



## COUNCIL SERVICES COMMITTEE REQUESTS FOURTH QUARTER 2024 UPDATE

### RECOMMENDATION

That the February 21, 2025, Office of the City Clerk report OCC02918, be received for information.

### Report Purpose

**Information only.**

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is being provided for information and is in response to the remaining direction provided by Council Services Committee as follow up to the Office of the Councillors Budget Review Task Force Report (presented to City Council on July 5, 2023).

### REPORT

#### **Background on the Budget Review Task Force**

The mandate for the Office of the Councillors Budget Review Task Force (The Committee) as described in Bylaw 20132 - Office of the Councillors Budget Review Task Force Bylaw states:

- (1) The Office of the Councillors Budget Review Task Force will, no later than September 30, 2023, provide a written report to Council with their findings and options for equitable resources for Councillors and their Ward Offices based on but not limited to a review of:
  - (a) the legislated and other duties of Councillors;
  - (b) information gathered from Councillors and Councillors' office staff;
  - (c) information gathered through jurisdictional scans and other relevant inputs, such as ward composition;
  - (d) the financial and human resources available to Councillors within the Office of the Councillors; and (e) current policies that govern the Office of the Councillors budgets.

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(2) The Office of the Councillors Budget Review Task Force will apply an accountability, transparency, and equity lens to their work and ensure their findings consider equity among all 12 Ward Offices.

The Committee brought the Office of the Councillors Budget Review Task Force: Final Report (Office of the City Clerk report OCC01933) to Council on July 5, 2023. Council then sent the report to Council Services Committee for further discussion.

### **Council Services Committee Direction**

At the September 15, 2023 Council Services Committee meeting, Committee discussed which of the recommendations in the aforementioned report should be followed up on. Committee determined 10 actions that required further review and are included in Attachment 1 along with the status of the decisions made to date.

This report is in response to the final outstanding action:

“to explore options towards providing greater flexibility, equitable access and removing barriers to participate in Councillor duties as per resources in Policy C618B - Councillors Budget and Expenses.”

### **Options to Provide Equitable Access for Councillors**

In its final report the Committee defined equity as:

*Equity is treating everyone fairly by acknowledging their unique situation and addressing systemic barriers. The aim of equity is to ensure that everyone has fair and just access to results and benefits. Equality means treating all people the same. Though equality is a time honored and important principle in a democratic system, it is not perfect. Equity means people could be treated differently in the interest of giving all people access to local government.*

*Equity is about fairness in access to resources and in the opportunity to succeed in the pursuit of political choices. Equity principles, policies, and practices enable equitable access, representation, opportunities, and meaningful participation of socially diverse people.*

Several of the equity issues highlighted in the Final Committee Report were actioned as follow up items identified at the September 15, 2023 Council Services Committee meeting.

- **Ward Composition factors were identified as inequitable.**
  - Further information regarding the Ward Boundary Review was presented at the December 8, 2023, Special Council Services Committee meeting. This process is defined by Policy C469B - Ward Boundary Design, with the guiding principles:
    1. Ward Boundary Design maintains effective representation.
    2. Ward Boundaries maintain their integrity through regular reviews
- **Costs for mail outs to constituents were identified as inequitable.**

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- The Taskforce Final Report outlined the need to maintain and expand traditional media distribution to ensure equitable communication to constituents who may not access online services.
- As each ward has a different number of residences, therefore had different costs associated with production of mail out materials and postage, an amendment to the Councillors Budget and Expenses Policy was drafted to allow postage and courier services as an eligible expense in the Common Budget was included in the November 6, 2024, Office of the City Clerk report OCC02713 and a motion was passed to address this inequity.

### **Equitable Access to Information**

Feedback was received around ensuring Councillors' offices are supported and have equal access to the same information in a timely manner. In response, the Office of the Councillors Google Site was implemented. This tool transitioned the 'Office Guide' into a digital format, allowing real time updates and the accommodation of Council Office requests. The tool offers the ability to adapt and expand to the needs of the Office of the Councillors.

### **Literature Review**

A literature review was completed to identify potential equity and inclusion measures that had not been identified elsewhere. Research included resources from the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.<sup>1</sup> These resources broadened the definition of equity by taking a more inclusive and gender-based approach and perspective. Key themes of this research included:

- cultural shifts through increased engagement,
- mentorship and training to identify and remove barriers, and
- ensuring equitable access to information and resources.

### **Respect In the Workplace and Art of Inclusion**

Research was followed by engagement with the Respect in the Workplace section of Employee Services. They identified two key Administrative foundations: Respectful Workplace Administrative Policy, and the Art of Inclusion.<sup>2</sup> A recommended action from the Art of Inclusion seeks to remove systemic barriers through the creation of a community or community of practice to share information, best practices and challenges. This is consistent with research that identified communities of collaboration as a way to share information, identify best practices, and create room for mentorship.

### **Review by Independent Council Compensation Committee**

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<sup>1</sup> "Measuring Inclusion Tool for Municipal Governments" created by the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, "Toward Parity: Inventory of Strategies, Ideas and Actions" and "Run Win and Lead: Toward Parity in Municipal Politics" published by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

<sup>2</sup> The Art of Inclusion is up for renewal this year based on the findings of the Employment Systems Review.

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The final report of the Office of the Councillors Budget Review Task Force was also provided to the 2024 Independent Council Compensation Committee for consideration. The 2024 Independent Council Compensation Committee Final Report found that “the benefits available to the Mayor and Councillors were generally appropriate and comparable in nature and extent to the employee benefits available to management employees of the City of Edmonton.” However, the Independent Council Compensation Committee did recommend that Councillors receive Workers’ Compensation Insurance. The motivation for this coverage is to “[provide] workers (the members of Council) with the benefits and services needed to help them get back to work safely should a workplace injury occur.” This recommendation was accepted and City Council approved an estimated \$40,000 to cover the cost of the increase to WCB premiums, having 12/13 of the costs coming from the Council Common Budget and 1/13 of the costs coming from the Mayor's office budget. The Committee had thoughtful discussion on further benefit enhancement, in particular the importance of ensuring benefits such as access to childcare, thereby allowing for a potentially wider and more diverse range of potential citizens to consider running for future Councils. The Committee found that childcare is not provided to other City employees in Edmonton, nor is it generally available to other elected officials in Canada, and therefore the Committee could not recommend introducing this in Edmonton.

### **Jurisdictional Scan**

A jurisdictional scan found that in 2023 the City of Calgary updated its Code of Conduct for Elected Officials to include direct references related to mandatory anti-racism and indigenous relations training, and applied the respectful workplace policy to elected officials.

### **Summary of Possible Next Steps for Consideration**

Following the acceptance of the report from both the Councillors Office Budget Review Taskforce and the Independent Council Compensation Committee, Administration continues to look for opportunities to reduce barriers to access and improve equity in the course of support for Council.

Should Council Services Committee wish to direct Administration to further pursue this work next steps could include:

- Pursuing the creation of a dedicated community of practice for elected officials to create an intentional space to discuss removing barriers, and creating equitable access. This may offer opportunities of knowledge sharing, mentorship, and the development of best practices. This could be a dedicated space in the Council Services Committee meeting or an alternative avenue.
- Recommend to Council changes be made to the Council Code of Conduct to include:
  - A duty to educate themselves on topics that address systemic barriers including participation in training related to Respectful Workplace Administrative Policy and the Art of Inclusion.

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- Request Administration to offer additional dedicated training opportunities related to topics such as indigenous awareness, anti-racism, respectful and inclusive workplace, diversity and inclusion and inclusive language.
  - Elected officials do have access to administrative resources through the Learning Management System however additional training may be able to be tailored or provided in person rather than self-directed.

## **ATTACHMENT**

1. Overview of Actions Directed by Council Services Committee and Follow Up