

To:	Warden Milne and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	November 28, 2024
Subject / Report No:	PDR-CW-63-24
Title:	Centralized Planning Service Delivery Model Update
Prepared by:	Randy Scherzer and Scott Taylor
Reviewed by:	Kim Wingrove
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	All member municipalities in Grey County

Recommendation

1. That report PRD-CW-63-24 be received; and
2. That staff be directed to continue to investigate the planning efficiencies staffing model based on approximately two thirds of the member municipalities participating; and
3. That staff be directed to arrange a joint, open session council meeting with member municipalities to provide a summary of the comments and questions received regarding the potential centralized planning service delivery model and to identify potential next steps and options.

Executive Summary

This report provides an update regarding the investigations of the potential centralized planning services model. At least two thirds of the member municipalities have indicated interest in further exploration of the planning efficiencies staffing model. It is recommended that a joint council meeting be arranged with member municipalities in early January 2025 with the intent of presenting a summary of all the comments and questions received from the municipalities and to discuss potential next steps.

Background and Discussion

On September 12, 2024, County Council passed a motion directing staff to send correspondence to each member municipality requesting feedback on the potential centralized planning service delivery model. Most of the member municipalities have provided their feedback and staff are in the process of summarizing all the feedback received to date and preparing responses to the comments/questions.

The following are some of the key highlights of the comments and questions received to date regarding the potential centralized service delivery model:

- Confirmation of the purpose of the project being to enhance customer service and access to adequate staffing, not to impact responsibility for planning decisions.
- Importance of maintaining in-person office hours at each of the municipal offices to respond to inquiries.
- Importance of maintaining existing working relationships between planners and other local municipal staff (e.g. building staff, public works staff, clerks, etc.).
- Importance of maintaining solid pre-submission consultation processes and development review teams.
- Logistics on office space and who will be responsible for providing the space, furniture, etc. and who will pay for what.
- The memorandums of understanding/service level agreements will be key to identify services provided by the County, reporting relationships (i.e. between CAO's, Directors, etc.), process for resolving any potential issues that may arise, etc.
- Finalizing what services would be provided by the County and what services would be provided by local municipalities (i.e. determining who will provide the 'planning adjacent' or corporate roles that municipal planners might currently provide at the local municipal level).
- If consultants are still required for special projects, who pays for what?
- Will planners be available to support and attend Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) appeal hearings for appeals on local municipal planning decisions, and who will pay for what (i.e. legal costs, expert witness costs, etc.)?
- How will planning related agreements be handled (e.g. subdivision agreements, site plan agreements, etc.)?
- Determining the financial model and ensuring it is equitable and fair. Questions about potential loss of revenue to fund those non-planning staff still involved in the planning/development review process (e.g. municipal engineers, public works/operations, etc.).
- Providing further details on the efficiencies anticipated from the new model, including timelines for processing applications and responding to inquiries.
- Are there other models that could be investigated e.g. hybrid model, pilot projects, service agreements/contracts between municipalities, etc.?
- Questions about overall staffing levels, including the ability to adjust during busy or slow times.
- Impacts on local committees (e.g. local planning committee or committee of adjustments).
- Other logistic related questions and comments such as transitional matters, HR matters, IT logistics, records retention/file transfer matters, etc.

County staff will provide a more comprehensive summary of the questions/comments received as well as responses to those questions/comments in the next staff report.

County staff recently met with the local municipal CAO group to provide an update on the centralized servicing model investigations and to discuss potential next steps. Based on the feedback received so far as well as the feedback shared by the CAO's, there appears to be at least two thirds of the member municipalities that are interested in further investigating the centralized planning service delivery model. Staff have received a motion from one of the member municipalities indicating that they do not want to be included in the centralized planning

service delivery model. The initial intent of the proposed centralized planning service delivery model was on the basis that all member municipalities would be part of the proposed model. Should there be direction to proceed with another model, staff would need to do some further investigations on whether a hybrid model (i.e. some municipalities participating in the centralized service delivery model and some municipalities keeping status quo) would still achieve the anticipated efficiencies and critical mass that is required.

Beyond the option to potentially investigate a hybrid planning service delivery model, other options that could be explored include keeping the staffing arrangements as status quo and focusing on other opportunities for planning efficiencies as identified in the [County Staff Report PDR-CW-03-24](#). Another option is that municipalities could work together to explore the option of sharing staff resources through service level agreements, similar to what some municipalities are doing already with sharing of building officials/inspectors, etc.

The CAO group suggested that it would be beneficial to have a joint council meeting in early January so that County staff can present the summary of the initial feedback received and to discuss potential next steps. This will provide an opportunity for all the County and municipal councilors to hear the information all at the same time and to ask any further questions. Should County Council support the direction to have a joint council meeting, County staff will work with the municipal CAO's and Clerks on a date for this meeting. The intent would be to host this meeting in-person in the County Council Chambers with the option for municipal staff and councilors to connect virtually if they are unable to attend in-person.

Legal Considerations

None at this time.

Financial and Resource Implications

Any financial and resource considerations will be explored as part of the future staff report(s).

Relevant Consultation

- Internal: Clerks
 - AODA Compliance (describe)
 - Contribution to Climate Change Action Plan Targets (describe)
- External: Member municipalities in Grey

Appendices and Attachments

[PDR-CW-52-24 – Planning Efficiencies – Centralized Service Model – Next Steps](#)

[PDR-CW-03-24 – Planning Efficiencies Report](#)