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Item No. 4
Halifax Regional Council
September 18, 2018

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:

Original Signed by 

John Traves, Q.C., Director, Legal, Municipal Clerk and External Affairs

Original Signed

Kelly Denty, A/Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: August 20, 2018

SUBJECT: Social Policy Lens and Social Procurement

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

December 12, 2017 Regional Council resolution:

That Regional Council request a staff report and recommendations with respect to developing a Social policy lens through which to assess future initiatives by;

1. Assessing municipal responses and actions to support; health and livability initiatives, planning and land use policy/by-laws, recreation program delivery, operational services, and other HRM initiatives.
2. Explore options for enhanced service delivery, not limited to departmental expansion, dedicated resources, partnerships, etc.)
3. Research what other jurisdictions are doing regarding municipal social policies.

June 20, 2017 Regional Council resolution:

THAT Halifax Regional Council direct staff to:

1. Create a cross departmental working group to engage external stakeholders, conduct further investigation and recommend with respect to whether or not to adopt a policy framework for the consideration of social economic benefit, employee compensation/living wage and environmental impacts in the procurement process (excluding local preference) and report back to Council;
2. Report back to Regional Council with an update prior to the finalization of the 2018-2019 budget, outlining scoring options that may be identified by then and;
3. Prepare an In Camera report that outlines upcoming contracts that will be put to tender before the 2018-2019 budget is finalized.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, S.N.S. 2008, c.39

34(3) The Council shall provide direction on the administration, plans, policies and programs of the Municipality to the Chief Administrative Officer.

BACKGROUND

As noted in the Origin section, Regional Council has requested two reports related to social policy: one on options for incorporating social economic benefit, living wage and environmental impact into procurement policy and processes; and one on the development of a social policy lens.

DISCUSSION

The report requests noted above connect to Council's broader interest in social development. Two of Council's current priorities relate to Social Development:

- (1) HRM's communities have access to social infrastructure that supports all segments of the community and Healthy, Liveable Communities; and
- (2) HRM is a safe, livable and sustainable community that encourages public engagement and participation in civic life.

The municipality is involved in a wide range of activities that support social development. A few examples of these activities include an array of recreation programming; the low-income transit pass program; the creation of a Diversity and Inclusion section and framework; work with the United Way on approaches to poverty reduction; and participation in the Housing and Homelessness Partnership.

Because the services provided by local government connect closely to the health and wellbeing of citizens, there is a direct relationship between municipal government and social development. The level of involvement of municipal government in social development can fall on a spectrum from provision of traditional municipal services; to provision of these services with a heightened sensitivity to their impact on equity, health and wellbeing; to widening the scope of services provided with a view to more involvement in both advocacy and delivery of services in the social sphere.

A policy lens is a tool for analyzing potential and existing legislation, policies, programs and practices. Such a lens needs a foundation of values or principles to guide how it is used. In the absence of a formal social policy, these values/principles arise from the by-laws, administrative orders, and policies adopted and implemented by Regional Council. Motions passed at Regional Council also define some of the values and principles that govern the municipality's approach to social policy.

When a policy is put in place, an organization can assess how it is performing by applying a policy lens to its work. A policy lens is a means to provide a structured method to assist decision-makers in assessing how well a policy, program or practice is working or might work.

As such, before responding to the report request related to procurement, staff will first undertake the work to make a recommendation to Council on development of a social policy lens. This broader piece of work will include an assessment of current social development activity, as well as cross-jurisdiction research and analysis. This work will include consideration of the various policies, procedures, programs and activities through which municipalities support implementation of a social policy, as well as their legislative framework. Due to human resource constraints this has not yet been undertaken. A policy advisor position is expected to be filled in the fall of 2018 and will lead this work.

This approach is supported by a cross jurisdictional review previously conducted by procurement staff which points to the creation of social procurement policies typically forming part of a broader social policy framework. This review also indicated that development of social procurement policies and programs was an activity that typically drew not only on a range of internal resources but was often supported with external consulting support.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications to this report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

No community engagement was conducted in the development of this report.

ATTACHMENTS

None

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

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