

INFORMATION REPORT

Office of the Chief Administrative Officer

To: Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council **Date:** Click to select date

From: Lisa Spitale, Chief Administrative Officer **File:**

Item #: [Report Number]

Subject: **Status Report on Public Engagement Strategy**

RECOMMENDATION

That Council received this report for information.

PURPOSE

To update Council on progress in implementing the City's Public Engagement Strategy, which was adopted in 2016.

SUMMARY

The City of New Westminster's Public Engagement Strategy was adopted in late 2016 and includes 35 actions developed to help the City advance and improve its public engagement practices. All but three of the 35 actions have been completed and/or are underway or ongoing.

Two of the actions – piloting the Deliberative Dialogue engagement technique (action #2.1 in Attachment 1), and reporting back to Council on the feasibility of Participatory Budgeting (action #2.2) – are still pending / to come. These actions are included in the Public Engagement Division's workplan for 2023. It is important to note that a suitable project is required in order to pilot Deliberative Dialogue, and such a project may not be identified in 2023.

One action – piloting an online budget calculator (action #4.2) – has not been initiated, and is not recommended at this time by the Public Engagement Division and Finance Department, given that alternative efforts to educate the community on the City budget are underway.

Attachment 1 includes a table outlining each action and its status as of January 2023.

BACKGROUND

The City's Public Engagement Strategy (see Attachment 2) was developed through the work of the Public Engagement Task Force, which included seven members of the New Westminster community, the Mayor, two Councillors, and five members of City staff. The strategy includes an Action Plan: a series of measurable steps for the City of New Westminster to implement its Public Engagement Strategy, in support of the recommendations and detailed priorities developed by the Public Engagement Task Force.

Implementation of the strategy began under the leadership of the Corporate Communications Division, and a temporary coordinator was hired in 2017 to lead this work. After this role became vacant, a new, permanent position for a Manager of Public Engagement was established and a new stand-alone Public Engagement Division was also created. The Manager position was filled in 2020, and a new, permanent coordinator role was added in 2021.

The Public Engagement Division is part of the Office of the CAO and is responsible for supporting City departments in planning, delivering and reporting on their public engagement initiatives. The Public Engagement team also oversees the Be Heard New West online engagement platform, delivers staff training and capacity building, and develops policy, tools and supports to improve the City's public engagement practices.

NEXT STEPS

The Public Engagement Division continues to implement many of the actions included in the City's Public Engagement Strategy. The work of authentic, equitable public engagement is never finished, and many of the actions outlined in the strategy require sustained effort. In addition to the actions outlined in the strategy, there are opportunities for continual growth and improvement of the City's engagement activities, such as working to include more community voices, and trying new/different engagement techniques.

The Public Engagement team works in collaboration with City staff, Council and the community in delivering this work, and continually seeks feedback and suggestions towards strengthening the City's engagement practices. In particular, the team works closely with City project teams that are actively planning and delivering engagement, the Public Engagement Community of Practice for City staff, the Reconciliation, Social Inclusion and Engagement Task Force, and the Social Inclusion, Engagement and Reconciliation Advisory Committee.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Public Engagement Strategy: Action Plan Status Update, January 2023

Attachment 2: City of New Westminster Public Engagement Strategy (2016)

APPROVALS

This report was prepared by:

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This report was approved by:

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