
SUBJECT: Guidelines for the Use of Strong Mayor Powers and amendments to the Council-Staff Relations Policy

TO: Committee of the Whole

FROM: Legal and Legislative Services
Legislative Services

Report Number: LLS-25-26

Wards Affected: All

Date to Committee: May 11, 2026

Date to Council: May 26, 2026

Recommendation

Adopt the Guidelines for the Use of Strong Mayor Powers Policy attached as Appendix A to legislative services report LLS-25-26; and

Direct the City Clerk to amend the Council-Staff Relations Policy as recommended in this report; and

Direct the City Clerk to report back to Council before the end of Q2 in 2027 with further information and recommendations regarding aligning the Council Code of Good Governance with the Halton Region Council Code of Conduct.

Executive Summary

Purpose of report:

- This report responds to the Council adopted staff direction to review the Council-Staff Relations Policy to strengthen the language around individual members of Council attempting to direct municipal staff or advisory committees/local boards.
- This report proposes a non-binding, standalone policy for the Mayor to consider when contemplating whether to use Strong Mayor Powers.
- This report also reviews the Council Code of Good Governance for areas of alignment with Halton Region's Council Code of Conduct as well as potentially achieving further

clarity regarding the ability of member of council make directions to local boards and committees.

- Finally the report speaks to the existing clarity for municipal staff around the roles of staff with respect to local boards and committees.

Implications:

- As explained in this report, a policy regarding the use of Strong Mayor Powers would be non-binding and for guiding purposes only. The Mayor would not be required to give the principles of the policy due consideration when deciding whether to use Strong Mayor Powers because a municipal policy cannot limit or otherwise remove the statutory powers that are assigned to the Mayor in the *Municipal Act, 2001*.

Recommendation Report

Background

At the March 2, 2026 Special Meeting of Council, the following staff direction was adopted by Council;

Direct the City Clerk to review the Council-Staff Relations Policy including consideration of a section designed to guide the Mayor's decision making when considering the use of Strong Mayor Powers, including that "Strong Mayor Powers directions will only be delivered in writing in accordance with Ontario Regulation 530/22," and to review the option of stipulating that staff are only to implement directions from the mayor that are delivered in writing in accordance with Ontario Regulation 530/22; and

Direct the City Clerk, in consultation with the Integrity Commissioner, to review Council's Code of Good Governance with a view to (a) alignment with the region's code; (b) clarity regarding the ability of member of council make directions to local boards and committees; and

Direct the CAO to review staff policies to ensure clarity around the roles of staff with respect to local boards and committees; and

Direct the City Clerk to report back to Committee of the Whole by May 11, 2026.

Analysis

Council-Staff Relations Policy

The Council-Staff Relations Policy provides guidance on the interactions between Members of Council and City Staff and is designed to promote a respectful, tolerant and harassment-free relationship and workplace between Members of Council and the officers and employees of the corporation. The current policy clearly delineates the roles of Members of Council and City staff while also providing keys to highly effective working relationships and expectations for the conduct of Members of Council and City staff.

After reviewing the policy, staff do not recommend appending a guiding document for the Use of Strong Mayor Powers to the Council-Staff Relations Policy as the purpose of that policy is to outline the roles and working relationship between all members of Council and staff, not simply the Mayor. Instead, should Council want to have a policy that specifically provides policy guidance for the Mayor to consider in the exercise of Strong Mayor Powers under the

Municipal Act, 2001 and its regulations, staff have attached a draft, non-binding, standalone policy for the use of Strong Mayor Powers as an appendix to this report for Council's consideration.

Staff recommend the following bullet point be added to Section 3 (Expectations) of the Council-Staff Relations Policy;

It is expected that Council members will:

- **Refrain from providing direction to staff that has not been adopted by Council, and additionally, in the case of the Mayor, exercising their authority pursuant to Part VI.1 of the *Municipal Act, 2001*, refrain from directing staff by any means other than a written Mayoral Direction, in accordance with Ontario Regulation 530/22 and, provided on the approved template that is signed by the Mayor.**

Staff recommend the following bullet point be added to Section 3 (Expectations) of the Council-Staff Relations Policy;

It is expected that staff will:

- **advise their supervisor of any directions received from Members of Council to ensure that such directions have been considered and adopted by Council.**

Guidelines for use of Strong Mayor Powers Policy

The draft policy, attached as Appendix "A" to this report, represents staff's recommendations for the principles that should be considered by the Mayor when deciding whether to use Strong Mayor Powers. The use of Strong Mayor Powers is at the sole discretion of the Mayor, meaning that should this policy be adopted, it will be considered non-binding and the Mayor will not be required to consider the principles contained therein.

The City's Integrity Commissioner was consulted in the creation of this policy and their comments are reflective of what is being recommended to Council.

This would be a unique policy for a municipal Council in Ontario to enact. Staff could not locate another example of a policy or other document designed to guide the Mayor in their use of Strong Mayor Powers. The likely reason for that is because a municipal policy cannot limit or otherwise remove the statutory powers that are assigned to the Mayor in the *Municipal Act, 2001*.

Council Code of Good Governance

At this time, staff are not recommending that Council adopt any amendments to align the Council Code of Good Governance with Halton Region's Council Code of Conduct. The reason for this is twofold; with less than six months remaining in the Council term, it is not considered a best practice to make significant changes to a Council Code of Conduct (or the like) due to the significant amount of training required for members of Council as well as the substantial public education campaign that would be launched to assist the City's residents in understanding the changes. Further, the Province of Ontario could adopt Bill 9, the *Municipal Accountability Act, 2025*, at any time. If passed, the legislation would introduce a standardized municipal Code of Conduct across Ontario. As a result, adopting the Region's Code of Conduct at this stage may not be the most effective use of time or resources, particularly if further changes are required to align with provincial requirements. The Integrity Commissioner was consulted with regards to potentially aligning with the Region's Code of Conduct and agrees with the position of staff.

Should the Province not introduce a standardized Code by early 2027, staff are of the view that there would be merit in aligning the City's Code of Good Governance with the Region's Code of Conduct, as this could support greater consistency for Members of Council and the City. Should Council agree, staff would report back on moving forward with alignment early in the 2027-2030 Council term.

Staff also do not believe further amendments to the Code of Good Governance are necessary to address Members of Council being restricted from singularly directing staff. Rule No. 17 contains the wording "we will not direct staff..." which clearly articulates the expectation for Members of Council in this area.

Other Staff policies that relate to local boards and committees

On behalf of the CAO, Legislative Services considered other corporate policies that could be amended to ensure clarity with the role of staff as it relates to local boards or committees. After the review, staff are not recommending any further amendments to any corporate policies.

Recommendation Details

Council has indicated they would like to consider adopting a policy that assists the Mayor in their potential use of Strong Mayor Powers. Council has further suggested it may be beneficial to strengthen the language around the inability of a single member of Council or minority of Council to direct staff.

The recommendations in this report provides staff's advice on how those two goals can be achieved.

Key Dates & Milestones

None

Implications

Note the financial, human resources, legal, communication, engagement and climate implications of the recommended action or decision where relevant.

References

None

Strategic Alignment

- 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. Draft Guidelines for the Use of Strong Mayor Powers

Draft By-laws for Approval at Council:

None

Notifications:

None

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.