



Subject: *Strategic Plan 2025-2028*
To: Corporate & Residential Services Committee
Date Prepared: November 15, 2024
Related Motions:
Prepared by: Kim Ramsay, Chief Administrative Officer
Approved by: Kim Ramsay, Chief Administrative Officer

Summary

Staff are seeking Council's instructions in regards to updating the current organizational Strategic Plan. Councillors need to decide whether they would like to prepare the update or have staff draft the update for discussion and how councillors should be engaged throughout the process.

Financial Impact Statement

None

Recommendation

Based on a successful result the last two Plan developments, it is recommended that staff draft an update to the Strategic Plan and bring it before Council for discussion; this should include a survey or specific meeting between staff and Council to kick start the process.

Recommended Motion

That the Corporate & Residential Services Committee recommends to Council to proceed with an update of the organization Strategic Plan, to be drafted by the CAO, through (insert option 1, 2 or 3).

- 1) ... staff preparing a survey to send to councillors to get input on the priorities they see for the community and then prepare a draft update to the Plan for Council consideration;
- 2) ... staff preparing a draft update to the Plan and bring this to Council for discussion; or,
- 3) ...staff facilitating a strategic planning session where councillors can share thoughts with their fellow councillors and staff.

Background

East Hants has had a Strategic Plan for many years. The organization uses the Strategic Plan as a guide to prioritize work, prepare the capital investment plan and set the business plan for each year. The Strategic Plan guides the administrative function of the Municipality.

Originally, the Council members, along with the CAO and Director of Finance of the time, developed the plan in consultation with a hired consultant.

In 2013, staff recommended Council update the Plan and sought guidance on how they preferred to proceed. Council was asked whether they wished to engage the public in the process and whether they wished to again hire a consultant. As another option, Council was asked whether they preferred to have senior staff develop a draft and place it before Council. This is the option Council chose and the Strategic Plan was adopted based on staff's draft.

The same approach was taken again in 2017 and 2021 with senior staff preparing a draft that Council reviewed and adopted.

Following the Fall 2024 Election, staff will begin meeting to prepare for the next update to the Strategic Plan.

Discussion

Public Engagement

Strategic Plans for Municipalities can be developed in a variety of ways. One of the basic decisions is whether to engage the general public in its development. If the Council and staff have a good understanding of the community and its needs, Council may feel this step is not necessarily needed.

Throughout the development of our Accessibility, Economic Development, Parks & Open Space, Tourism and Planning related planning documents, East Hants has engaged with our public. More recently, the Facilities Plan will be doing public consultation and will include consultation on the Diversity and Equity work being done. Each of these plans will inform the corporate Strategic Plan and therefore reflect the established needs of the public.

Preparing the Plan

The high-level key strategies of East Hants are very much driven by our status as a bedroom community of Halifax, our need for commercial development and our need to serve an ever-growing residential community. East Hants has built a name for itself as a vibrant, growing and innovative Municipality. This has served us well. Staff and Council have a collaborative relationship and as such staff are very aware of the needs of the organization and the community.

Senior staff would be pleased to once again place a draft of an updated Strategic Plan in front of Council. However, staff would also be pleased to assist Councillors through some brainstorming sessions with a strategic focus or working with Council as they develop the Plan. Finally, there is the option of hiring consultants. Staff do not see the need to hire outside facilitation, but Council may feel otherwise.

Staff have discussed ways in which we can engage Council to be a part of the initial draft of the updated Plan.

Three options present well:

Option 1) staff can prepare a survey to send to councillors to get input on the priorities they see for the community and then prepare a draft update to the Plan for Council consideration;

Option 2) staff can prepare a draft update to the Plan and bring this to Council for discussion; or,

Option 3) staff can facilitate a strategic planning session where councillors can share thoughts with their fellow councillors and staff.

One-on-one meetings with the CAO would also be an option, however, this would be more time consuming and likely yield similar results as a survey.

Alternatives

1. Have staff draft an update to the Strategic Plan and bring it before Council for discussion; this could or could not include a survey or specific meeting between staff and Council to kick start the process.
2. Hire a consultant to assist Council and staff to update the Strategic Plan.
3. Have staff assist Council through the process of updating the Strategic Plan.

Conclusion

The Strategic Plan is a very important document for the Municipality. Council has professional staff who can work through a Plan update without the help of consultants. It is important that councillors have input into the Strategic Plan through survey or consultation with staff either before or after the first draft is prepared.

Recommendation

It is recommended that staff draft an update to the Strategic Plan and bring it before Council for discussion; this could or could not include a survey or specific meeting between staff and Council to kick start the process.