



**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER**
Staff Report

REPORT NO: CAO-2024-01
TO: Council
SUBMITTED BY: Sharon Chambers, CAO
PREPARED BY: Sharon Chambers, CAO
REVIEWED BY: Sharon Chambers, CAO
DATE: February 26, 2024
SUBJECT: Office of the CAO, Mayor and Council Staffing Resources

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report CAO 2024-1 Office of the CAO, Mayor and Council Staffing Resources be received as information.

SUMMARY:

At the January 25, 2024 Finance and Budget Committee meeting, staff was directed to report back to the Committee on Contracted Services and options to redistribute work within the Office of the CAO and potential cost savings. This report provides information on the current staff complement within the Office of the CAO, and allocation of staff resources to support the Mayor and Council.

BACKGROUND:

Prior to 2021, the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) operated without dedicated staff support. Instead, staff within the Information and Legislative Services Department provided administrative assistance to both the CAO and the Mayor. Corporate Communications fell under the jurisdiction of the Information and Legislative Services Department and was

supported by a Communication Specialist role. The Communication Specialist's responsibilities encompassed basic media releases, aiding in departmental marketing campaigns, and overseeing the Township's social media channels. Additionally, the website was managed by personnel within the Information and Legislative Services department, with additional support from the Manager of Planning and Economic Development.

Following the transition of the Chief Administrative Officer in late 2021, an Executive Assistant role was established through a secondment from Corporate Services. In 2022, this position was converted to a permanent role. The primary responsibility of the Executive Assistant is to provide administrative support to the CAO and the Corporate Leadership Team, as well as some assistance to the Mayor and Council. The shared position primarily focuses on calendar and meeting management, internal and external customer service for the Office of the CAO, and routine administrative duties. Later in 2022, the Township's departments underwent reorganization, resulting in the transfer of corporate communications and human resources functions to the Office of the CAO. Shortly after the transition, the Communications Specialist role became vacant and the position transitioned to a Digital Media Coordinator/Website Administrator role to address day to day content creation and technical aspects of communication, with the idea that an additional position would be implemented to address the Township's strategic communication needs.

After the new Mayor and Council assumed office at the end of 2022, the Township was in the final stages of developing its Corporate Communication Strategy. However, the process was temporarily halted to accommodate input from the incoming Council. During this engagement, several key themes emerged:

- Formal processes for Council would improve the Township's communications function and increase understanding of appropriate roles and responsibilities of staff and elected officials.
- Desire for consistent training on policies and procedures for all elected officials.
- Strong desire for more high-quality, timely information from staff to support informed decision making, issues management, and interactions with constituents.
- Desire for dedicated communications support for Council to facilitate effective communication with constituents.
- Priority for a more planned and strategic approach to communications and public engagement, including less reliance on digital communications, to achieve a broader reach and increase community knowledge of the Township's work.
- Increased public communications and engagement is needed to help strengthen community trust and confidence in local government.
- There are opportunities to strengthen positive storytelling about Township accomplishments.
- An improved website would make information easier to find.
- Need for a stronger and more cohesive social media presence with a consistent brand and messaging.
- Belief that elected officials should be able to get information from all levels of staff, not just the department director, to save time and ensure efficient use of staff resources.

The Draft Corporate Communication Strategy identified six strategic communication priorities.

1. **Invest in communications:** Effective communications and public engagement can only be achieved with sufficient resourcing and setting it as a strategic priority across the organization. Investment in communications means skilled staff are in place with the appropriate tools at their disposal to proactively plan and implement strategies, reach audiences, monitor attitudes and reactions and measure success. To meet the growing needs at the Township, additional staff resources should be considered to support the manager once in place.
2. **Establish a strong proactive and strategic function:** Building a strong communications culture at the Township starts from the inside out. The communications manager will need to establish effective processes, policies and tools to build and strengthen a communications mindset across the organization and communicate more efficiently and quickly with key audiences, especially when issues arise. Everyone has a role to play. Goal setting with departments and communications calendars play a key role in focusing communications efforts so that the Township can engage effectively with its audience and build a stronger relationship with residents.
3. **Improve alignment with Council:** Elected officials are important influencers in the community. They engage with constituents daily and can be leveraged as a key channel to share information broadly. They can also be a conduit to share information back to staff. Establishing effective processes for Council to stay informed, including between Council meetings, is critical to success. It also builds trust and helps ensure consistency of messages and helps mitigate misinformation in the community. Strategic Communications Priorities Based on the research, findings, best practice, future trends and analysis, this strategy includes six strategic communications priorities for the Township. The strategic priorities form the basis of this Communications Plan and will guide communications activities from late 2023 to 2027. Each priority includes objectives and actions to achieve them, with high-level timelines to ensure progress.
4. **Strengthen positive story telling:** We engage people and build trust and understanding by sharing authentic, human stories that resonate. Strengthening storytelling will help draw people in, demonstrate value for taxpayers' dollars and build a captive audience when the Township needs to share information. Storytelling includes both the narrative aspect as well as visual elements, and celebrates what makes the municipality unique. This includes strengthening the Township's social media presence, showing progress on key projects and profiling staff working to improve the quality of life in Wilmot everyday.
5. **Increase the Township's visibility in the community:** Effective communications are easy to find, understand and share. Effective community engagement ensures there are opportunities for everyone to have a voice. The Township needs to be seen through all its channels, and leverage community influencers, like the media or community groups, to help tell its story.
6. **Enhance public engagement efforts:** Wilmot is rich with stakeholder groups that want to have a say in Township matters. Committing to guiding principles for engagement, developing an overarching framework and toolkit for staff, and closing then loop with the community following engagement will help streamline the Township's approach and improve its engagement efforts with residents.

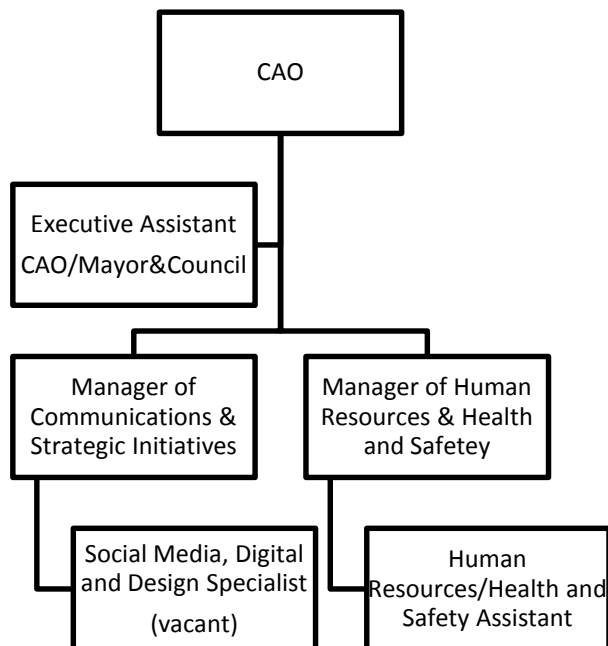
To build capacity for enhanced communications, Council approved a new Manager of Communication and Strategic Initiatives Position in 2023. Rather than add a new FTE, this position replaced the previously approved Sustainability Coordinator Position which had not yet been filled.

The recruitment process for the Manager of CSI role commenced in early 2023. However, due to market conditions, the position remained unfilled until September. Later, in July of 2023, the Digital Media Coordinator/Website Administrator Position became vacant. Consequently, the Township had to heavily depend on third-party contract support to meet its communication requirements. Basic communication support and triage of communication requests were managed through the CAO Executive Assistant.

Since joining the Township, the Manager of CSI has assessed the Township's communication requirements and strategic communication priorities. She has also made necessary adjustments to the supporting role, ensuring that the essential skill sets are in place to advance the Communications Strategy Action Plan. The hiring process for the Social Media, Digital and Design Specialist is underway, but has been temporarily paused, pending the outcome of Council's request to review departmental staffing resources.

REPORT:

The current staff complement with the Office of the CAO is illustrated below;



Position Summaries

Chief Administrative Officer

- Broad oversight of municipal operations and finances
- Advice and support to Council
- Corporate wide projects
- Oversee Corporate Leadership Team and Fire Chief
- Liaison with other levels of government
- Oversee Communications & Strategic Initiatives, Human Resources & Health and Safety Divisions

CAO Executive Assistant (shared with Mayor and Council)

- Calendar management
- CAO & CLT administrative support, minutes, general correspondence
- Mayor – calendar management, meeting planning, conferences/travel
- Some event support i.e. September 30th, Truth & Reconciliation Day

Manager of Communications and Strategic Initiatives

- Media relations
- Issues management
- Crisis communication
- Community engagement
- Communication and Social Media Strategy
- Strategic initiatives and projects
- Strategic Planning, Measurement and Reporting

Social Media, Digital and Design Specialist. (vacant)

- Social media/content development
- Website administration
- Intranet
- High quality design, photography & video

HR & H&S Manager

- Employee relations
- Health & Safety program
- Legislative compliance
- Support management and CLT
- Performance Management
- Benefits & Compensation
- Training & Development
- Policy review and creation

HR & H&S Assistant

- Recruitment
- HRIS maintenance
- Payroll support
- Maintains staff training records
- Administration of benefits programs/OMERS
- H&S support

Since this structure was implemented, the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) has operated below its full staff complement, as indicated by the organizational chart provided. Despite the existing structure, vacancies and unfilled positions have persisted, impacting the office's operational capacity.

Since assuming office, Mayor Salonen has recognized the necessity for increased administrative assistance beyond the existing shared Executive Assistant position. Additionally, Council members have expressed the need for additional support in handling constituent inquiries and managing communications.

Council has asked if an additional Council support role could be achieved through the reorganization of staffing resources within the office of the CAO, and further, if there could be cost savings.

Action:

1. Conduct a thorough **needs assessment** to determine the precise for additional administrative support for the Mayor, Council and CAO.
2. Define **political functions versus corporate functions**
3. Collaborate with HR to define job descriptions and qualifications for the proposed positions.
4. Allocate necessary budgetary resources to implement the changes.

Needs assessment:

Below are the support requirements for the Mayor and CAO.

Mayor:

- Calendar management
- Political communications
- Conference/travel management
- Constituent responses
- Speaking notes
- Research
- Event management (Political) (i.e. Mayor's breakfast, State of the Township)

Council:

- Political communications
- Research
- Conference/travel management
- Constituent responses

CAO

- Calendar and meeting management
- Customer Service for the Office of the CAO
- Email management
- Document and records management
- Research/writing reports/documents/memos
- Internal communication
- Conference/travel management
- Invoices approval/budget research, compilation, monitoring
- Project management/support

Corporate Leadership Team

- CLT agendas/minutes
- Action tracking and follow-up
- Internal scheduling

Communication Needs

- Strategic Communication Needs – Strategic communication focuses on achieving long-term goals and over-arching objectives.
 - Media relations
 - Issues management
 - Crisis preparedness and communication
 - Community and stakeholder engagement
- Communication and Social Media Strategy
- Business Plan Development, progress reporting
- Tactical Communications – Tactical communication deals with short-term actions and immediate tasks required to support strategic goals
 - Social media and website content development
 - Website back-end
 - Intranet development and maintenance

Following is a summary of key initiatives that will be led and/or supported by the Office of the CAO in 2024.

CAO Department Led Projects

- Strategic Plan
- Communications Strategy Implementation
- Website update and Intranet design and implementation
- Prime Minister's Path Next Steps and Engagement
- Human Resources
 - Recruitment of Director of Corporate Services and Finance Manager Positions
 - Human Resources Audit Recommendations
 - Job description update and policy review
 - Health and Safety Program review and update

Support for Corporate-wide initiatives:

- Key Economic Development initiatives
- Budget process update and Financial Strategy update
- Space Needs Study
- Community Services Master Plan
- Corporate Records Management Project
- Completion of People Plan – Community Services and Final Report
- Enterprise Resource Management System
- Development Services – Secondary Plan

Region-wide Initiatives

- Bill 23 Download of Planning from Region to Lower Tiers
- Bill 39 - Regional governance review
- Six Nations Engagement Protocol

Four Township Initiatives:

- Waterloo Economic Development Corporation – Rural Economic Development Strategy
- Rural Transit Review
- Rural Libraries Review
- Sustainability Work Plan

Mayor and Council

- Government Relations support, policy work and advocacy
- Analysis, reporting and implementation of legislative changes

Observations:

1. The Office of the CAO organizational structure consists of two staff positions to support both strategic and tactical communication needs and support for corporate wide projects. The effectiveness of this structure cannot be assessed because one or both of these positions have been unfilled since the structure was implemented. The Manager of CSI role was intended to support strategic communication and projects, however, due to the existing vacancy in the support/technical communications role, the Manager of CSI must focus primarily on tactical, day-to-day communication tasks and has reduced

capacity to address proactive and strategic communication initiatives. Furthermore, this situation impacts the ability to provide support to the CAO in executing strategic projects, including strategic planning oversight, business plan development, and progress reporting, as well as communications support to the Mayor and Council.

2. Throughout 2023, the Office of the CAO has faced persistent staff vacancies. These include the Manager of Communication and Strategic Initiatives (with a 7-month recruitment process due to market conditions), the Manager of Human Resources (vacant for 7 months), and the Executive Assistant position (currently vacant and temporarily filled through a third-party contract expiring at the end of April 2024). Additionally, the Social Media, Digital, and Design Specialist role has remained vacant since July 2024. These vacancies have negatively impacted customer service, slowed response times, and hindered progress on key projects and council priorities.
3. The Township has been undergoing significant organizational transformation and modernization since 2022. As part of this process, there has been a restructuring of various functions and services, leading to the appointment of new leadership in Community Services, Legislative Services, Public Works, Communications, and Human Resources. Recruitment for leadership positions within the Finance Division is currently in progress. The incoming leaders are actively updating and modernizing processes, updating policy and implementing best practices in their respective areas of responsibility. Given these changes, the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) is required to focus more on operational support to facilitate the ongoing transformation.
4. The Mayor and Council's needs have evolved following the election and additional staff support is needed in the area of calendar management, constituent responses, event planning, communications, and technical writing. The current Executive Assistant to the CAO role provides basic support to both the Mayor and CAO, but due to limited capacity, is providing more day-to-day administrative assistance. Due to the limited capacity, there is a gap in executive level support in the area of technical writing such as drafting and editing documents, reports, presentations, conducting research and preparing briefs. In the absence of this support, this work is being done by the CAO.
5. The Mayor has expressed the need for a dedicated staff position to support the Mayor and Council.
6. Considering the needs assessment outlined in this report, reducing the staff complement within the Office of the CAO would significantly impact the operational effectiveness of the office and the ability to advance key priorities.

Options:

1. **Implement a dedicated staff position by approving a Constituent Liaison position reporting directly to the Mayor and Council. (+1 FTE)**

This option would offer optimal support to both the Mayor and Council and Office of the CAO.

Opportunities:

- CAO, Mayor and Council each have their own dedicated staff support
- Maximum capacity for communication and engagement by maintaining full staff complement in the Communications Division
- Increased support for advocacy to senior levels of government
- Maintains project management support for the Office of the CAO

Risk:

- Increased costs due to the addition of one FTE
- Lack of clarity concerning political versus corporate roles could hinder effective governance

For this structure to function effectively, there must be clear differentiation between tasks of a political nature and those that are corporate in nature.

Political Tasks

- Council newsletters and communications, speaking notes, quotes for media releases, etc.
- Constituent responses
- Scheduling and event management for the Mayor and Council (Mayor's Breakfast, State of the Township, political meetings)

Corporate Tasks (Office of the CAO)

- Corporate Communication – media releases and media relations
- Crisis Communications
- Policy support and advocacy – in conjunction with Mayor and Council

Financial Implications: Approximately \$125,000/year including salary and all employment related costs and IT requirements, travel/conference attendance, etc.

If this option was selected, the next step would be to finalize a job description, complete the job evaluation to confirm the salary range and post the position. Rather than implement a permanent new position, Council could consider a contract position for the remainder of the term.

- 2. Implement a dedicated staff position by approving a Constituent Liaison position reporting directly to the Mayor and Council and eliminating the vacant Social Media, Digital and Design Specialist role and contracting out technical communication needs.**

This option would also provide optimum support for the Mayor and Council, however would reduce staff resources allocated to corporate communications and project support within the Office of the CAO.

The Manager of Strategic Initiatives and Communications would continue to simultaneously handle strategic and tactical communications tasks, which will diminish their capacity to support strategic projects such as the Prime Minister’s Path engagement and strategic planning process. Within the existing Executive Assistant to the CAO role, there will be additional capacity to handle tasks such as internal communication support, budget development assistance and monitoring, and basic document preparation and report writing.

The technical aspects of communication, such as website backend and intranet operations, would still present a skills gap if the Social Media, Digital, and Design Specialist role is eliminated. In the 2024 budget, a contract position has been allocated to facilitate the website upgrade and intranet development. This contract could be expanded to provide additional operational support for day-to-day technical requirements.

Opportunities:

- Lower cost than adding a new FTE
- Provides greater support to the Mayor and Council
- Provides some support for technical communication functions

Risks:

- Increased costs over current approved staff complement
- Lack of clarity concerning political versus corporate roles could hinder effective governance

Financial Impact: (annual)

Constituent Liaison to Mayor and Council (+1 FTE)	\$125,000
Social Media, Digital and Design Specialist role (-1 FTE)	-\$100,000
Additional contract technical support for website/intranet (estimate 10 hours per week)	<u>\$25,000</u>
Total estimated financial impact	\$50,000

If this option is selected, staff recommend that it be a temporary solution and that the Social Media, Digital and Design Specialist position be reconsidered in 2025.

3. Maintain the existing staff complement within the Office of the CAO, and maximize internal resources to provide a higher level of support to both the Mayor/Council and CAO.

This option would provide some enhanced support to the Mayor and Council.

In this situation, if the Social Media, Digital, and Design Specialist role were filled, they could assist the Mayor and Council with communications, newsletters, event organization, and promotion of events. Since this role is currently vacant, there's an opportunity to modify the job description to enhance support for event management for corporate and political events. Additionally, this would create additional capacity within the Manager of Strategic Initiatives role, allowing them to provide enhanced communication support to the Mayor and Council

By updating the job description, skills and experience requirements for the Executive Assistant role, the vacant position could be enhanced to attract an individual with skills in the area of document preparation, research and technical writing.

Opportunities:

- No impact to current budget
- Maximizes internal resources

Risks:

- May not provide the level of support desired by the Mayor and Council

4. Eliminate Social Media, Digital and Design Specialist role and continue to operate below full staff complement within the Office of the CAO (not recommended)

Opportunities:

- Reduction in overall costs

Risks:

- Does not provide adequate support to the Mayor and Council and CAO.
- Reduces the ability to advance strategic projects and initiatives.
- Annual work plan would have to be reviewed and adjusted to align with available resources. Many projects and initiatives are not discretionary, therefore cannot be deferred or eliminated.
- Communications function will be reduced, with a primary focus on day-to-day tactical communication. Media and communication request response times could be delayed.

- Continued lower level of customer service and response times within the office of the CAO and Mayor
- Increased risk of burnout due to ongoing requirement for overtime, evening and weekend work for existing staff to meet day to day requirements.
- May require reliance on contracted services to address workload during peak periods, or for crisis and strategic communications support.

Financial Impact: (annual)

Eliminate Social Media, Digital and Design Specialist role (-1 FTE) \$100,000

Contracted Services provision \$30,000 to \$50,000

This scenario is not recommended as it will have significant negative impacts to the Mayor, Council and Office of the CAO.

Other Considerations:

In all of the scenarios mentioned, the overarching objective is to strengthen internal communication capabilities across the organization. The Manager of CSI is working to implement a communications team consisting of staff within each department who will act as liaisons between their teams and the central communications function. The Manager of CSI would oversee the team, set the strategic direction and ensure alignment with organizational goals.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE TOWNSHIP OF WILMOT STRATEGIC PLAN:

Providing sufficient staff resources to the CAO and Mayor and Council will support the following strategic goals and actions:

Goal - Quality of Life

Arts Culture and Heritage - Provide sufficient resources to advance consultations on the Prime Ministers Path Project while fostering dialogue and community healing.

Health and Wellbeing – Invest in our staffing resources to reduce the need for constant overtime to meet workload requirements.

Goal - Community Engagement

Belonging - improve community outreach and input into decision-making as committed to by Council through the First People's Group recommendations.

Community Events – Assist in the promotion of Community Events.

Goal - Responsible Governance

Active Communications – Develop a community engagement framework and communications protocol. Enhancement of the Emergency Information Communications Program.

Service Reviews/Master Planning – Monitor and adjust staffing levels to support community growth.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

The financial consideration for each of the options is outlined within the report.

Council also requested an update on contracted services expenditures within the office of the CAO in 2023.

Communications contracted services -	\$29,831
Executive Assistant (temp agency)	\$14,212
Human Resources management	\$22,200
Recruitment support	\$39,686

ATTACHMENTS:

None.