

People, Innovation & Collaboration Services Report to
Executive Committee
2026 May 05

ISC: UNRESTRICTED
EC2026-0008

Strengthening Transparency – Improving Engagement with Calgarians

PURPOSE

KPMG will provide Council with the final report from the review of engagement at The City of Calgary, as outlined in Notice of Motion, Strengthening Transparency: Improving Engagement with Calgarians, EC2024-1130 (Attachment 1). The review identifies opportunities to strengthen transparency and improve engagement with Calgarians.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION

At the Regular Meeting of Council held 2024 October 29, Council directed Administration to contract an independent, third-party consultant accredited in public participation to:

- Conduct an analysis of The City's policy and approach to public participation and engagement through public feedback and validation in contrast to industry best practices in public participation and engagement (e.g., International Association for Public Participation (IAP2));
- Identify lessons learned and develop opportunities to improve public participation and engagement with Calgarians; and
- Report back with an update to City Council through Executive Committee no later than Q2 2025.

To satisfy Council's report back direction, KPMG provided an update (EC2025-0503) at the 2025 June 17 Regular Meeting of Council on the process they planned to take to review engagement at The City of Calgary.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That Executive Committee recommends Council receive this Report and Attachments for the Corporate Record.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER/GENERAL MANAGER COMMENTS

The General Manager of People, Innovation & Collaboration Services concurs with this report. City engagement is vital because it builds trust, improves decision-making and ensures inclusive participation in shaping our community's future.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The City's official approach to public participation is currently guided by the Engage Policy and Engage Framework. It provides Calgarians with opportunities to share input on decisions that affect their lives.

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- KPMG’s final report (Attachment 2) indicates:
 - The City’s engagement policies and framework are well-aligned with leading practices. The Engage Policy and Engage Framework provide clear direction, and the Engage Resource Unit (ERU) offers expert support for planning and delivery.
 - Despite strong policies, there is no effective oversight mechanism to ensure compliance. The Engage Resource Unit lacks authority to enforce standards, resulting in gaps between policy and practice.
 - Effective engagement depends on strong, ongoing relationships. Building on existing networks and advisory bodies The City must integrate relationship management with engagement oversight to optimize outcomes.

DISCUSSION

Public engagement is essential for trust and informed decision-making. KPMG’s review found that while The City’s policy and framework aligns with leading practice, engagement practices lack consistency, clarity and processes do not always link engagement to specific decisions, which reduces transparency and accountability.

Through their assessment, KPMG identified five recommendations for improvements to engagement at The City.

Structure and manage engagement as a function - The City should reposition the Engage Resource Unit to oversee engagement, enforce standards, and approve activities and practices.

Strengthen controls to follow through on policy - The Engage Resource Unit should serve as an approval checkpoint throughout engagement planning and associated communications to ensure alignment with approved strategies, working jointly with Communications on all engagement-related materials.

Consistently organize engagement around specific decisions and promises - Every engagement must start with a clear decision and promise. Apply stronger quality controls and approval checkpoints and involve Council early on high-impact issues through systematic workflows for timely briefings and approvals.

Strengthen interested party analysis to support selection of engagement tactics - Require detailed analysis after Engage Assessments, including a mandatory Participation Table, a centralized feedback database, and clear criteria for engagement scale.

Manage relationships systematically - The City should define the role of advisory committees in engagement, create an inventory to address representation gaps, and proactively manage key relationships using a Customer Relationship Management tool.

EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public engagement was undertaken | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dialogue with interested parties was undertaken |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public/interested parties were informed | <input type="checkbox"/> Public communication or engagement was not required |

KPMG has concluded their four-phase review, including:

- Research and benchmarking, comparing Calgary's practices against 13 municipalities across Canada, the U.S., and internationally.
- Interviews with City staff across the organization and the 2021-2025 City Council.
- A citywide public survey and 28 public engagement sessions (two per ward) between late spring and early summer 2025.
- Development of 20 benchmarks for municipal engagement based on principles of inclusion, transparency, accountability, and capacity The City should use to measure good engagement.

KPMG indicated:

- The City's engagement policies and tools align well with leading practices, including clear strategies, appropriate tactics, and templates for accountability, noting an opportunity to apply these tools more consistently.
- It is difficult for the public to see how their input influences outcomes.
- There is a disconnect between the policy and engagement practices, most notably, commitments to the public about how input will be used are not always upheld.
- Engagement tactics are chosen by budget rather than fit-for-purpose.
- Engagement at The City is managed project by project, and there is no program-level coordination or performance measurement, with senior leaders lacking visibility into engagement volume and timing.
- The City has strong networks and advisory bodies, though relationships are informal and not systematically tracked, thus limiting continuity and the ability to leverage insights for better engagement.
- Adjusting operations alone will not improve trust, and structural changes are needed to enforce policy, ensure consistent practices, and manage relationships strategically.

IMPLICATIONS

Social

Clear and accessible opportunities to participate in this review support The City's commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging.

Environmental

Not applicable.

Economic

Not applicable.

Service and Financial Implications

Existing operating funding - one-time

One-time operating funding of \$775,000 was approved by Council for this third-party review of The City's engagement policy and processes. Administration is currently utilizing existing resources to begin implementation and estimating future investments required to fund improvements in the next budget cycle.

RISK

If KPMG's recommendations are not advanced, public trust in The City's public engagement process and practices may stay the same or deteriorate.

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ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Notice of Motion – Strengthening Transparency Improving Engagement with Calgarians, EC2024-1130
2. Strengthening Transparency - Improving Engagement with Calgarians Final Report
3. Presentation

Department Circulation

General Manager/Director	Department	Approve/Consult/Inform
Jennifer Kapala	People, Innovation & Collaboration Services	Approve
Executive Leadership Team		Inform
Paul Taylor	People, Innovation & Collaboration Services	Approve
Jennifer McMurtry	People, Innovation & Collaboration Services	Inform

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