolve or dissolve during the project management phases, and as such the level of engagement must be clearly identified and communicated. In general terms, the levels include:

1. **Inform:** Where information is communicated, after decisions are made or projects are defined, to keep the stakeholders apprised of events or service delivery.
2. **Consult:** Where information is released, and input is requested, in order to incorporate comments and feedback into the decision making or project management process.
3. **Involve:** Where information is released, and customers/stakeholders are encouraged to assist in developing alternative solutions or processes, and / or proposed partnerships.
4. **Communicate Results:** Where the final information is released, and includes the input and levels of engagement used to ratify the decision or service.

Next Steps:

Staff will be hosting structured facilitated meetings throughout January/February to gather feedback from our customers/stakeholders with respect to their interpretation of and use of "Public Engagement". Meetings will be scheduled at appropriate facilities within the Township to accommodate those who indicate their interest through an RSVP process. In addition, printed and online surveys will be available for the public to provide input commencing the first week of February.

The opportunity to provide input will be advertised through scheduled media interviews (TV and radio); social media postings (Facebook, Twitter); on the Township's website; advertising within available means; and through direct contact with community-based organizations.

From the information gathered, Staff will be in a position to identify who, how, when and for which purposes public engagement is appropriate, while balancing the available resources and legislated responsibilities for Notice under various Acts.

A recommended draft policy will be brought forward for Council's consideration prior to the end of the first quarter of 2016.

Financial / Legal Implications / Risk Management:

Any costs associated with the public engagement process, not expected to exceed \$500.00 and can be included in the current 2016 proposed budget allocation.

Policies/Legislation:

Not applicable.

Corporate Strategic Goals:

Service Excellence: To provide a welcoming, courteous and professional culture of service excellence on the part of Council and Township staff.

Consultations:

Senior Management Team
Residents/Stakeholders
Staff
Council
Other municipalities (Ottawa, Vaughan, Waterloo etc.)

Attachments:

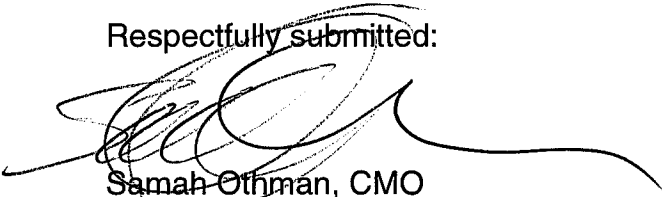
None.

Conclusion:

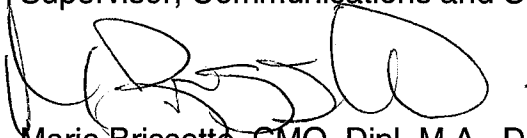
Understanding there is an increased demand on enhanced communications and engagement, the communications and public engagement strategy is targeted to identify tools to assist with our efforts to improve transparency and accountability. The information obtained from the public consultation process will assist staff to validate the criteria for

public engagement, and afford an opportunity to provide feedback with respect to the Communications Strategy and Plan.

Respectfully submitted:



Samah Othman, CMO
Supervisor, Communications and Customer Service



Marie Brissette, CMO, Dipl. M.A., Dipl. M.M.
Executive Assistant Mayor & Council / Special Project Coordinator

SMT Approval / Comments:



C.A.O. Approval / Comments:

