BRIEFING

Response to Notice of Motion C2019-0795

PURPOSE OF BRIEFING

To provide information on the transparency practices suggested in Notice of Motion C2019-0795 "Keeping Tabs on Council", the City Clerk's Office worked with partners from Customer Service & Communications, Information Technology, and Corporate Analytics & Innovation to identify existing initatives, and additional practices that support transparency of Council. This Briefing provides an overview on the activities identified in the related Notice of Motion. The response to this Notice of Motion represents approximately 30 hours of collective work.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Action on each item is presented in the order of appearance in the Notice of Motion.

1. Publish, upon request by a member of Council, the text and results of a motion that they deem to be of exceptional public interest on the City of Calgary front webpage for a period of one week after the vote;

2. Compile such exceptional votes on a separate webpage, including a verbatim explanation by each member of Council if they so wish.

Response:

Not currently under consideration.

- Publishing the text and results of a motion would be a manual process requiring many hours of staff time. If a custom solution could automate the process it could cost between $50K-100K to build.
- Administration currently shares Council decisions and information through media and social media on items that have high public interest.

3. Provide this record of votes alongside candidate biographical profiles if any member of Council stands as a candidate for the 2021 municipal election.

Response:

Not currently under consideration.

- The Candidate Profiles section on the Elections Calgary website is a neutral platform. Providing a space for information that is specific only to incumbents would not align with providing a neutral platform for all candidates.
- All candidates have the ability to provide links to their own websites with their own content.

4. Council directs Administration, as part of the on-going exploration of electronic voting, to consider the tagging and categorizing of all votes so that in the long-term, the complete record of any member of Council may be easily recalled based on issue and a citizen's topic of interest.

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Response:

Work is underway.

- The City Clerk's Office is currently assessing the ability to improve searchability of Council records through the use of meta-data (i.e., the information about the data).
- A report to Council on electronic voting is expected on November 5th (Priorities and Finance Committee). If implemented, the vote record will be published to Open Data. Administration will also be investigating what other information (in the form of structured data) can be pulled directly in Open Data, and proactively made available to the public.

5. Council directs administration to explore the viability and potential costs of retaining a transcript of what is said in Council meetings.

Response:

Not currently under consideration.

- Initial comparative research showed the requirements to support such a program are likely to be prohibitively expensive.
- City Clerk's is currently testing a new closed captioning system that would simultaneously improve the viewing experience when using captioning and also provide the ability to capture the closed captioning text.

6. Council directs administration to retain and provide for the public the video recordings of Council and Committee meetings for two Council terms (eight years), and explore the viability and costs of uploading the video of Council meetings to platforms such as YouTube and Facebook.

Response:

Video retention component already complete.

- Video can be retained for eight years, and related policies will be updated by The City Clerk's Office (current policy outlines a four-year retention).

Posting to social media not currently under consideration.

- Video is already made available to the public through eScribe, and is linked to related documents, agendas and meeting minutes.

7. Council directs administration to endeavor to provide the aforementioned as part of the City's Open Data Catalogue, for free use by citizens.

Response:

Work underway.

- If electronic voting is implemented, the vote record will be published to Open Data. Administration will be investigating what other information can be pulled directly in Open Data and proactively made available to the public.