

October 3, 2024

RE: Correspondence regarding the joint Closed Meeting held August 8, 2024 and the Grey County Collaborative Decision Making Framework

As a follow up to the above noted correspondence dated September 19, 2024, Grey County wishes to provide further information and context about the closed meeting held jointly with all Grey County member municipalities on August 8, 2024, and the Grey County decision making framework that was considered and supported by the Corporate Services Committee in 2013.

On August 8, 2024, Grey County and all its member municipalities held a joint all Councils meeting, which included an in-camera/closed session portion pertaining to shared service delivery and service efficiencies and proceeded into a closed meeting under the exemption of labour relations or employee negotiations and advice subject to solicitor-client privilege. Section 239 of the *Municipal Act, 2001* specifies the exceptions where a meeting, or part of a meeting, may be closed to the public. The labour relations exception is intended to protect discussions relating to the relationship between a municipality and its employees. The advice subject to solicitor – client privilege exception provides a municipality with the opportunity to hear advice from its legal counsel.

The purpose of the joint, closed session all Councils meeting was to provide for a meeting where all elected officials in Grey County could receive the same information simultaneously, protect all municipalities' relationship with the employees affected by the discussion, and to receive advice provided by legal counsel and that it was held in accordance with section 239 of *Municipal Act, 2001*. Staff sought direction about whether further discussions should be held on the topic which would include affected staff. To discuss shared service delivery in open session would have disclosed the nature of the discussions that were meant to be protected.

Recognizing that this matter was not intended to remain in closed session in perpetuity, Grey County Council issued a press release on August 21, 2024, and provided an open session report PDR-CW-52-24 at its next meeting on September 12, 2024, to Grey County Committee of the Whole, formally requesting each member municipality to provide feedback on a potential centralized planning service model and to provide the public with information on the proposal. Staff met with the planning staff of all member municipalities to review the proposal and seek their questions and feedback.

Grey County has appointed LAS as its closed meeting investigator for matters pertaining

to closed meeting complaints. Should there be a closed meeting investigation resulting from a complaint, the investigator will provide opportunities for improvement and advise if errors were made in staff's assessment in this process.

The County of Grey collaborative decision making framework process for shared services was endorsed by Grey County Council in 2013. It was intended to provide a terms of engagement between two or more municipal organizations wanting to work together to improve service delivery. Report CAOR-GOV-03-13 cites that the framework is not a one size fits all process and can be simplified or made more complex depending on the needs of the situation. The report further states that if Grey County is to be involved in a review of service arrangements, then it makes sense to use existing county governance structures and process. The model proposed at the time used the County Corporate Services Committee as the project steering committee for any such review. The Corporate Services Committee no longer exists due to the change to the Committee of the Whole and Council structure. Staff maintain that the intention of the framework was to serve as a foundation and guide, and can be changed as appropriate, and that existing structures and process should be used where necessary.