

New 2020 Council Initiatives

Report Back

Recommendation

1. That the four new Council Initiatives Social (Healthy City); Environment (Climate & Energy); Economic (Regional Prosperity) and Urban Places, approved on April 29, 2020 be suspended.
2. That the 2017-2021 Council Initiatives, subordinated to the new Council Initiatives, be paused
3. That Administration provide a report to Council in Q1 2021 on a possible path forward including amendments to Council Initiatives Policy C518C returning the policy to the pre-April 2020 version.

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the April 29/30, 2020 City Council meeting, the following motion was passed:

1. That City Policy C518C as set out in pages 1-3 of Attachment 1 of the April 29, 2020, City Manager report CR_8261, be approved.
2. That four new Council Initiatives and the Terms of Reference for the Healthy City, Regional Prosperity, Climate and Energy, and Urban Places Council Initiatives, as outlined in Attachment 2 of the April 29, 2020, City Manager report CR_8261, be approved.
3. That all previously approved 24 Council initiatives be made subordinate to the four new initiatives, as generally outlined in Attachment 3 of the April 29, 2020, City Manager report CR_8261.
4. That a report back on the new initiatives be returned to Council no later than the end of September 2020.

Executive Summary

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Administration proposed amendments to the Council Initiatives Policy C518C to facilitate a temporary subordination of the original 24 Council Initiatives under four new Initiatives which were aligned with the four strategic goals of ConnectEdmonton.

The Council Initiative Working Groups, which are based on the ConnectEdmonton strategic goals of Climate and Energy, Healthy City, Regional Prosperity and Urban

Places, began meeting in May 2020. Since then, the Working Groups have held 31 meetings.

In September 2020, Administration sought feedback about continuing the Working Groups and the future of the subordinated Council Initiatives

Administration recommends that all Council Initiatives be paused at this time. This includes the original 24 Initiatives which have been subordinated under the four new Council Initiatives which were created early in the global pandemic. Administration will return to Council in Q1 2021.

Report

Background

At the April 29/30, 2020 City Council Meeting, City Council directed that all previously established Council Initiatives be made subordinate to new Council Initiatives based on ConnectEdmonton's four strategic goals.

In May 2020, the Administrative Climate and Energy, Healthy City, Regional Prosperity and Urban Places Working Groups began meeting. Since then, the Working Groups have held 31 meetings. Working Group membership consists of up to six Councillors per Working Group.

The mandates for each Working Group are described below:

- **Healthy City** - Focus on health and social impacts, particularly for vulnerable Edmontonians.
- **Regional prosperity** - Focus on economic impacts, challenges, strengths and key resiliencies in the Edmonton region, particularly for small businesses.
- **Climate and Energy** - Focus on environmental impacts, including opportunities to improve environmental outcomes, incorporating lessons learned into the City's climate resiliency strategy, and capitalizing on green job opportunities in the Edmonton region.
- **Urban Places** - Focus on built form impacts, particularly on mobility, housing, land use and urban spaces.

In addition to these individual mandates, the Working Groups have focused on opportunities to recover from economic stresses resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and low oil prices. Based on these discussions, the Working Groups provided advice to Administration that will inform recommended actions to support economic recovery, in alignment with the Office of the City Manager report CR_8379, Reimagine Report - Strategic Response to COVID-19, discussed at the July 6/8, 2020

City Council meeting. These recommended actions will be presented to Council for approval at a future date.

Feedback from Working Group Members

In September 2020, Administration solicited feedback from Working Group members to learn the members' perspectives on the Council Initiative Working Groups and the potential to make changes to the subordinated Council Initiatives.

With respect to the Council Initiative Working Groups, members shared the following feedback:

- Members appreciated that Working Groups provide the opportunity for stakeholders to engage with multiple Councillors on issues of concern.
- Working Group meetings have been helpful for building an understanding of the challenges ahead.
- Working Groups provide an opportunity for Council and Administration to talk about key issues.
- Members wanted to see a robust work plan with clear next steps, timelines and deliverables.
- Members felt it was important to establish clear relationships with Committees of Council to determine the right decision making body for recommendations based on the Working Groups' advice, and to encourage precise and informed discussions at Committee meetings.
- Membership in the Working Groups could be rotated to ensure all Councillors have the opportunity to contribute to a variety of topics.
- To reflect that there are many shared concerns between the four Working Groups, allowing Councillors to attend meetings of Working Groups where they are not members would provide opportunities to participate in initiatives where there are overlapping interests.
- Working Group members requested that they be given access to the information discussed at other Working Group meetings.
- Members wanted to create space to focus on and freely discuss specific topics within the Working Group's mandate.
- There was a desire to see progress on issues following each meeting, as well as wanting clarity on how the Working Groups would identify targets and measure progress towards achieving outcomes.
- Some members felt that important individual issues become lost in the larger perspective.
- Some members noted that they felt disconnected from the Council Initiatives they were previously responsible for.
- Members requested clarity on which aspect of the City's business plan and strategy are being served by the Working Groups.

- Members expressed a desire to have regular, direct interactions between Councillors and Administration to discuss strategy.

Working Group members shared the following feedback about potentially making changes to the subordinated Council Initiatives:

- There is a strong desire to maintain the relationships established through the subordinated Council Initiatives. Members emphasized the need for clarity on how these relationships would continue through the Working Groups and to ensure that relevant stakeholders are informed of any change in direction.
- Assurance is needed that the subordinated Council Initiatives have been absorbed into Administration's business operations to ensure that this work remains a priority.
- Council Initiatives provided the opportunity to shine a light on issues that are important to the community but may otherwise get lost in the course of responding to other City priorities.
- The Council Initiatives allowed Councillors a seat at external tables outside of the Council and Committee tables and made it easier to communicate with the public about the issues discussed at these tables.
- Council Initiatives that are being overseen by external committees could continue, while those without external oversight that are part of Administration's regular business could be retired.
- Consider ways to leverage the Deputy Mayor role to support the work of Council Initiatives.

Next Steps

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council Initiative Working Groups benefited the City by providing Councillors and Administration the opportunity to discuss and better understand the breadth and depth of challenges facing Edmonton due to ongoing health and economic shocks to the region. With the return of Standing Committees and the need to focus on budget planning and upcoming discussions at Council in November and December 2020, Administration recommends that the Council Initiative Working Groups be suspended, effective immediately.

Additionally, due to ongoing impacts on staff and resources due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Administration recommends that the Council Initiatives remain paused. In Q1 2021, Administration will return to Council with options for resuming the Council Initiatives later in 2021.

Budget/Financial Implications

There are no budget or financial implications associated with suspending the Council Initiative Working Groups.

Corporate Outcomes and Performance Management

| Corporate Outcome(s): Conditions of Success | | | |
|---|---|------------------|------------------|
| Outcome(s) | Measure(s) | Result(s) | Target(s) |
| Strategic advice from the Council Initiative Working Groups strengthens Administration's ongoing pandemic response and recovery | Percentage of working group strategic advice considered by administration | 100% (2020) | 100% |

Risk Assessment

| Risk Element | Risk Description | Likelihood | Impact | Risk Score (with current mitigations) | Current Mitigations | Potential Future Mitigations |
|----------------------|---|-------------------|---------------|--|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Political Influences | Policy change may result in delays in achieving strategic objectives | 3 - possible | 3 - Major | 9 - Medium | | |
| Legal / regulatory | Changes to partnerships, policies and programs may not be compatible with existing regulation or agreements | 3 - possible | 2 - Moderate | 6 - Low | | |
| Public perception | Poor public perception of the City during COVID-19 affects its ability to achieve its objective | 3 - possible | 3 -Major | 9 - Medium | | |

Others Reviewing this Report

- M. Persson, Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer, Financial and Corporate Services
- C. Owen, Deputy City Manager, Communications and Engagement
- G. Cebryk, Deputy City Manager, City Operations
- J. Meliefste, Acting Deputy City Manager, Integrated Infrastructure Services
- K. Armstrong, Deputy City Manager, Employee Services
- R. Smyth, Deputy City Manager, Citizen Services

- S. McCabe, Deputy City Manager, Urban Form and Corporate Strategic Development
- B. Andriachuk, City Solicitor