



Accountability and Transparency Policy

Policy Number	
Department	Administration
Service Area	County of Huron
Council Approval Date	2024-01-24
Next Revision Date	
CaRRS Classification	A / 09 / AC / Policies / Approved

Huron County External Document



Accountability and Transparency Policy

Table of Contents

Accountability and Transparency Policy	1
1.0 Purpose:.....	3
2.0 Vision:	3
3.0 Definitions	3
4.0 Objectives:	3
5.0 Policy:	5
Financial Matters	6
Internal Governance	6
Public Participation and Information Sharing.....	6

Accountability and Transparency Policy

1.0 Purpose:

The Municipal Act, 2001 (the Act) requires that all municipalities adopt and maintain a policy with respect to the manner in which the municipality will try to ensure that it is accountable to the public for its actions, and the manner in which the municipality will try to ensure that its actions are transparent to the public.

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for the delivery of the County of Huron's activities and services in accordance with the principles as outlined herein, the Municipal Act, 2001, S.O. 2001, c. 25, and any other applicable law.

The principles of accountability and transparency shall apply equally to the political process and decision making and to the administrative management of the County of Huron.

2.0 Vision:

The County of Huron is committed to providing efficient, accessible government services to its residents and being accountable and transparent to those it serves in its affairs.

Accountability, transparency and openness are standards of good government that enhance public trust. They are achieved through the County adopting measures ensuring, to the best of its ability, that all activities and services are undertaken utilizing a process that is open and accessible to its residents. In addition, wherever possible, the County will engage its residents throughout its decision making process which will be open, visible and transparent to the public.

3.0 Definitions

"**Act**" means the Municipal Act, 2001, S.O. 2001, c.25 as amended.

"**Accountability**" means the County of Huron and its elected Council's commitment, undertaking and duty to answer to those it serves for its decisions, actions, inactions and general state of affairs.

"**Corporation**" means The Corporation of the County of Huron.

"**Council**" means the duly elected Council of the County of Huron.

"**Transparency**" means the Corporation and its Council's commitment and undertaking to be open and transparent to those it serves in the execution of its offices, duties and activities and its commitment to public participation and input in its decisions and activities.

4.0 Objectives:

Accountability and Transparency Policy

The Council of the County of Huron acknowledges its duty to provide good municipal governance to those it serves. It further acknowledges that good governance is tied to and measured by its commitment to transparency and public accountability in its affairs.

Accordingly, the Council of the County of Huron hereby affirms its commitment to accountability and transparency in its affairs. It intends to achieve these goals by:

- encouraging and permitting - where appropriate - public access to and participation in its processes, debates and meetings to ensure that its decisions and actions are responsive to the needs of its residents and receptive to their opinions,
- delivering high quality services to those it serves; and,
- promoting and monitoring the efficient use and expenditure of public resources.

Accountability, transparency and openness are standards of good government that enhance public trust in municipalities and its elected officials. They are achieved through the Corporation adopting measures ensuring, to the best of its ability, that all activities and services are undertaken utilizing a process that is open and accessible to its stakeholders and compliant with the Act and any other relevant legislation.

Wherever possible, the Corporation will engage those that it serves throughout its decision making process which will be open, visible and transparent to the public.

The Corporation will promote accountable and transparent municipal governance guided by the following principles:

- I. Decision-making will be open, fair and transparent;
- II. Municipal operations will be conducted in an ethical and accountable manner;
- III. Financial resources and physical infrastructure shall be managed in an efficient and effective manner;
- IV. Municipal information will be accessible so that it is consistent with legislative requirements;
- V. Inquiries, concerns and complaints will be responded to in a timely manner;
- VI. Public access and participation will be encouraged to ensure that decision making is responsive to the needs of its constituents and receptive to their opinions;
- VII. An open, responsive meeting process will ensure that residents have access to and awareness of the Council/Committee business being discussed,
- VIII. Every new delegation of power or authority will include appropriate accountability mechanisms.

Accountability and Transparency Policy

5.0 Guidelines:

1. **Open Council Sessions:** All discussions related to official council business, including policy deliberations, decision-making processes, and relevant matters, shall take place during open council sessions. Closed-door meetings among council members are strictly prohibited for official business.
2. **Public Accessibility:** Council sessions, committee meetings, and any other gatherings related to official business shall be accessible to the public. Meetings may be live-streamed or recorded to facilitate broader public engagement.
3. **Documentation and Records:** Comprehensive records of all council discussions, decisions, and supporting documents shall be maintained and made available to the public upon request. This includes meeting minutes, reports, and any other relevant materials.
4. **Notification of Meetings:** Advance notice of all council sessions and committee meetings, along with the agenda items, shall be provided to the public. This allows residents and stakeholders to stay informed and participate in the democratic process.
5. **Confidential Matters Exception:** While promoting transparency, certain matters may be confidential due to legal, personnel, or sensitive issues. In such cases, closed sessions may be held, but the nature of discussions and decisions shall be disclosed to the public once the confidentiality concerns are resolved.
6. **Discouragement of Informal Meetings:** Council members are discouraged from conducting official business through informal, closed-door meetings outside the established council sessions. All discussions and decision-making should occur within the formal framework of council meetings.
7. **Ethical Conduct:** Council members are expected to uphold the highest standards of ethical conduct in all interactions related to official business. Any attempt to circumvent the open and transparent process outlined in this policy will be considered a breach of conduct and should be reported to the council's ethics or integrity officer for investigation and resolution. .
8. **Periodic Review:** This policy shall be subject to periodic review to ensure its effectiveness in promoting open governance. Amendments may be proposed and implemented through a transparent decision-making process at council sessions.

By adhering to this policy, the council aims to build public trust, encourage civic participation, and uphold the principles of open and transparent governance.

6.0 Policy:

Principles of accountability and transparency apply equally to the political process, exercise of municipal authority and prerogatives and the Corporation's administration.

The Corporation shall meet its duties, responsibilities and prerogatives prescribed in the Act and any other applicable law in the exercise of its affairs, and appoint such officials to review its practices as required by the Act.

Accountability and Transparency Policy

More specifically, but without limiting the generality of the foregoing, the Council and Corporation shall adhere to the following principles and practices with respect to the following subject matters:

Financial Matters

The Corporation will be open, accountable and transparent to those it serves in its financial dealings as required by the Act and all other applicable law.

This will be achieved through, for instance:

1. review of its activities and finances;
2. reporting of its finances and preparation of relevant financial statements;
3. long term financial planning;
4. fees and charges By-law;
5. managing its assets in a fiscally prudent manner;
6. adopting and/or adhering to appropriate purchasing/procurement policies and/or bylaws adopted and/or amended from time to time;
7. adopting and/or adhering to appropriate policies with respect to the sale of the Corporation's land; and,
8. forecasting and adhering to established budgets.

Internal Governance

The Corporation's administrative practices and policies ensure specific accountability on the part of its employees through the following initiatives:

1. appointment and retention of competent leadership, including without limitation a Chief Administrative Officer;
2. adoption of a Code of Conduct for all the Corporation's employees;
3. establishment of a fair and consistent performance management and evaluation process;
4. fair and transparent hiring practices and policies;
5. adoption of consultative policies and practices; and,
6. adherence to a continuous improvement philosophy in regards to accountability and transparency.

Public Participation and Information Sharing

The Corporation strives to be open, transparent and accountable to those it serves through the implementation of processes outlining how, when and under what rules meetings will take place.

Council and its committees' meetings will be open to the public when and as required under the Act, and members of the public will have an opportunity to make delegations or comments in writing on specific items at these meetings in accordance with the Corporation's Procedural By-law.



Accountability and Transparency Policy

County information shall be readily available to the public subject to the requirements of the Municipal Freedom of Information & Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA).

The Corporation welcomes the public's participation in its affairs. Its communication policies and strategies will ensure timely dissemination of notices, decisions and other matters concerning the Corporation and its affairs. Such information will be made publicly available through print material, the Corporation's website, social media platforms and the media.

Examples of available materials addressing the Council and Corporation's commitment to accountability and transparency include but are not limited to the Corporation's:

1. procedural by-law;
2. strategic plan/priorities;
3. delegation rules;
4. records retention policies;
5. appointment of Integrity Commissioner and Closed Meetings Investigator;
6. budget;
7. planning processes;
8. public notice by-law; and,
9. agendas and minutes published on the Corporation's website.

Questions/Comments

Should you have any questions about this policy and/or the Corporation's commitment to accountability and transparency, you may bring your question to the attention of:

Susan Cronin, Director of Legislative Services/County Clerk

County of Huron
1 Courthouse Square
Goderich, ON N7A 1M2
519-524-8394 ext. 3257
scronin@huroncounty.ca