Minutes – Executive Policy Committee – January 16, 2024

REPORTS

Item No. 5 Open Government Policy Annual Review 2023

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

The Executive Policy Committee concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service and recommended to Council:

1. That the report be received as information.

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

Moved by Councillor Duncan,

That the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service be concurred in and forwarded to Council.

Carried

COUNCIL DECISION:

On December 14, 2023, Council concurred in the recommendation of the Executive Policy Committee and granted an extension of up to 30 days for the Public Service to report back on Open Government Policy implementation at the City of Winnipeg.

On February 22, 2017, Council concurred in the recommendation of the Executive Policy Committee and adopted the following:

1. That the City of Winnipeg Open Government Policy be approved, and the Public Service be directed to report back annually on Open Government Policy implementation at the City of Winnipeg.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Title: Open Government Policy Annual Review 2023

Critical Path: Executive Policy Committee

AUTHORIZATION

Author	Department Head	CFO	CAO
F. Wiltshire	F. Wiltshire	N/A	M. Jack

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On February 15, 2017, Council approved the City of Winnipeg Open Government Policy, which provides a framework for the Public Service to continue to move towards being more open, transparent, and accountable.

The Open Government Annual Review aims to provide a summary of the work that has been done to date on Open Government in the City of Winnipeg, and to outline work that is ongoing and planned for the future.

Key achievements over the past year include:

- The launch of an online form for requests for access to City records (i.e., FIPPA requests) increased the number of FIPPA requests that were filed in 2023;
- Improved awareness of the administrative standard for the Application of the Engage Winnipeg Policy;
- The development of a Plain Language Policy for all public communication;
- The launch of seven new data sets on the City's Open Data Portal; and
- The launch of one new Open Data-powered application to provide information in a more user-friendly manner.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That this report be received as information.

REASON FOR THE REPORT

On February 15, 2017, Council adopted the following recommendation:

"That Council approves the City of Winnipeg Open Government Policy (Appendix A) and direct the Public Service to report back annually on Open Government Policy implementation at the City of Winnipeg"

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

There are no implications associated with receiving this report as information.

HISTORY/DISCUSSION

Over the past decade, citizens have been passionate about informing themselves on local community issues and engaging in government policy. Direct access to information and openness and transparency at all levels of government is being demanded in order to empower citizens.

On March 20, 2013, Council adopted an Open Data Initiative which endorsed the principles of providing citizens, businesses, and other jurisdictions with the greatest amount of Open and Accessible Data possible while respecting privacy and security concerns.

On June 25, 2014, Council adopted the "Open Government Initiative - Improvements to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act Process" which directed the Winnipeg Public Service to implement a new process for Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) requests. This process would focus on the concepts of openness and transparency in providing government data, while ensuring privacy and security of data for citizens and businesses, in keeping with the Open Data Initiatives adopted by Council.

On September 16, 2015, Executive Policy Committee requested the Public Service to conduct a review of all City data sharing and identify opportunities to apply machine readable format along with a review of security and privacy considerations and report back within 90 days.

On October 26, 2015, the City Clerk's Department prepared a report outlining leading open government initiatives in other jurisdictions and broad recommendations on next steps for the City of Winnipeg in implementing open government.

On November 18, 2015, the Chief Administrative Officer was directed to implement an open government policy across all Departments in the City of Winnipeg, and to develop an Action Plan for Council's endorsement within six months.

On July 13, 2016, Council approved the Open Government Action Plan, and directed the Winnipeg Public Service to report back on an Open Government Policy by February 2017.

On February 15, 2017, Council approved the City of Winnipeg Open Government Policy and directed the Public Service to report back annually on open government initiatives that have been undertaken. The first annual review was provided to Council on September 27, 2017, and have continued on an annual basis since then.

2023 Annual Update

Over the past year, significant work has been done to increase the amount of information available to the public with seven new data sets having been made available on the City's Open Data Portal. All data on the Open Data portal has been released as JSON, XML and CSV, which are universal general standards for machine readability.

Among the new datasets are:

- Detailed development permit data which lists the development permits issued by the City of Winnipeg since November 2022;
- Estimated daily passenger counts on Winnipeg Transit buses;
- Geographic list of public Wi-Fi sites; and
- Active vacant building by-law compliance orders.

On December 16, 2022, the City launched the online Burial Search, a replacement search-based application for locating graves based on keyword searches, powered by an Open Dataset. This application combined the records from all three City Cemeteries to allow users to search all locations in one spot. The search application uses all the fields known about the gravesite locations to quickly filter to relevant results.

This application also uses additional filters such as age, date of death, and name fields to help users narrow their results to assist with their search. This application replaced a legacy application which was difficult for non-technical users to navigate. By focusing on an improved User Experience, more inquiries will be satisfied using web technologies, and less time used by critical staff.

The Office of Public Engagement has been working with City departments to ensure better understanding of roles and responsibilities in public engagement. Through collaboration and understanding where gaps exist, the Office of Public Engagement has a better sense of how to support project teams to achieve meaningful public engagement.

In summer 2023, the Office of Public Engagement issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to establish a pre-qualified list of public engagement service providers.

The pre-qualified list allows us to:

- Require training of pre-qualified proponents;
- Reach out to a rotating sub-set of pre-qualified proponents to request proposals for assignments;
- Target assignments for specific service needs;
- Conduct an evaluation at the end of each assignment; and
- Remove Proponents from the list if they do not meet the City’s standards for public engagement.

This approach is expected to result in improved service quality and more efficient and flexible procurement when it comes to outsourcing public engagement.

In 2023, the Access and Privacy Office (APO) again saw an increase in FIPPA requests received. The most obvious factor for the increase was the introduction of the City’s online FIPPA request form in May 2022 with the City receiving 29 percent more requests in 2022 and, as of the end of November 2023, another 13 percent more requests in 2023. The online form streamlined the intake process, enabling requests for police and fire reports (70-80 percent of requests received annually) to be automatically routed with the remainder assessed by the APO for assignment and coordination. To date in 2023, the City has processed 1,336 FIPPA requests, granting full or partial access to 84 percent of these.

Delivery of access and privacy training continued in early 2023 and APO is making strides to convert this training to online modules by early 2024.

In September 2023, Council passed the City's first Plain Language Communication Policy. The Policy will help the Public Service write for residents in a way that they can understand. It is important to use plain language so that residents can stay informed, act on important information, and take part in activities.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Financial Impact Statement

Date: December 1, 2023

Project Name:
Open Government Policy Annual Review

COMMENTS:

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

Randy Bernard

Randy Bernard, CPA, CMA
Manager of Finance & Administration (Campus)
Corporate Finance Department

CONSULTATION

This Report has been prepared in consultation with:

- Innovation & Technology Department
- City Clerks Department

OURWINNIPEG POLICY ALIGNMENT

1.5 Evidence-Informed Decisions
Invest in data and technology in order to support objective, evidence-informed decision-making; support open government and open data principles for collection and sharing; help coordinate records and information management; and improve process efficiency, results-based service delivery and accountability.

1.19 Equitable Service Access
Achieve best practice standards in equitable customer service and communications, enabling all community members to understand and navigate municipal service-delivery systems and decision-making processes, in the official language of their choice.

WINNIPEG CLIMATE ACTION PLAN ALIGNMENT

Consideration was given as to whether this report connects to the Winnipeg Climate Action Plan (CAP), and it was determined that the CAP is not applicable to this specific report.

WINNIPEG POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY ALIGNMENT

Goal 6: All City Services are Equitable, Inclusive and Accessible

Objective C: Use of City's tools and resources are maximized to reduce systemic inequities.

SUBMITTED BY

Department: Customer Service & Communications
Division: Office of the Director
Prepared by: F. Wiltshire
Date: December 1, 2023