



REPORT

TO: Mayor Bonnette and Members of Council

FROM: Alex Fuller, Director of Communications

DATE: April 14, 2022

REPORT NO.: ADMIN-2022-0017

SUBJECT: Update to the Public Engagement Charter

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. ADMIN-2022-0017 dated April 14, 2022 regarding Update to the Public Engagement Charter be received;

AND FURTHER THAT Council approve the recommended updates to the charter;

AND FURTHER THAT Communications share the updated charter with staff and post on the website.

KEY POINTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- The Town's Public Engagement Charter was adopted in November 2017 through report CORPSERV-2017-0025
- New priorities and changes in the Town's approach to consultation warrant a review and update to the three pillars of the charter (transparency, notification, and participation) as well as an update to the definition appendix
- The drivers for updating the charter are:
 - Advancement of the Truth and Reconciliation strategy
 - Hosting public consultations in a virtual environment
 - Recognizing the Accessibility for Ontarians Disability Act (AODA) in the definition of accessibility

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION:

In 2017, one of the focus areas for Halton Hills Town Council was public engagement. As a result, the Mayor's Task Force on Public Engagement was formed and subsequently developed the Council-adopted 'Public Engagement Charter'. This document serves as the foundational piece to the municipality's public engagement program which includes the engagement platform 'letstalkhaltonhills.ca', consultation events and wrap around communications support such as graphic design, preparation of website and e-newsletter content, advertising and social media.

In the past few years, changes have occurred that make it timely to update the charter. First, the Town began advancing the Truth and Reconciliation strategy in fall 2020 by embedding the work into the Cultural Services portfolio and receiving approval through the 2021 budget to allocate resources for implementing related initiatives. While the current Public Engagement Charter references inclusion of special interest groups, it would be appropriate and meaningful to recognize consultation with Indigenous nations as a specific stakeholder.

The second event is the change in approach to delivering public consultations. The onset of the pandemic prompted the Town to implement new ways to deliver services and subsequently consultation events were held in a virtual environment. From June 2020 – April 2022, the Town delivered 20 online consultation events, with almost 1,100 participants. As virtual consultation was not utilized when the charter was first developed, it is appropriate to update the charter pillars and the appendix definition of 'Public Information Centre (PIC)' to recognize this as one of the approaches to engaging with the public.

In addition, Town staff have worked to meet and uphold higher AODA standards which would be appropriate to note in the charter appendix under the definition of 'accessible'.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report is administrative in nature and does not have an impact on the Town's Strategic Plan.

RELATIONSHIP TO CLIMATE CHANGE:

This report is administrative in nature and does not directly impact or address climate change and the Town's Net Zero target.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Public Engagement was not needed as this report is administrative in nature.

INTERNAL CONSULTATION:

This report was reviewed by: Director of Strategic Initiatives and the Manager of Culture and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

This report is administrative in nature and does not have any financial implications.

Reviewed and approved by,

Chris Mills, Chief Administrative Officer