
SUBJECT: Community Engagement Charter - relaunch
TO: Committee of the Whole
FROM: Corporate Affairs
Communications and Engagement

Report Number: CAF-01-26

Wards Affected: N/A

Date to Committee: April 13, 2026

Date to Council: April 21, 2026

Recommendation

Endorse and adopt the updated Community Engagement Charter and Framework as outlined in Appendix A to corporate affairs report CAF-01-26.

Executive Summary

Purpose of report:

This report is being presented on the updated Community Engagement Charter and Framework for Council's endorsement and adoption. The Charter, originally a brief policy document outlining resident rights, responsibilities, and City commitments, has been comprehensively modernized to reflect current best practices in municipal engagement.

The revised Charter includes a more comprehensive framework for engagement, updated language and definitions, clearer expectations for roles and accountability, consideration of accessibility and technology, and revised or expanded commitments. New sections also provide greater clarity on engagement planning, participation expectations, and principles for collaboration.

Endorsement of the updated Charter and Framework would support a more consistent, transparent, accessible, and inclusive approach to engagement across the organization and reinforce Council's commitment to informed and responsive decision-making.

Key findings:

- The Community Engagement Charter has been significantly updated from a brief policy document into a more detailed Charter and supporting framework.
- The updated document provides greater clarity on roles, responsibilities, accountability, and engagement planning.
- The revised Charter places stronger emphasis on accessibility, inclusivity, transparency, and plain language.
- The updated framework reflects current engagement practices, including the use of technology and more clearly defined participation expectations.
- Endorsement of the updated Charter and Framework would support a more coordinated and consistent approach to community engagement across the City.

Implications:

Financial

- Implementation of the updated Charter may result in modest incremental costs in some circumstances. These may include costs associated with accessibility supports, translation of materials, or honoraria for certain engagement activities.

Legal

- There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendation. The Charter serves as a guiding framework for engagement and does not replace statutory requirements or legislative obligations related to consultation or public notice.

Human Resources

- The updated Charter will support staff by providing clearer guidance for planning and carrying out engagement activities. Ongoing implementation may require staff time for awareness, application, and continuous improvement.

Communications

- The updated Charter strengthens the City's approach to communication by emphasizing clear language, transparency, and follow-through with participants, including communicating what was heard, how input was considered, and where feedback may not have informed the final outcome.

Engagement

- The updated Charter has direct implications for how engagement is planned and delivered across the organization. It establishes a clearer and more consistent framework for engaging residents, staff, Council, and community stakeholders.

Climate

- There are no direct climate implications associated with the recommendation.

Recommendation Report

Background

The City of Burlington Community Engagement Charter is an agreement between Burlington City Council and the residents of Burlington. It outlines the commitments, responsibilities, and guiding principles that inform how the City approaches community engagement.

Effective community engagement is an important part of municipal governance. Engaging people on issues that affect their lives and community helps support informed decision-making, builds understanding, and strengthens relationships between the City and residents.

The original Community Engagement Charter was designed as a concise, plain language document focused primarily on resident rights and responsibilities, along with the City's commitments to engagement. Since its adoption, engagement practices, expectations, and tools have evolved. The updated Charter and Framework are intended to reflect those changes and provide clearer guidance for engagement moving forward.

Analysis

Findings

The original Community Engagement Charter was a concise, plain language, 1.5 page policy document that focused primarily on citizen rights and responsibilities, included a vision and mission statement, and outlined 10 City commitments.

The updated Community Engagement Charter has expanded to include both a revised Charter and a supporting framework. Together, these documents provide a more comprehensive foundation for engagement practices across the organization. Key updates include:

- Expanded framework outlining roles, responsibilities, and accountability
- Inclusion of technology options to support modern engagement
- Replacement of the term “citizen” with “resident” (updated in 14 instances)
- Addition of land acknowledgement and contributor recognition
- Updated vision and mission statements to strengthen inclusivity
- Updated definitions, including the addition of seven new terms
- Evolution of the City's commitments (11 total, with revised titles and wording)
 - Addition of a Continuous Improvement section
 - Renaming of *Building Capacity* to Fostering Participation
 - Updating *Clear Language* to Communication & Clear Language
 - Updating *Delegation Process* to Speaking at Council or Committee

- New sections: opening and closing statements, rules of engagement, and planning steps
 - Greater emphasis on collaboration and transparency
 - Updated language to reflect a lower and more accessible reading level
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Recommendation Details

Council is being asked to endorse and adopt the updated Community Engagement Charter and Framework.

Endorsement of the updated Charter and Framework would strengthen the City's commitment to meaningful, transparent, and consistent engagement with residents, staff, and Council. The revised documents reflect current municipal engagement practices and provide clearer expectations, commitments, and processes to support more accessible, inclusive, and responsive interaction between the City and the community.

By endorsing the updated Charter and Framework, Council would:

- support greater transparency by helping residents understand how their input informs decisions
- provide staff with a clearer and more consistent structure for planning and delivering engagement activities
- strengthen relationships with the community through more accessible and intentional engagement opportunities
- support greater consistency and coordination across departments
- reinforce the City's commitment to collaboration, accountability, and continuous improvement in engagement practices

Endorsement of the updated Charter and Framework will help ensure that community engagement remains a core municipal priority and continues to evolve in response to changing community expectations and organizational needs.

Key Dates & Milestones

Phase 1 (2023–2024):

- Food for Feedback (Sept 14, 2023)
- Five public sessions (Oct 24, 25, 26; Nov 1, 2)
- Halton Multicultural Council included in session (12 languages, Nov 1)
- Meetings with Committees of Council (Oct/Nov 2023)
- Workbook used across meetings.
- Three staff sessions (Nov 28, 29 (x2))
- 1:1 meetings with Mayor and Councillors (Dec 2023–Feb 2024).

- Engagement with the original members of the Charter Action Team who helped produce the first Charter

Phase 2 (2024-2026):

- Food for Feedback (Sept 13, 2024)
- Four public sessions (June 4, 11, 12, 19)
- Halton Multicultural Council included in session (June 11)
- Two staff sessions (June 12)
- Council: 1:1 meetings with Mayor and Councillors (May 2024, January 2026 – March 2026).

References

[Community Engagement Charter and Framework](#)

Strategic Alignment

(Select all that apply)

- Designing and delivering complete communities
 - Providing the best services and experiences
 - Protecting and improving the natural environment and taking action on climate change
 - Driving organizational performance
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Appendices:

A. CAF-01-26 - Community Engagement Charter

Report Approval:

All reports are reviewed and approved by the Commissioner, Head of Corporate Affairs, Chief Financial Officer, and Commissioner of Legal and Legislative Services/City Solicitor.