Minutes – Executive Policy Committee – November 18, 2020

REPORTS

Item No. 10 Councillors' Office Resources

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE DECISION:

The Executive Policy Committee received the recommendation of the Governance Committee of Council as information.

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

Moved by Councillor Browaty,

That the recommendation of the Governance Committee of Council be received as information.

Yea:	Bowman, Browaty, Gillingham, Gilroy, Mayes, Rollins	6
Nay:	Allard	1

Carried

Steve Snyder submitted a communication dated November 17, 2020, in opposition to the matter.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On October 21, 2020, the Governance of Council passed the following motion:

WHEREAS each City of Winnipeg City Councillor currently receives an annual budget of $84,924 to run their offices and hire staff;

AND WHEREAS as below, a cross jurisdictional review of other Canadian City Councils conducted by the Public Service found that Winnipeg City Councillors receive the second lowest level of funding to operate their offices and is the only jurisdiction that does not provide a pension for Councillor's staff;

City	Office Budget (2019)	Staff Budget	Staff Pension	Per Capita	Average Ward Size
Ottawa	$266,565		Yes	$6.36	41,922
Manitoba MLA	$89,466	$52,416	Yes	$6.33	22,428
Toronto	$50,000	$482,000	Yes	$4.87	109,263
Calgary	$285,900		City RRSP contributions	$3.27	87,314
Edmonton	$191,649		Yes	$2.56	74,954
Winnipeg	$83,924		No	$1.79	47,016
Vancouver*	41,951	$6,000	Yes	$0.76	63,149

*In addition to the office and staff budget above, the 10 Councillors in Vancouver share 5 Assistants who are city employees paid out of a $400,000.00 budget which equates to an additional value of $40,000 per Councillor and increases the value of each Councillor's budget to $87,951 with a per capita rating of $1.39.

DECISION MAKING HISTORY (continued):

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION (continued):

AND WHEREAS Councillor's Offices are one of the initial points of contacts for citizens and poor resourcing of Councillor's Office staff results in reduced customer service and leads to difficulty in attracting staff and increased turnover / loss of experienced staff;

AND WHEREAS an increase of $35,000 per ward will result in a per capita allocation for Winnipeg of $2.55, just below the $2.56 per capita for the City of Edmonton, the City just above Winnipeg in terms of funding;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

1. That the issue of funding for Councillor staff resources be referred to the 2021 Budget Review Process:

    A. That the current annual CWA operating budget be examined with a view to increasing the per capita rate up to $2.55 per capita.

    B. That the City of Winnipeg provide pension and benefits to Councillor's office staff similar to civic employees, with funding provided corporately similar to other jurisdictions.

    C. That the Governance Committee be directed to examine changing the CWA Policy to enact best practices such as splitting the budget into dedicated staffing and operations budget.

2. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to fulfill the intent in the foregoing.

and submitted the matter to the Executive Policy Committee.

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL DECISION:

On July 6, 2020, the Governance Committee of Council directed the Winnipeg Public Service to conduct a cross jurisdictional review of other Canadian City Councils to determine the level of support provided to Councillors, including budgets and staffing, and report back to the Governance Committee of Council within 90 days.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Title: Councillors' Office Resources

Critical Path: Governance Committee of Council

AUTHORIZATION

Author	Department Head	CFO	CAO
C. Gameiro	M. Lemoine	N/A	N/A

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The resources that members of Council have access to for operation of their offices are governed by the Councillors' Ward Allowance Policy, with budgetary amounts approved in each year's operating budget. These budgets include monies to be spent on all items required to operate each Councillor's office, including items such as office supplies, advertising, telephones and most notably, staffing.

Councillors in comparable cities in Canada have similar duties to their Winnipeg counterparts, though the budgetary amounts available vary across jurisdictions. A cross jurisdictional scan of Canadian cities is outlined in Attachment A, and reveals that the City of Winnipeg has amongst the lowest levels of support available to Councillors of the compared municipalities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That this report be received as information.

REASON FOR THE REPORT

On July 6, 2020, the Governance Committee of Council directed the Winnipeg Public Service to conduct a cross jurisdictional review of other Canadian City Councils to determine the level of support provided to Councillors, including budgets and staffing, and report back to the Governance Committee of Council within 90 days.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

There are no implications to receiving this report as information.

HISTORY/DISCUSSION

The City of Winnipeg Council consists of 15 Councillors and the Mayor. Each Councillor represents a ward consisting of roughly 47,000 constituents and is provided with an office budget of $83,924.00 (2019 funds). The spending of these funds are governed by the Councillors' Ward Allowance Policy (CWA), and includes allowance for such categories as advertising, community expenses, office equipment, supplies, community offices and staffing, amongst others. In addition to actual staff salary costs, Councillors must also pay for the employer portion of staff employment insurance and Canada pension plan, as well as the full costs for vacation pay and optional benefits. Staff are not eligible to receive a pension. The strain on Councillors budget limits their ability to pay and retain staff, which has resulted in an increasingly high turnover rate of Councillors Executive Assistants.

A cross jurisdictional review of other Canadian City Councils was conducted in July of 2020 to determine the level of support provided to Councillors to run their offices, including budgets and staffing. Results of the survey include those municipalities who responded to the survey and who have a comparable methodology. Information from the Province of Manitoba for operation of MLA offices is also included. As indicated in Attachment A, the review found that of those jurisdictions included, Winnipeg City Councillors are provided with the second lowest level of funding to operate their offices and serve their constituents, with a budget of $83,924.00 annually. Conversely, City of Toronto City Councillors are each provided with an annual budget of $532,000.

Each City of Toronto electoral ward contains approximately 109,263 people. Councillors in Toronto have separate budgets for operating their offices and hiring staff. The amount available to Councillors to operate their office is $50,000.00 annually, with their staff budget being $482,000.00. Each Councillor can hire a maximum of 5 staff, with defined job titles and roles, as well as salary ranges. These positions include Executive Assistant, Constituency Assistant, Administrative Assistant Level 2, Administrative Assistant Level 1, and Councillor's Aide (summer student). At the top of this scale is the Executive Assistant with a salary scale of $48,102.60 to $90,344.80, and the Councillor's Aide representing a part-time/casual position with an hourly rate of $15.51. Councillor staff are considered non-union employees of the City of Toronto and as such are provided with benefits in accordance with the City's benefits plan for non-union employees. Councillors are not responsible for the benefits expenditures, which come from a separate corporate budget.

Vancouver's civic government is distinct in nature to the majority of Canadian Councils in that their system allows for political parties. As well, some Councillors are elected at large. Councillors' Assistants are civic employees, paid for out of budgets that are not at the discretion of Councillors. The 10 Councillors in Vancouver are aided by 5 Assistants out of a staffing budget of $400,000.00. In addition to assistants provided by the City, each Councillor has a $6,000.00 discretionary budget allocated to political staff, and an office budget consisting of $41,951.00. Councillors' Assistants are City employees and fall under the collective agreement.

The cities of Ottawa, Calgary, and Edmonton are the most closely comparable to Winnipeg, in that Councillors in those cities have access to combined budgets that include office expenditures and staffing, similar to the budget provided by the CWA in Winnipeg.

Councillors in Ottawa have access to a budget in the amount of $266,565.00 to operate their offices. There is no set maximum or minimum number of staff that each Councillor must or may hire, but in consultation with the City of Ottawa, it was communicated that it is common for each Councillor to employ between 3 and 5 staff, comprised of both full and part time positions. The level of staffing is at the discretion of each Councillor, provided the annual budgetary amount is not exceeded. Councillors' Assistants enter into an employment contract with the City and are entitled to receive pension and benefits paid for by the City.

In Calgary, Councillors have access to a budget of $285,900.00 for office operations and to hire a maximum of three staff. One complexity unique to Calgary is that staff salaries are paid out of the Councillor's budget, while RRSP contributions, vacation pay, and other employer contributions are made from separate accounts contained in City budgets. The salary amounts of these assistants are not publicly disclosed.

Edmonton City Councillors are provided with a budget in the amount of $191,649.00 from which to operate their offices and hire staff. Similar to other cities, the number of staff members is at the discretion of each Councillor. Although not part of a union, Councillor's assistants are an employee group at the City of Edmonton and are entitled to receive benefits and pension which is paid out of a separate budget.

On a per capita basis, the City of Ottawa ranks as the highest in providing funding to assist Councillors with operation of their offices with a budget that equates to $6.36 per constituent, followed by Toronto at $4.87. The prairie cities are next with Calgary at $3.27, Edmonton at $2.56 and Winnipeg at $1.79.

Councillors in Vancouver have the lowest budget at their discretion at $0.76 per constituent, though it must be reiterated that the City of Vancouver provides 5 assistants to serve all 10 City Councillors, out of a budget of a $400,000. Taking that into consideration, it could be argued that the per capita budget for Vancouver City Councillors increases to $1.39 per constituent.

The Province of Manitoba is also included for comparison purposes. The Members' Allowances Regulation at https://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/members/regulations/membersallowancesregulation.pdf contains the rules regarding allowances for Members of the Legislative Assembly. Allowances include a constituency allowance for operation of offices. Expenses include office supplies, telephone, advertising, websites, etc. The constituency allowance varies for members in different parts of the Province. For the purposes of this report, the 2020 / 2021 Winnipeg Constituency Allowance rate of $65,185 is used. Also available is a Constituency assistant's allowance of $2,016 bi-weekly / $52,416 annually. There are also various other small allowances that MLA's can access including a constituency office rent allowance of $1,446 monthly / $17,352 annually, an annual travel allowance of $6,929 and living allowances for MLA's residing outside of Winnipeg.

As with all of the City's examined, the basis of the plans vary slightly compared to Winnipeg, so it is difficult to allow for a true "apples to apples" comparison among the various jurisdictions. However, most cities compared did have other benefits which were not included in these comparisons, such as benefits and pensions for employees paid for out of separate corporate budgets. These were not included in order not to inflate other comparable cities versus Winnipeg, which has few similar extra funding mechanisms. Regardless of how the comparisons are made, City of Winnipeg Councillors Offices do appear to be funded at a lower level than comparable municipalities, both in total amount and per capita. It is also notable that Winnipeg was the only jurisdiction that did not provide pensions to Councillors Assistants. It is

believed that they may be the only staffing group at the City of Winnipeg that does not receive a pension. Lower pay and benefits are significant as these factors impact staff that can be attracted to the position and can increase turnover / reduce experience which is critical to this unique complex position. Councillor's Offices are often the first point of contact for citizens along with the 311 service. Inability of Councillor's Assistants to handle customer service directly impacts customer service and can add to the public service burden by increasing requests.

It is worth noting that the City of Winnipeg Councillor office budget was temporarily increased by $40,000 in 2013, but it was then reduced by $37,000 in 2014. If that increase would have been maintained, Winnipeg would still be at the bottom end of the scale in terms of budget amount, but on a per capita basis would be at a level equal to Edmonton (see Attachment A).

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Financial Impact Statement Date: September 10, 2020

Project Name:
Councillors' Office Resources

COMMENTS:

There are no financial implications associated with the recommendations in this report.

Electronically signed by T. Yanchishyn
Tanis Yanchishyn
Manager of Finance (Campus)
Corporate Finance Department

CONSULTATION

None

OURWINNIPEG POLICY ALIGNMENT

The recommendations contained in this report align with Our Winnipeg Direction 1: Provide efficient and focused civic administration and governance.

WINNIPEG CLIMATE ACTION PLAN ALIGNMENT

N/A

SUBMITTED BY

Department: City Clerk's Department
Prepared by: C. Gameiro, Deputy City Clerk
Date: September 9, 2020

ATTACHMENT A

City	Office Budget	Staff Budget	Staff Pension	Per Capita	Average Ward Size
Ottawa	$266,565		Yes	$6.36	41,922
Manitoba MLA	$89,466*	$52,416	Yes	$6.33	22,428
Toronto	$50,000	$482,000	Yes	$4.87	109,263
Calgary	$285,900		City RRSP contributions up to 7.5% of base salary	$3.27	87,314
Edmonton	$191,649		Yes	$2.56	74,954
Winnipeg	$83,924		No	$1.79	47,016
Vancouver**	$41,951	$6,000	Yes	$0.76	63,149

*Includes Winnipeg Constituency Allowance rate of $65,185, constituency office rent allowance of $17,352, and travel allowance of $6,929

**In addition to the office and staff budget above, the 10 Councillors in Vancouver share 5 Assistants who are city employees paid out of a $400,000.00 budget which equates to an additional value of $40,000 per Councillor and increases the value of each Councillor's budget to $87,951 with a per capita rating of $1.39.