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**Subject:** Mid-term Highlights - 2019-2022 Strategic Plan

**Report to:** Regional Council

**Report date:** Thursday, May 20, 2021

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### **Recommendations**

1. That Regional Council **RECEIVE** the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan Highlights Report attached as Appendix 1 to Report CAO 6-2021;
2. That Regional Council **APPROVE** the retention of management consulting support for a Council Workshop to refresh the Strategic Plan;
3. That staff **BE DIRECTED** to provide a report at the September 15, 2021 Corporate Services Committee with a recommended suite of performance measures and an implementation plan for a community performance dashboard; and,
4. That staff **BE DIRECTED** to report back at the end of year with a further progress report on Council's Strategic Plan and Priorities.

### **Key Facts**

- On June 20, 2019, Regional Council approved the Region's four year Strategic Plan (Shape Niagara 2019 -2022) and a subsequent Implementation Plan on August 15, 2019
- The Region has made significant progress in advancing the outcomes set out in the Strategic Plan. The attached "highlights report" serves as an update on progress in each of the Region's four priorities as well as the Region's response to COVID-19 and recovery activities
- As Council reaches the mid-point in its term and the Strategic Plan, there is an opportunity to take stock to ensure the Region continues to invest in the projects and initiatives that achieve desired outcomes and move the Region forward. A Council workshop to validate and refresh the Strategic Plan is proposed.

### **Financial Considerations**

It is proposed that consulting services be retained to support a Council workshop on a Strategic Plan refresh. Services would include stakeholder interviews, Council workshop facilitation and report writing. Subject to the number of workshops (one or

two), it is expected that this consulting engagement would cost approximately \$25,000 to \$35,000. This expense will be funded through the 2021 budget of the Office of the CAO.

## **Background**

On June 20, 2019, Regional Council approved its four year Strategic Plan (Shape Niagara 2019-2022) with four priority areas of focus and articulated objectives on how to achieve those priorities.

The four priorities are:

1. Supporting Businesses and Economic Growth
  - A coordinated approach to fostering economic growth in Niagara
2. Healthy and Vibrant Community
  - Foster a high quality of life through safe, healthy, and inclusive neighbourhoods through the delivery of quality, affordable and accessible human services
3. Responsible Growth and Infrastructure Planning
  - Sustainable investments in transportation, transit and infrastructure, while aligning infrastructure planning with preservation of the natural environment
4. Sustainable and Engaging Government
  - A commitment to high quality, efficient, fiscally sustainable and coordinated core services through enhanced communication, partnerships and collaborations with the community

An Implementation Plan was approved by Council a few months later on August 15, 2019 containing 23 strategic projects and actions to advance the objectives in the Strategic Plan (See Appendix 2 for the foundational activities and the timeline for the current Plan).

While the Implementation Plan was intended to be a flexible document allowing for projects or actions to be changed or added, the Plan has not been revisited nor refreshed by Council since its inception.

In normal course, Council would have received regular updates from staff on progress made in advancing the Plan through reports and a public dashboard. Due to a perfect storm of organizational changes, secondments, leaves, and COVID–19, regular reporting has not occurred. Work is underway to fill key vacancies and put in place best practices to ensure regular reporting to Council for accountability and transparency. A relaunch of a community performance dashboard is targeted for September 15, 2021.

The attached highlights report (Appendix 1) demonstrates significant progress and staff innovation despite the impact of COVID-19. Work has commenced and progress made on 21 of the 23 projects in the Implementation Plan. Of the remaining two (2), one (1) was closed due to a change in provincial legislation (Community Benefits Charge), the other is scheduled to begin later in 2021 (Waste Management Strategy). This is a first step in getting the organization back on track on regular reporting. More detailed reporting is planned for year-end.

Subsequent to the Council discussion on Appendix 1, staff will incorporate feedback and produce a camera ready, graphically pleasing report for posting on the Region's public website.

## **Analysis**

The disruption caused by COVID-19 and the anticipated residual effect on the economy, community and government operations will be felt for the next two or three years, if not longer. **As a result, the Region is at a crossroads:**

- One path of decision making advocates municipal spending realigned to provide 'essential' services with a goal of weathering the storm (focus on short-term);
- The other path aligns services and service levels within the new fiscal constraints and towards strategic direction established in the Strategic Plan (focus on long term).

This is a key discussion for Council.

At the midpoint in its term, Council may wish to check- in and revisit existing priorities and give the Strategic Plan a “refresh” to ensure the Region is investing in the right projects and initiatives. A refresh would provide an opportunity to ensure alignment with other strategic activities including:

- KPMG review recommendations
- New leadership and strategic focus in Economic Development
- Official Plan Review and Master Plans
- Transportation Master Plan
- Housing and Homelessness Action Plan
- Water Wastewater Master Servicing Plan
- Asset Management Plan update
- DC Study
- COVID-19 recovery activities

This review could also be leveraged to make enhancements to the Plan with respect to outcomes, performance measures, and gaps such as environmental initiatives, and other key projects.

To support this conversation, a Council workshop is proposed in late June, early July facilitated by a consultant. While the engagement methodology would be refined based on expert advice from the consultant, four phases are envisioned:

### **Phase 1 Background**

- Brief review of foundational municipal documents
- Telephone/ Skype interviews with Members of Council (31 x 45 minutes)
  - Members could choose to participate in the calls individually or in a group
- Telephone/ Skype interviews with the CLT and other key leaders
- Preparation of a discussion paper based on interviews

### **Phase 2 – Workshop Preparation**

- Workshop design – virtual facilitated session
- Preparation and distribution of workshop materials

**Phase 3 – Workshop # 1 Delivery** Subject to the degree of refresh sought by Council, a 2nd workshop may be required

- Facilitation of a virtual Council priority setting session (full day)

## Phase 4 – Final Reporting and Approval

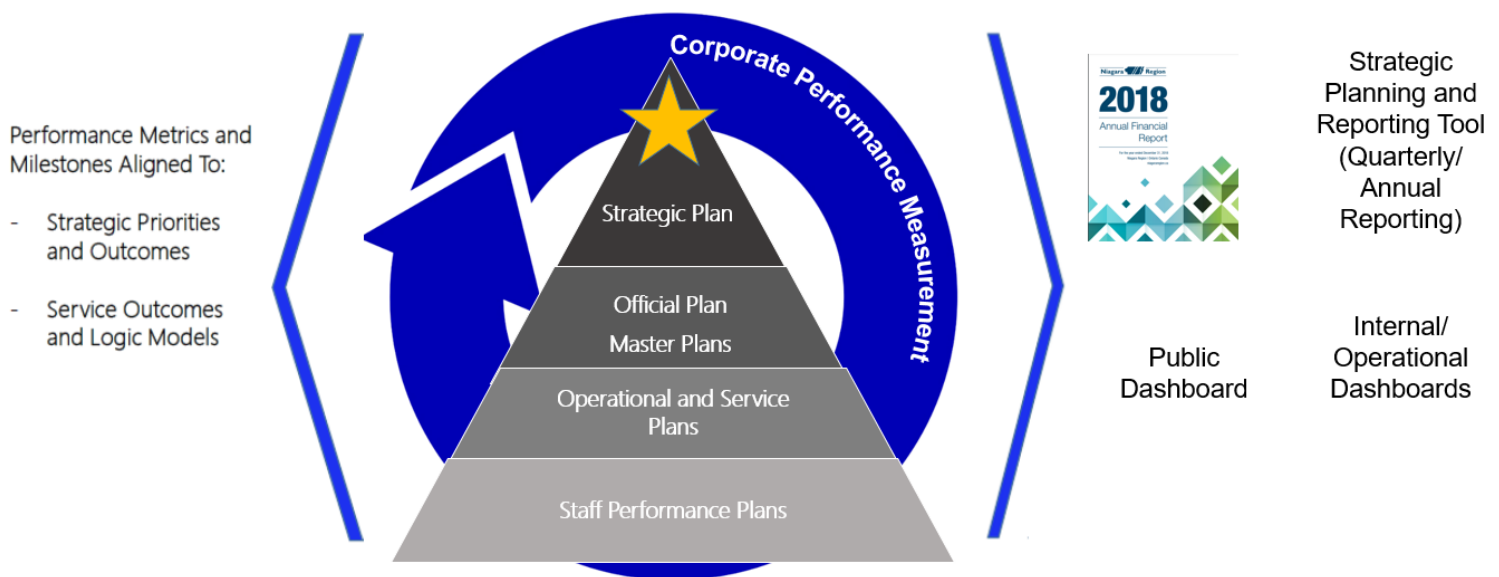
- Final report preparation and submission
- Final Council presentation
- Communications strategy

## Corporate Performance Framework

The Corporate Performance Framework for the Region should be tightly aligned to the overall planning context – from our long term strategic plans, down to annual operational/service level plans. Each level of planning should guide the next in order to achieve the desired outcomes of the above. (See Figure 1 below)

Figure 1 Illustration of the Region's Corporate Performance Framework

# Corporate Performance Framework



We have an opportunity to enhance our focus as a corporation through a refresh of our Strategic Plan to clearly articulate desired outcomes, align metrics and monitor and report on them consistently. With this alignment, we can start to put some of the various reporting views we are building in context – a community performance dashboard, metrics in the budget aligned to services, and operational dashboards. All pull on

similar data and metrics, but present in different ways for different purposes and audiences. This is priority work for the balance of 2021 and into 2022.

## **Conclusions**

The Region continues to advance the outcomes set out in the Strategic Plan. The attached highlights report serves as an update on progress in each of the Region's four priority areas of focus in the Strategic Plan as well as the Region's response to COVID-19 and recovery activities.

The Strategic Plan is the anchor of the Region's Corporate Performance Framework and the North Star for corporate alignment. As Council reaches the mid-point in its term and the Strategic Plan there is an opportunity to take stock to reflect, reaffirm or refine priorities to ensure the Region continues to invest in the right projects and initiatives with a contextual lens that includes COVID-19 among other considerations. A Council workshop to validate and refresh the Strategic Plan is recommended with the support of consulting services.

The evolving nature of the COVID-19 pandemic and its potential impacts on the Region's Strategic Plan will continue to be monitored including risks and mitigation efforts surrounding the achievement of desired outcomes. Regular reporting will take place on a go forward basis.

## **Alternatives Reviewed**

N/A

## **Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities**

This report provides highlights on progress made in each of the four priorities of the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan Shape Niagara.

## **Other Pertinent Reports**

- 2019-2022 Strategic Plan
- Council's Strategy Implementation Plan 2019-2022
- Financial Annual Plan 2020

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This report was prepared in consultation with the Commissioner's of the Corporate Leadership Team, the Director's of Departmental Senior Leadership Teams, Helen Chamberlain, Director Finance Management & Planning/Deputy Treasurer, and Gina Van den Burg, Government Stakeholder Relations Specialist

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1            2019-2022 Council Strategic Plan Highlights

Appendix 2            Foundational Activities and Timeline for the Current Strategic Plan