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Animal Services Program Delivery Information Report to Council

Report Number: INFO-2022-06

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Distribution Date: February 4, 2022

In accordance with the Procedure By-law, any member of Council may make a request to the Town Clerk that this Report be placed on an upcoming Committee of the Whole agenda for discussion.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update on upcoming service delivery and administrative changes to the Animal Services Division for the Town of Newmarket, commencing on **July 1, 2022**.

Background

On **October 5, 2018**, The Towns of Newmarket, Aurora, and Georgina entered into a Memorandum of Understanding for Aurora to provide Animal Services on behalf of the Town as part of a collective partnership agreement.

The partnership's terms included a two-year pilot program, commencing **January 1, 2019**, with an end date of **December 31, 2020**. A fulsome review to either extend or conclude the partnership was to be determined at that time. The goal of this partnership was to enhance customer service levels, while providing a cost efficient program that meets the service delivery expectations of our community.

As part of this agreement, the Town of Aurora has directly led the partnership by managing human resource considerations (i.e. is the employer of staff), administrative processes, and all aspects pertaining to front-facing service delivery expectations and enforcement initiatives.

In late 2020, the Towns of Newmarket, Aurora, and Georgina extended the Joint Animal Control Partnership for a term of one year (**Jan 1, 2021- Dec 31, 2021**) as a direct result

of Covid-19 and other priorities relating to the pandemic, which prevented a fulsome review of the partnership at that time.

Discussion

After completing a fulsome review of Animal Services, the Town's Legislative Services Department has recommended Animal Services to be returned in-house for service delivery to residents of Newmarket. The Town's Treasurer and Strategic Leadership Team ("SLT") supports this recommendation and the Town's Chief Administrative Officer ("CAO") is in direct communication with the Towns of Aurora and Georgina CAOs to finalize a transition plan for **July 1, 2022**.

Service Delivery Levels

When assessing the Town's ability to be successfully return Animal Services in-house, it is imperative that the program matches or exceeds the current service delivery levels provided by the partnership. Overall, the goal for returning Animal Services in-house will be to meet the existing service delivery levels at a cost-savings to the Town. However, Town staff believes that by returning this service in-house, the customer experience for Town of Newmarket residents will also benefit from enhanced:

- Clarity: a one-stop shop complaint process through the Town's Customer Services Department, where residents use one phone number for any and all complaints relating to by-law services;
- Community Presence: stronger flexibility to direct proactive presence in our community and increase educational awareness campaigns; and
- Consistency: the ability to develop streamlined, consistent processes across all bylaw-related business units for the Town.

Hours of Operation

As part of the existing partnership, the Town of Aurora currently provides the following service levels:

- Public-facing hours of operation are 9:00am-10:00pm (with some exceptions) for active patrol/officer response, with a 24-hour on-call service available for receiving complaints.
- Hours of operation for one full-time Animal Services Officer are 9:00am-7:00pm.
- Additional hours of operation managed by part-time positions.

Town staff has reviewed the hours of operation provided by the Town of Aurora and are confident that the proposed staffing compliment for an in-house service will meet or exceed the existing hours of operation currently in-effect.

Calls for Service

Since implementation of the Animal Services partnership in 2019, calls for service have increased year over year. In 2019, there were 1107 calls for service for animal or wildlife related matters. In 2020, that number increased to 1830. In 2021, calls for service have increased to approximately 2300. Despite this year over year increase, the average number of calls per day in 2021 remained relatively low at approximately six calls for service. Recognizing that the majority of these calls occur during regular business hours (8:00am-6:00pm), Town staff believes that the proposed compliment of staff is sufficient in responding to and resolving ongoing community concerns. Complaint calls will be received through the Town's Customer Services department with no additional administration support needed at this time.

Transitioning Animal Services In-House

Partnership Considerations

A transition plan with the Towns of Aurora and Georgina has been established at the Chief Administrative Officer level. Both Aurora and Georgina have been notified of the Town's intention to leave the partnership and a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with Aurora to extend the current partnership until **June 30, 2022**. This extension will provide ample time for a proper transition plan between all municipalities involved. The Town of Newmarket will commence as the full service provider for Animal Services effective **July 1, 2022**.

Internal Considerations

In preparation for returning Animal Services in-house, Town staff has worked diligently on an overall operational plan, communications strategy, and necessary human resource considerations as part of this new service delivery model. A comprehensive communications strategy will be vital for successfully redirecting residents to the appropriate place when requiring animal services assistance. The goal will be to enhance educational awareness efforts to guide residents through a smooth transition with minimal service delivery disruptions.

Legislative Services has worked closely with Human Resources to create a job description for one full time Animal Services Officer. The Town will also have one upcoming vacancy for the Supervisor of Animal & Parking Services position, effective **March 1, 2022**, due to a retirement. Town staff are also in the process of realigning the existing job descriptions for Town Municipal Enforcement Officers (MEOs) to include file management assistance with animal related calls, as required. Historically, MEOs have been responsible for licensing-related matters, however, recent changes to the department have established independent Municipal Licensing and Enforcement Officers for any and all matters pertaining to business licensing. Recognizing this recent role change, the Town will be supplementing MEO licensing responsibilities with targeted animal services responsibilities at no additional costs or impacts to the Town.

Recognizing that Animal Services will return in-house effective July 1, 2022, Town staff are also proposing a six-month secondment contract for an internal candidate to offset any gaps in scheduling with the full time Animal Services Officer. The Regulatory Services Division currently has one vacancy for a Senior Municipal Enforcement Officer position that was previously established and, in consultation with the Town's Human Resources department, this position meets the necessary criterion to provide an elevated role for animal-related matters. This role will primarily serve as a senior parking officer and a part-time animal services officer. This position will be a six-month contract to better understand the demands of delivering a successful Animal Services program. Town staff are confident that, following a six-month implementation period (i.e. the remainder of 2022), data-driven considerations will be more readily available to understand any future human resource requirements.

Contract Considerations

There are several implications worth consideration when returning Animal Services in-house. Existing contractual agreements that will need to be re-established independently of the existing partnership, such as Shades of Hope (contract wildlife services) and existing practices for safely and ethically euthanizing animals.

It is also relevant to note that the existing contractual agreement for animal shelter services, as provided by the Town of Georgina, will have no impact in any way. The Town's animal licensing program through DocuPet will also have no impacts, as both agreements are independent of the partnership agreement.

Future Considerations

Town staff are committed to building an effective Animal Services program to enhance the overall resident experience. Upon evaluating the success of returning Animal Services in-house, Town staff will further explore future opportunities to extend this service to other interested municipalities.

Conclusion

Under the direction of the Town's Chief Administrative Officer, a Memorandum of Understanding exists between the Towns of Newmarket and Aurora to maintain service delivery under the partnership until **June 30, 2022**. Following this date, Animal Services will go live with offering this service in-house.

A comprehensive communications strategy will commence between January 2022 and June 2022 to ensure exemplary service continuity for Town of Newmarket residents throughout the transition period.

Business Plan and Strategic Plan Linkages

This report aligns with the strategic vision of the Town of Newmarket being *Well Beyond the Ordinary*.

This report also aligns with Council's strategic priority of long-term financial sustainability.

Consultation

Consultation is complete with the following Town departments/teams:

Strategic Leadership Team

Financial Services

Human Resources

Customer Services

Legal Services

Consultation with the Towns of Aurora and Georgina remains ongoing.

Human Resource Considerations

On **November 8, 2021** at a Special Committee of the Whole meeting, a formal request for one full time Animal Services Officer was presented through the Town's 2022 budget process. Legislative Services has worked in coordination with Human Resources to establish a job description for this new role. Town staff are seeking to initiate the recruitment process in January 2022 for the purpose of incorporating this new role in the early development of the Town's Animal Services program.

To offset service delivery hours not provided by the full-time role, Town staff will rely on existing compliments of staff as follows:

- Municipal Enforcement Officers (i.e. parking officers) for file management assistance; and
- A six-month internal contract to pilot a senior parking officer role, while will also incorporate part-time animal services duties.

Regulatory Services has also worked in conjunction with the Town's Human Resources and Financial Services departments to ensure that all necessary preparations are made to transition Animal Services in-house effective **July 1, 2022**.

Budget Impact

Town staff anticipate increased revenue opportunities through stronger flexibility in directing and coordinating educational and enforcement initiatives relating to Animal Services. This will include enhancing educational efforts relating to the licensing of animals throughout Town, in addition to enforcement action taken under the Administrative Monetary Penalty System for noncompliance with Town by-laws.

The cost of one additional full time employee is within the current operating budget of Legislative Services.

Attachments

None.

Contact

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Approval

Esther Armchuk, Commissioner, Corporate Services