

Corporate Governance and Finance Business Line

ISSUE

As the City of Saskatoon (City) heads into its planning for the 2024 and 2025 Business Plan and Budget Cycle, there continues to be several budgetary pressures the City is facing. This report will provide information on the Corporate Governance and Finance Business Line.

This process has been established so that City Council can provide early direction to the Administration, on what to include in the 2024/2025 Preliminary Business Plan and Budget which will be considered by City Council in November 2023 during the 2024/2025 Business Plan and Budget deliberation meeting.

BACKGROUND

At its March 15, 2023 meeting when considering the [2023-2025 Budgetary Pressures and Trends](#) Report, Governance and Priorities Committee (GPC) resolved in part:

“That Administration report back on a potential special budget meeting process to address some of the budgetary challenges and pressures for the upcoming two-year budget cycle. That this report include recommendations on using the existing Governance and Priorities Committee/Finance Committee meeting schedule vs. having special budget/Finance committee meetings and recommendations for organizing these special budget meetings based on departmental budgets or based on service lines or some combination.”

At its April 12, 2023 meeting when considering the [2024/2025 Business Plan and Budget Process Report](#), GPC resolved:

“That Option 3 be approved, and the City Clerk’s office be directed to schedule Special Budget Meetings for the presentation of Business Line-based reports if the Governance and Priorities Committee Capacity does not exist as outlined in the April 12, 2023 report of the Chief Financial Office.”

CURRENT STATUS

The multi-year business plan and budget process includes the following key steps:

1. Develop the cost to maintain existing services considering city growth, inflation pressures, and updated revenue estimates. This step is also used to present and discuss required corrections of base budgets and phase-in of funding plans.
2. Provide a summary of the information from Step 1 to GPC.
3. Use cross-divisional teams to discuss City Council’s strategic priorities and develop options to achieve these priorities.

4. Present a list of Business Plan Options to City Council for prioritization.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Each business line report presented through the Governance and Priorities or through the Special Budget Meetings will have the same general outline to provide information to City Council. The categories in each report will be:

1. Expenditure Overview
2. Service Level Review
3. Pandemic Challenges
4. 2024/2025 Pressures
5. Potential Options

Additionally, if the business line has Business Plan and Budget Options for operating that will be presented at the August 2023 GPC meeting there will be a summary of these items that are not included within the 2024 and 2025 Budget Status Update report that was presented at the June 14, 2023 GPC.

Appendix 1 includes the information for the Corporate Governance and Finance business line. The Corporate Governance and Finance Business Line includes:

1. Assessment and Taxation
2. City Clerk's Office
3. City Solicitor's Office
4. City Manager's Office
5. Corporate Support
6. Debt Servicing
7. Financial Services
8. General Services
9. Legislative
10. Revenue Services
11. Service Saskatoon

OPTIONS

Appendix 1 provides the full information regarding the options available to Committee.

Option 1 - Reduce Payroll Expenditures

Option 2 - Reduce Fusion Operating Phase-In

Option 3 - Deferral/Exemption for the City from the Storm Charge

Option 4 - Defer Information Technology Reserve Increase

Option 5 - Defer New Property Tax Funded Positions

Option 6 - Increase Contribution to Paved Roadways Infrastructure Reserve from the Water and Wastewater Utilities

RECOMMENDATION

That the Governance and Priorities Committee direct Administration to include the following options in the 2024/2025 Preliminary Business Plan and Budget:

1. Reduce Payroll Expenditures;
2. Reduce Fusion Operating Phase-In;
3. Deferral/Exemption for the City from the Storm Charge; and
4. Deferral of Information Technology Reserve Increase.

RATIONALE

The provided recommendations aim to strike a balance in addressing the significant cost pressures the City is facing heading into 2024/2025 with a more reasonable property tax increase. While there are implications to the provided recommendations to service levels and increases in user fees, the Administration believes it provides reasonable options to lessen the financial impact included in the 2024/2025 budget.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications of this business line will be deliberated at the 2024/2025 Business Plan and Budget Deliberations meeting.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no privacy, legal, social or environmental implications identified.

NEXT STEPS

Any direction from Committee on this report will be incorporated into the 2024/2025 Business Plan and Budget process. Decisions for 2024/2025 Business Plan and Budget will be made by City Council during the budget deliberation meeting which will be held on November 28-30, 2023 where the budget implications of all business lines will be deliberated.

APPENDICES

1. Corporate Governance and Finance Business Line

REPORT APPROVAL

Written by: Kari Smith, Director of Finance
Reviewed by: Clae Hack, Chief Financial Officer
Approved by: Jeff Jorgenson, City Manager