

August 7, 2019

To: Members
Executive Committee

Re: Council and Committee Report Templates

RECOMMENDATION

That a new corporate template for Council and Committee reports as outlined in Option 1 of this report and attached as Appendix A-1 and A-2 be approved.

CONCLUSION

In consultation with Council members and Administration, a revised corporate template for Council and committee reports is being implemented to ensure reports provide the right information at the appropriate level of detail to support sound decision-making.

Administration is also exploring additional ways to improve the quality of Council and committee reports. As part of continuous improvement, a strategy and implementation plan to enhance reports will be undertaken in conjunction with the new template’s introduction.

BACKGROUND

At its meeting on November 26, 2018, City Council approved recommendations respecting the Council Committee structure and related procedural amendments (*CR18-105 Executive Committee – Council Committee Recommendations*).

Members commented on the merits of the format for Council and committee reports and directed the City Clerk to review the existing templates with the objective of making reports more “user-friendly” to the reader (ie., members of Council and the public).

A multidisciplinary team reviewed the templates and provided options:

| | |
|---|--|
| Amber Ackerman <i>Deputy City Clerk</i> | Pamela Deck <i>Director, Corporate Strategy & Performance</i> |
| Maureen MacCuish <i>Manager, Communications</i> | Leah Goodwin <i>Senior Communications Strategist</i> |
| Linda Ungar <i>Manager, Corporate Information Governance</i> | Donna Mitchell <i>Corporate Strategy and Performance Consultant</i> |

Councillor Bob Hawkins participated in discussions as a liaison between the team and City Council.

In developing recommendations, the team conducted a literature review and researched other municipalities. That led to the development of new templates designed to present information more concisely and focus on key information.

Key stakeholders were invited to review the templates and provide advice, guidance and expertise:

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| ▪ Council officers | ▪ ELT (Executive Leadership Team) |
| ▪ Business and systems staff | ▪ ELT administrative and executive staff |
| ▪ Corporate governance staff | ▪ Ten report writers from across the corporation |
| ▪ Governance review team | |

DISCUSSION

The template options presented below are designed to balance detail and brevity with:

- standard headers organized to follow a clear policy analysis process;
- an introductory matrix to present key information quickly;
- visual appeal and less repetition;
- clear communication and plain language principles; and
- a new section to outline the options to the recommendation, or alternatives for consideration.

Option 1 (Recommended)

1. Reports initially going to a committee or directly to Council will be in the form attached to this report (Appendix A-1).
2. When a committee recommendation is forwarded to Council for consideration it will include the original report (Appendix A-1) along with a cover memo (Appendix A-2).

This approach reflects the fact that most reports (~ 90% in 2018) are submitted first to a committee. After considering the report, the committee will either approve and/or amend the report and forward it to Council. This approach maintains the integrity of the original report while providing a user-friendly and transparent way for the committee to summarize and convey any changes or amendments made for Council's consideration or approval.

Option 2 (Modified Status Quo)

1. Reports initially going to a committee or directly to Council will be in the form attached to this report (Appendix B-1).
2. When a committee recommendation is forwarded to Council for consideration it will be in the form attached to this report (Appendix B-2).

Instead of forwarding the original Administration report on to Council with a cover memo from the committee, as presented in Option 1, this alternative option would require the council officers to take the original Administration report presented to a committee (Appendix B-1) and the committee's recommendations and combine them into a final report for Council (Appendix B-2).

With this approach, the council officers would:

- make the necessary changes in points of detail (as to names, recommendations, signatories, etc.); and
- include links to the original Administration report submitted to the committee and the committee's meeting minutes in the section titled *Decision History*. Readers would need to access the links to learn more about the original Administration recommendations and the committee's decisions regarding same.

This approach is similar to the current practice, which presents the following challenges for report writers and readers:

- readers must differentiate between two different reports that look substantially alike, with differences in points of detail;
- with the report templates proposed in this option, readers would not have immediate access to the original Administration report, and would have to access the link located under the section of the report titled *Decision History* to do so; and
- having the council officers copy key portions of one report and paste them into another increases the likelihood of human error.

Implementation of new templates

A series of workshops will be held with staff to review the new templates and reinforce best practices related to report preparation. Implementation will be targeted to be in place by December 1, 2019.

Improved reports

While a new and improved template is a good first step to improve Council and committee reports, Administration is exploring ways to further improve the quality of reports over the next few months. The plan is expected to be completed in conjunction with the implementation of the new templates by December 1, 2019.

RECOMMENDATION IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

None with respect to this report.

Environmental Implications

None with respect to this report.

Policy and/or Strategic Implications

The new templates support two strategic goals:

- 1. Improve Processes.** The new templates are designed to improve the corporation's reporting system by encouraging report writers to pull together all the relevant information decision-makers need with balance and objectivity. This will improve the information flowing through the corporation to Council and its committees, and then from Council and committees to the general public.
- 2. Improve Decision-Making.** The effectiveness of Council and committee decision-making is dependent on the quality of the information it receives. The new templates are designed to provide good quality and timely information by presenting key information in a way that makes it easy to grasp the critical issues and providing enough information for the decision-maker to make a well-informed decision.

Other Implications

None with respect to this report.

Accessibility Implications

None with respect to this report.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Office of the City Clerk, in concert with members of the multidisciplinary team will provide guidance, focused workshops and other tools to assist report writers using the new templates and reinforce best practices related to report preparation.

DELEGATED AUTHORITY

The recommendation contained in this report are within the delegated authority of the Executive Committee.

Respectfully submitted,



Amber Ackerman
Deputy City Clerk

Respectfully submitted,



Jim Nicol
City Clerk

Report prepared by:
Donna Mitchell, Corporate Strategy and Performance Consultant, Public Policy
Leah Goodwin, Senior Communications Strategist