



Date: June 27, 2022
To: Mayor and Council
Author: Paula Parker, Town Clerk
RE: 2022 Customer Service Review
Report No.: CAO-2022-12

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. That the Customer Service Standards and recommendations presented by Dr. Forsyth, Foresight Management Consulting **BE SUPPORTED** in principle; and,
2. That Administration **BE DIRECTED** to bring back a report to adopt the Customer Service Standards, including an implementation plan and 2023 budget implications for Council consideration.

BACKGROUND

In February 2021, Council identified its top priorities for the remainder of the 2018-2022 Council Term. Council identified "Customer Service" as its highest priority (ranked number one out of fifteen priorities).

On recommendation of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), Council approved the engagement of Dr. Janice Forsyth, Foresight Management Consulting to conduct an organization-wide Customer Service Review. The CAO recommended that the review be conducted by an impartial and independent party. Dr. Forsyth brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to this task.

This Customer Service Review aimed to obtain feedback on the municipality's current customer service levels, explore opportunities, and make recommendations for improvements. The scope of the review included:

- Develop customer service standards
- Identify staff training
- Improve levels of service
- Identify resources to meet levels of service
- Enhance the use of technology to provide citizens with improved access to services without compromising the security of transactions

- Increase efficiencies with existing staff resources

Over the course of the last few months Dr. Forsyth, with assistance of a Customer Service Review Staff Committee, engaged the community, council/committees and staff in surveys, meetings, and interviews and has compiled the data for Council's information. Dr. Forsyth and the Staff Committee have developed Customer Service Standards that are believed to be attainable based on feedback throughout the organization.

The standards will be presented at the June 27, 2022 regular council meeting by the consultant.

DISCUSSION

Dr. Forsyth and the Staff Committee created the following customer service standards for Council's consideration:

1. We will treat you in a professional and respectful manner.
2. We will treat you fairly while complying with all our policies, by-laws and regulations.
3. We will provide service in a responsible, efficient and timely manner.
4. We will acknowledge receipt of your correspondence within 3 business days.
5. We will ensure our services are accessible for all of our customers.
6. We will identify ourselves to you by using our first name and position title (where applicable).

In addition to the above noted standards, Dr. Forsyth provides recommendations for implementation. The recommendations provided by her support the success of the organization in meeting the standards. It was noted during Staff Committee meetings, that some departments cannot meet the standards with current technology or current staffing levels. In order to explore ways to properly fulfill the commitment of the Customer Service Standards, Council should support the recommendations of Dr. Forsyth in principle and allow administration to explore options to support its staff.

It is important to note that if Council wishes to adopt the Customer Service Standards without further commitment to increased staffing levels and/or improved technology the standards will not be met and team morale could diminish.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Based on the recommendations of Dr. Forsyth, there could be impacts to the 2023 budget with respect to appointing/hiring a director for the "Corporate Services" department, the hiring of a Manager of Customer Service and the acquisition of new technology to assist with efficiencies in each department.

It is also possible, that in collaboration with the Senior Management Team and IT, we could find efficiencies in technology already being used within the organization.

If administration is directed to further explore the recommendations of Dr. Forsyth and bring back a report to Council on how we intend to implement the new standards, costs will be brought back at that time.

NEXT STEPS

On Wednesday, June 22, 2022, the CAO met with the entire Management Team to focus on causes and solutions related to customer service concerns.

Managers have identified the following issues:

- Backlog in requests for service
- Not enough staff to address the volume of customer service requests
- Customer service has not been prioritized in the past
- Staff need additional training
- Lack of fairness in addressing complaints
- Technology not being properly utilized or unavailable
- Lack of tools to measure customer service

For example, Building and By-law Enforcement is currently backlogged with approximately 90 to 100 by-law enforcement requests and also backlogged in issuing building permits with a 30 to 35 day wait. More data is needed to determine backlogs in other departments, such as Public Works, Water and Wastewater, Drainage, Parks and Recreation, etc. More information will come forward in a future report.

Administration has identified a surprising contributor to the backlog in customer service requests. Staff have advised that some complaints are being pulled to the top of the backlog waiting list based on who is asking (ie. CAO or Council members). Staff have identified this as creating unfairness to residents remaining at the bottom of the list. It also causes additional delays as staff are pulled off their planned tasks and activities.

Administration has also identified a history of staff avoiding the issuance of lawful fines or penalties against residents, on the basis that fines or penalties are not “good customer service”. This results in frustration among residents and questions about fairness. It also results in additional time for staff on files because it takes longer to beg for compliance than it does to issue a fine or penalty.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are no environmental consideration to the recommendations in this report.

CONSULTATIONS

Dr. Janice Forsyth, the Management Team and the CAO were consulted on this report.

PREPARED BY:



Paula Parker
Town Clerk

REVIEWED BY:



John Norton
Chief Administrative Officer

LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Strive to make the Town of Kingsville a more accessible community.

Promote the betterment, self-image and attitude of the community.

To promote a safe community.

To become a leader in sustainable infrastructure renewal and development.

Support growth of the business community.

Manage residential growth through sustainable planning.

Manage growth through sustainable planning.

Improve recreational and cultural facilities and opportunities within the Town of Kingsville.

Effectively manage corporate resources and maximize performance in day-to-day operations.

Link to Council 2021-2022 Priorities

- COVID-19 and the health and safety of the community
- Customer Service: Training, Technology, Staff, Review Standards/Level of service
- Housing: Affordability (lot sizes, developer incentives, second dwellings, density, etc.)
- Greenhouse: lights & dark sky, odours (site plan compliance, bylaws, other tools)
- Programming Increase: Youth and Seniors
- A development plan for Downtown Kingsville / Main Street
- Financial savings: Schools closings, Migration Hall
- Economic Development: strengthen tourism/hospitality
- COVID - economic recovery
- Communications: Strategy – Policy (social media), Website refresh and other tools, Public engagement
- Housing: Migrant Worker Housing – Inspections (Building/Fire), regulate, reduce, or increase
- Committees / Boards: Review and Report
- Policy Update: Procedural Bylaw
- Economic Development: diversify the economy, create local jobs, industrial, Cottam
- Infrastructure (non-Municipal): Union Water expansion & governance
- Infrastructure (Municipal): Asset Management Plan update, the infrastructure funding deficit
- No direct link to Council priorities