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Item No. 15.1.4
Halifax Regional Council
April 29, 2025

TO: Mayor Andy Fillmore and Members of Halifax Regional Council

FROM: Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: March 14, 2025

SUBJECT: **2026-2030 Strategic Planning Process**

ORIGIN

Staff initiated to provide Regional Council with information on the intended approach for obtaining feedback on the draft 2026-2030 Strategic Plan and the proposed process for approval of the Plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2021-2025 Strategic Priorities Plan is coming to an end. The administration has begun creating the 2026-2030 Strategic Plan (the Plan) and is seeking council approval on a proposed approach to receive Regional Council member feedback on a draft of the Plan in advance of staff work to develop and submit a final 2026-2030 Strategic Plan for Regional Council approval.

RECOMMENDATION

That Halifax Regional Council adopt the strategic planning process as set out in the discussion section of this report for the development of the 2026-2030 Strategic Plan.

BACKGROUND

The 2021-2025 Strategic Priorities Plan is coming to an end. The administration has begun creating the 2026-2030 Strategic Plan (the Plan) that would come into effect in April 2026 and would inform the development of 2026/27 and future budgets and business plans.

DISCUSSION

2026-2030 Strategic Plan Process Overview

The draft 2026-2030 Strategic Plan is being developed in consultation with municipal staff, members of Regional Council, and strategic external partners. Additionally, the draft content incorporates input from multiple sources including public consultation through the 2024 Resident Survey and a Shape Your City survey. The intent is for staff to complete a draft plan, provide that draft plan to Regional Council for written feedback in May 2025, and then develop a final 2026-2030 Strategic Plan document that would be presented to Regional Council for their approval in summer 2025.

February 2025 - Workshops

Regional Council members were engaged in the development of the draft plan via a series of three workshops held in February 2025. At these meetings, attendees worked with staff to outline the priorities and goals they would like to accomplish during the term of the 2026-2030 Strategic Plan and provided input on the draft Plan content to date. The Councillors were then provided with this information in aggregate to review and provide their written feedback.

March to April 2025 - Staff Feedback

Staff have conducted additional plan development work, including conducting several rounds of Priority Working Group meetings. Priority Working Groups bring together senior staff and subject matter experts from across the organization, as well as external partners to develop and refine the Plan.

May 2025 – Council Written Feedback

Staff are proposing that all Regional Councillors be given the opportunity to provide further written feedback on the latest draft Plan. The draft Plan will be provided in electronic format to all Councillors for their input and will be supplemented with results from the Shape Your City public consultation on the draft strategic plan content. Councillors would have the option to provide comments within the draft document, or to submit them via email.

Staff are proposing that Council's review period of the draft Plan would occur between **May 5 and May 14**. This feedback would inform a subsequent round of Priority Working Group meetings and plan development in advance of the final Plan being presented to Regional Council in summer 2025. Staff recommend that Council deliberate on the Plan at Committee of the Whole.

For this review, Council members will be provided with draft plan content, including:

- Priorities
- Strategic Lenses
- Goals and goal results
- Shape Your City survey results

Alternative Draft Plan feedback options

The following alternative approaches could be utilized to obtain Regional Council's feedback on the draft Plan prior to the presentation of the final Plan:

One-on-One Councillor Feedback: Under this option, the Strategic Planning team would arrange one-on-one meetings with individual Councillors in early May 2025 and would review this feedback with the Priority Working Groups for incorporation into the final Plan.

Additional Workshops: Under this option, the Strategic Planning team would arrange a series of additional workshops with Regional Councillor members in early May 2025 to obtain feedback and would review this feedback with the Priority Working Groups for incorporation into the final Plan. These would be small-group sessions.

Several members of Regional Council communicated that they would like to have an all-Council in-person workshop on the current draft Plan, with the option to have this workshop held outside of Council Chambers; Staff considered this option but are not recommending doing an all-Council workshop because it would be problematic under the HRM Charter (due to the requirement for meetings to be open to the public) and difficult to provide the necessary level of transparency and formality required for conduct of municipal business.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications identified with the recommended approach.

RISK CONSIDERATION

Where the recommended approach solicits written feedback that will be incorporated into a final Plan for Council debate and decision, there are limited procedural risks. If staff do not receive feedback from all members of Regional Council, there is a risk that the final Plan may not represent all perspectives. However, there have been several rounds of feedback opportunities, and Regional Council may request changes to the final plan (subject to consensus) thus mitigating this risk.

Where staff are soliciting feedback from members of Regional Council on the draft Plan, there is the risk that feedback could be subject to interpretation and not incorporated into plan development as intended. This will be mitigated through the process of deliberation on the Plan during a Committee of the Whole meeting, where amendments to the Plan can be proposed and voted on.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Results from the [2024 Resident Survey](#) informed the development of the draft 2026-2030 Strategic Plan. The Resident Survey included questions on resident priorities and top issues facing the municipality and formed the primary public engagement process to inform the Plan.

A Strategic Plan Shape Your City Survey to gather feedback from the public on the draft 2026-2030 Strategic Plan Strategic Lenses, Priorities, and Goals was conducted from April 1 to April 23. Results from this survey will be shared with Regional Council with the draft Plan, to inform their feedback and any final Plan deliberations.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

No environmental implications were identified.

ALTERNATIVES

Regional Council could choose to:

1. Forego providing interim feedback on the draft plan and request a staff presentation on the final 2026-2030 Strategic Plan at Committee of the Whole in summer 2025 for deliberation and decision.
2. Provide feedback on the draft plan via alternative means (one-on-one meetings or facilitated workshops) followed by a presentation of the final 2026-2030 Strategic Plan at Committee of the Whole in summer 2025.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, S.N.S. 2008, c. 39

19(1) Except as otherwise provided in this Section, Council meetings and meetings of committees appointed by the Council are open to the public.

34(3) The Council shall provide direction on the administration, plans, policies and programs of the Municipality to the Chief Administrative Officer.

35(1) The Chief Administrative Officer shall ... (b) ensure that the annual operating and capital budgets are prepared and submitted to the Council.

ATTACHMENTS

No Attachments.

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