



SUBJECT: Staff directions audit
TO: Committee of the Whole
FROM: Legal and Legislative Services

Report Number: CL-25-24

Wards Affected: Not applicable

Date to Committee: November 4, 2024

Date to Council: November 19, 2024

Recommendation:

Direct staff to undertake an audit of the current incomplete staff directions, as listed in Appendix A to legislative services report CL-25-24.

PURPOSE:

Vision to Focus Alignment:

- Providing the best services and experiences
- Driving organizational performance

Executive Summary:

This report recommends conducting an audit of outstanding staff directions to enhance organizational clarity, ensure effective resource allocation, and provide transparency. With numerous staff directions pending, the City faces potential inefficiencies, duplication of efforts, and difficulty in prioritizing tasks. An audit will help assess the status of these directions, ensuring that key items are completed in a timely manner while identifying those that may no longer be relevant. This process allows the City to focus staff resources on the most pressing and actionable priorities and can help to ensure that relevant, outstanding staff directions are analyzed for possible consolidation or coordination of work. In conducting the audit, staff can further identify where initiatives overlap significantly and whether a more streamlined approach could be implemented.

The audit will commence once approved by Council, with a preliminary report delivered within three months. The report will outline staff directions, timelines, and recommendations for amendments or removals. This ensures a balanced review of outstanding directions, aligned with the City's strategic priorities, and establishes a plan to address high-priority initiatives and tackle medium and low-priority items.

Background and Discussion:

A staff direction is defined as a request from Council for research or additional and or supplemental work to be completed by staff. The current process for the administration of staff directions was established in 2021, through reports [CL-01-21](#) and [CL-05-21](#). The Clerk is responsible for keeping a list of approved staff directions.

Section 40 of the Procedure By-law contains provisions with respect to the staff directions list, specifically subsection 40.6:

40.6 At the beginning of the Council term a report will be generated by the Clerk featuring the previous Council's outstanding staff directions. The incoming Council will review the list, and by motion move any items to a new staff directions list that is reflective of the incoming Council's priorities.

In December 2022, report [CL-37-22](#) was brought forward to seek Council direction regarding the carryover of staff directions from the 2018-2022 term of Council. All 33 staff directions from the previous term were brought forward to the 2022-2026 staff directions list.

Due to significant organizational changes over the past two quarters, staff direction reporting was not completed in accordance with the procedure by-law for the City Clerk's office. While priority was given to more urgent matters during this time, the City remains committed to transparency and accountability. Upon the new CAO's arrival, this issue was addressed, and a plan was developed to ensure staff directions are reported in a clearer and more accountable manner. This report reflects that focus and commitment to timely reporting moving forward.

The current staff directions list is attached as Appendix A and includes 27 incomplete staff directions, 10 of which are outstanding from last term.

The purpose of this audit is to ensure that incomplete staff directions align with the City's Vision to Focus framework and remain relevant. The audit will provide an evidence-based review to determine whether certain staff directions should be completed, expedited, revised, or deemed no longer relevant. It is also intended to ensure that ongoing staff work continues to support the strategic priorities identified by the current Council.

The results of the audit will be brought to Council for review and approval.

Strategy/process/risk

Strategic Alignment and Relevance Evaluation

The first step will involve evaluating each staff direction for alignment with the City's strategic priorities. This includes assessing whether the direction is still relevant given current legislative, regulatory, or operational contexts. Some directions may no longer be relevant due to changes in provincial policies, technological advancements, or shifts in public needs. The audit will highlight directions that can be removed or redefined to better serve the City's goals.

Categorization for Action

- **Critical/High Priority:** Items that must be completed due to their strategic importance or statutory obligations. These tasks are critical to the success of key objectives and often have tight deadlines that must be met. High-priority items typically involve significant consequences if not addressed promptly, including potential risks to operations, stakeholder trust, or strategic goals. They often necessitate the allocation of resources and personnel to ensure timely completion. Teams should prioritize these tasks above all others to maintain momentum and achieve desired outcomes. Addressing high-priority items effectively can lead to significant advancements in projects, operational efficiency, and overall organizational success.
- **Medium Priority:** Items that are important to the overall objectives but do not require immediate action. These tasks are essential for achieving goals and may have deadlines, but they allow for flexibility in timing. Medium priority items should be addressed after high-priority tasks, as their completion contributes significantly to progress. They may involve strategic planning or collaboration and typically have a moderate impact on operations or outcomes. Failing to address medium priority items within their timelines can lead to missed opportunities or delays in achieving broader goals.
- **Low Priority:** Items that can be addressed at a later time without immediate consequences. These tasks are not urgent and allow for flexibility in scheduling,

making them suitable for future consideration when resources and time permit. While they may still align with broader objectives, their completion is not essential to current operations, allowing teams to focus on higher-priority items first. Low-priority tasks can serve as opportunities for enhancement or improvement when higher priorities have been managed.

- **Expired:** Items that are outdated and may be recommended for removal.

Engagement with Departmental Leads:

Each department will be required to review its outstanding staff directions, provide status updates, and assess barriers to completion. Department heads will be tasked with identifying resource needs and timelines for completing each direction deemed relevant. This consultation is crucial for setting realistic timelines and identifying any logistical or resource gaps that need to be addressed to complete high-priority tasks.

Risks and Considerations

- **Resource Constraints:** There is a risk that some departments may be stretched thin due to competing priorities. The audit will balance these considerations, ensuring that any proposed workload is realistic.
- **Obsolescence and Relevance:** A key challenge is ensuring that outdated directions are properly identified. The audit will include a rigorous review mechanism to avoid subjective decisions, with staff required to provide rationales for retaining or eliminating certain items.
- **Project Creep:** There is a risk of adding to the workload unnecessarily. By focusing on directions that remain strategically aligned, this risk can be mitigated by removing or consolidating unnecessary work.

Proposed Timeline

The audit will be conducted in a phased manner to ensure thorough review and feedback. The first phase will focus on high-priority items and is expected to take approximately 90 days. Following this, a more detailed assessment of medium- and low-priority items will be completed. A preliminary report will be presented to Council within three months, offering a clear pathway to action on relevant directions and recommendations for eliminating outdated items.

Options Considered

Option 1: Do Nothing This option would involve continuing with the current process of managing outstanding staff directions without any comprehensive review or audit. Under this approach, staff would continue to address directions as they arise, without reassessing their relevance or alignment with strategic priorities.

Benefits

- No additional resources would be required to conduct an audit.
- Staff can focus directly on competing directions already in progress.

Considerations

- Risks continuing inefficiencies and duplication of efforts.
- Staff may spend time on outdated or irrelevant directions.
- The lack of prioritization could delay high-priority tasks, compromising the City's ability to focus on current strategic goals.
- Lacks accountability and transparency on how outstanding staff directions will be managed.
- No opportunity for consolidation of overlapping initiatives, leading to potential project creep.

Option 2: Minimal Review (Status Quo Plus) This option involves a lighter version of the audit process, where only a surface-level review of the staff directions is conducted. Staff would evaluate directions based on simple metrics, such as completion percentage, rather than a detailed alignment with strategic priorities.

Benefits

- Fewer resources would be required than for a full audit.
- Some directions that are no longer relevant could be eliminated quickly.
- Allows staff to focus on completing more straightforward tasks.

Considerations

- A superficial review may overlook deeper issues, such as outdated or irrelevant directions that need consolidation.
- Without a detailed strategic alignment, priorities could still be mismanaged.
- Limited engagement with departmental leads may result in incomplete assessments, leading to missed opportunities for resource optimization or collaboration.

While a minimal review could provide some benefit, it lacks the thoroughness and rigor necessary to fully address the City's focus on transparency and accountability and does not adequately address a fulsome approach to managing outstanding directions, especially in terms of ensuring strategic alignment and resource allocation.

Option 3: Comprehensive Audit of Incomplete Staff Directions (Recommended Option):

The recommended approach is a comprehensive audit of the current incomplete staff directions, as outlined in the Executive Summary. This audit will provide a detailed, evidence-based assessment of which directions should be completed, expedited, revised, or eliminated based on their alignment with the City's strategic priorities as well as their relevancy (i.e. expired). The audit process includes engagement with department heads, ensuring a collaborative approach to managing workloads and timelines.

Benefits

- Provides a strategic review that aligns with the City's Vision to Focus framework, ensuring that staff efforts are focused on high-priority, relevant tasks.
- Enables consolidation of overlapping initiatives, reducing duplication of efforts and improving efficiency.
- Ensures that the City can adapt to changing legislative, technological, and public needs by removing outdated or irrelevant directions.
- Involves a collaborative approach with departmental leads, ensuring that resource needs are identified, and realistic timelines are set.
- Focus on transparency and accountability

Considerations

- Requires additional time and resources to conduct a comprehensive review.
- Departments may need to temporarily divert attention from ongoing tasks to participate in the audit process

This option demonstrates a commitment to transparency and accountability by providing a clear and structured review of outstanding tasks. It also ensures that the City addresses the issue of incomplete or outdated directions, offering clarity on their current status and relevance. By providing a clear plan of action for how incomplete tasks will be handled, it can help offer certainty to stakeholders that efforts are being made to better understand what is needed to fulfill these directions.

Financial Matters:

The financial impact is currently undetermined but is expected to involve both time and resources from multiple departments. Staff will conduct a more thorough review to determine any potential budgetary tied to certain staff directions. This includes identifying staff time and any required resources to facilitate the completion of outstanding items. As the audit progresses, staff will report on any necessary adjustments.

Climate Implications:

Not applicable.

Engagement Matters:

The results of the audit will be brought forward for Council review and approval. Any changes that are approved will be reflected in future iterations of the staff directions list, which will be published quarterly in the Council Information Package for members of the public to view.

Conclusion:

The audit will begin upon Council's approval. A preliminary report detailing the outcomes of the audit, including categorized staff directions, timelines, and recommendations for removals or amendments, will be brought to Council within three months. This approach ensures a balanced review of outstanding staff directions, aligned with the City's strategic priorities, and sets a practical course for completion of high-priority initiatives as well as a workplan to approach medium and low-priority items.

Respectfully submitted,

Samantha Yew
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Appendices:

- A. List of Incomplete Staff Directions

Report Approval:

All reports are reviewed and/or approved by Department Director, the Chief Financial Officer and the Commissioner Legal and Legislative Services/City Solicitor.