



City of
Peterborough

To: Members of the Budget Committee

From: Sandra Clancy, Director of Corporate Services

Date: November 27, 2017

Subject: Report CPFS17-062
Creation of Communication Services Division and Approval of
an Additional FTE

Purpose

A report to provide additional information to support the recommendation in the 2018 Draft Budget of the creation of a Communication Services Division and one additional FTE to manage the division.

Recommendation

That Council approve the recommendation outlined in Report CPFS17-062 dated November 27, 2017, of the Director of Corporate Services, as follows:

That Report CPFS17-062 be received for information and included in the 2018 Budget discussions.

Budget and Financial Implications

The 2018 Draft Operating Budget includes the net funding of \$131,800, including benefits, for one additional FTE as a Manager of Communication Services.

Background

The City of Peterborough needs to review and update all the ways it communicates with the public and create a Communications Strategy.

Social media has changed the landscape for municipal communications. More than ever, the public today demands greater responsiveness, accountability and transparency in government. As well, stakeholders and residents are expressing a desire for convenient information available when and where they want it.

With the resources available today, the City is falling behind in the area of communications especially in the following two elements of communication:

- the methods used to communicate and provide City services; and
- the City's engagement with the community prior to a Council decision.

There is more to a complete communications strategy than these two elements but they are the critical areas that need to be addressed within the City at this time.

1. Methods Used to Communicate

The methods of communicating have changed drastically in the last decade. Historically, municipal services were listed in the yellow pages and staff responded to over-the-counter and telephone requests providing services to citizens, visitors and businesses as required from various facilities.

All of this has changed. Over the last decade electronic service delivery, via websites and various types of social media now provide self-service and 24-7 options for the City's customers. These avenues provide information about City services, venues for customers to provide feedback and on-line customer service such as receiving and paying a bill, paying a parking ticket, completing a form to register for a program, reporting a problem or buying a building permit.

2. Engagement with the Community Prior to a Council Decision

The decision making process is changing. Today it includes notices and public meetings when legislated. Staff prepare reports for Council consideration and the public participates through delegations. Council then provides direction to staff who implement changes, new programs and capital projects.

More proactive community engagement is now being requested in a variety of different ways and across all Departments of the Corporation. City customers expect more engagement through various digital platforms and outreach. They do not necessarily want to come to a municipal setting. Sometimes staff are expected to go to them outside the City's workday to an externally organized public event. The City is doing some of this for certain projects, but not through a consistent or coordinated approach.

3. The City could do better

Other similar sized municipalities, such as Oshawa and Kingston, are farther advanced than Peterborough in terms of their communications, website, social media and community engagement activities. They have dedicated communication and customer service divisions, corporate communication plans, a community engagement policy, a public engagement hub and/or guide or an on-line platform for engagement. Some have a corporate e-newsletter. They do regular corporate citizen surveys on how their municipality is doing in general.

With no overall communications or community engagement plan, Peterborough falls behind in the development and implementation of:

- A corporate communication plan;
- A community engagement policy;
- Maintaining currency with our on-line platforms and abilities;
- Creation and maintenance of a public engagement hub;
- Creation and maintenance of public out-reach programs.

4. Solution

As with most problems, the solution (or partial solution) lies with the resources that can be applied. In the area of communications, the most important resource is staff, and the tools they use, especially for the person leading the communications strategy. This person must identify the key audience, the content of the intended communications, the channels this communication will use and the performance indicators or measures of success.

At present, the City does not have a position leading proactive communications in a consistent manner across the Corporation. For select projects, the City prepares a communication plan and includes a community engagement component. However, current staffing levels hinder the number of corporate initiatives that can be taken to improve the City's communications and there is no overall communications or community engagement plan nor adequate staff to maintain such initiatives.

4.1 Steps taken so far

Approximately 13 years ago, the City started to coordinate its customer service by creating a Customer Service Coordinator position. The portfolio includes City Hall reception, Accessibility and some coordination of customer service and communication components such as, customer service training, maintaining the City's main website and a main Facebook and Twitter account, issuing City media releases, coordinating special events and bringing a corporate customer service viewpoint to applicable City committees. There is some oversight and coordination provided to all departments but the volume of activity is now such that additional staff resources are necessary as well as a more strategic approach.

There are presently a number of key initiatives being undertaken that require leadership and resources to effectively implement. For example, the City has a project ongoing to update the City website. The City website is over 10 years old and lags behind other municipal websites in terms of functionality and ease of access. When a new website is developed with the many added features necessary to deliver on-line services effectively, corporate oversight will be required to ensure adequate training is provided, standards are developed around content, design and timeliness of updates and coordination of the information from City divisions into new sections or pathways that look at the website from the customer's perspective, not from the perspective of the City division that delivers the service.

The City is behind other municipalities in its computer programs for the many services it provides. There are several capital projects currently being implemented that will be instrumental in upgrading the City's offer to its customers. A corporate lead to assist in mapping out how customers access the various services on-line is needed as well as ensuring consistency across the corporation.

4.2 Manager of Communications Needed

This section of the report outlines some of the other key areas where the City can improve upon its processes and how the proposed new position would oversee a change.

Communicating council meeting agendas is left up to the media unless someone wants to call or go onto the City website and search what topics are coming up. Once council decisions are made, again, it is the media who is reporting the results and important data and information could be excluded. It is difficult for citizens to determine the results from any correspondence coming from City staff. It is expected that a Manager of Communication will develop a process for advising the public of upcoming reports on a regular basis, work closely with the CAO, Directors and Division Managers to extract all pertinent information to be communicated and provide regular updates through the chosen path. This could be a one-page regular feature in a local newspaper, a regular spot on a local news channel and information via social media channels.

Presently, the communication of major events or capital projects is being managed in a decentralized fashion by operating department staff whose main focus needs to be managing the event or project. There is no consistent approach across the Corporation for when and how to inform the public. It is expected that a Manager of Communication will develop and implement such an approach and act as a sounding board and advisor to all Directors to help manage such communications, ensuring the messaging is inclusive and timely.

The City is developing a community brand. It currently uses the City Crest in some communications and the phrase Peterborough – It's a Natural in others with no policy or guideline as to when each is used and neither has been adopted as an actual City brand. Whatever direction is taken, resources are required to implement the new brand to promote a more consistent identity and positive image for the City.

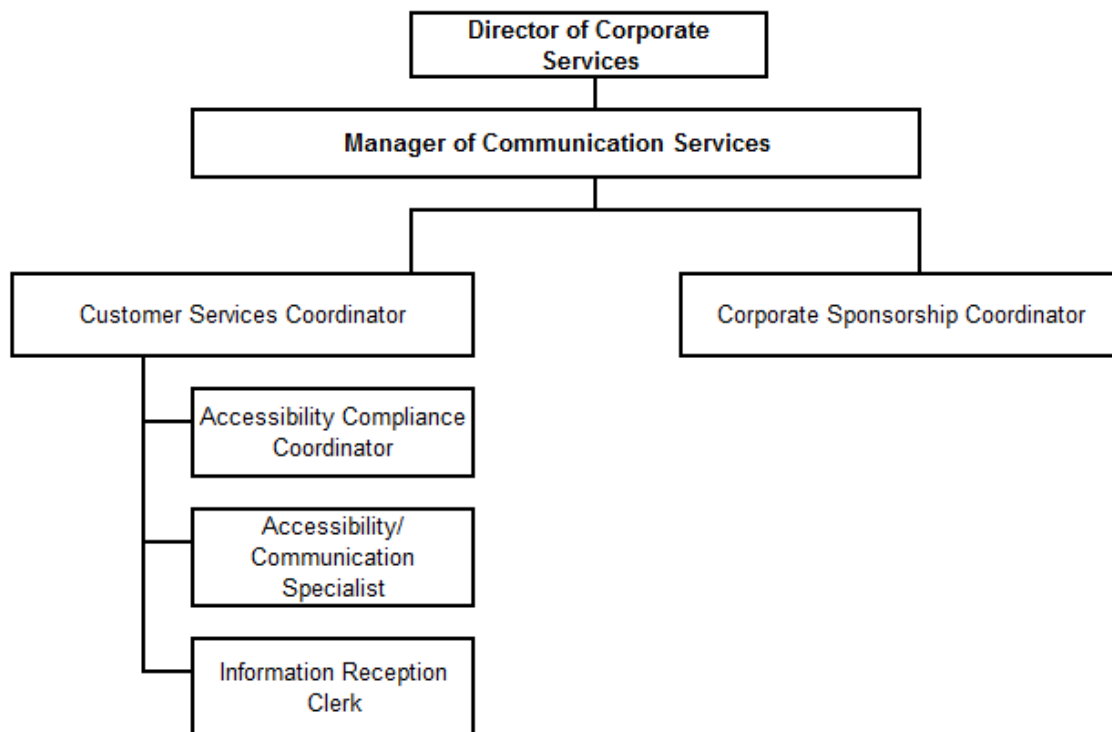
During situations when the City’s Emergency Operations Centre is activated or activation is being considered, the Corporate Communication Manager role would coordinate corporate resources and work closely with the Manager of the Emergency Management Division, who is directly involved in coordinating the response to the incident. Currently, the Manager of the Emergency Management Division assumes some of the corporate coordination responsibilities in the absence of the Corporate Communication Manager role, creating a requirement to undertake additional responsibilities in an already stressful situation.

A major step forward in dealing with the communication shortfalls of the City and the successful implementation of the new initiatives in this area is the establishment of a position of Manager of Communication Services.

4.3 New Communication Division

For presentation and budget purposes, any corporate customer service reference has been included under Financial Services. To provide the presence and leadership required, a new Communication Services Division is recommended and would be led by the proposed new Manager of Communications position to implement strategic communications for the City and ensure a more positive community engagement image is developed and maintained.

The following organization chart shows the positions that would report to the new manager:



Next Steps

If the recommendation to create a Communication Services Division and one additional FTE are approved by Council in the 2018 Budget, the recruitment process for the Manager of Communication will begin shortly after the 2018 Budget is approved.

Summary

The creation of a Communication Services Division and a Manager of Communication Services will assist all departments in communication efforts and proactively set the stage for better community engagement. It will provide an additional resource that can lead new initiatives in these areas.

Submitted by,

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