
Fire Services Service Level

Recommendation

That the Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development and Community Services recommend to City Council:

1. That the current service level for the Fire and Rescue Operational Response in relation to NFPA 1710 service line be maintained and approved;
2. That the current service level for Fire Prevention be referred by Committee to City Council budget deliberations for consideration of a phased in increase of Fire Inspector staffing levels; and
3. That the current service level for Public Education and Community Relations be maintained and approved.

Topic and Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide information on the current service level provided under the Fire Services service line. The report also presents options should City Council wish to adjust service levels for 2018.

Report Highlights

1. Fire Services service line delivers core emergency services to citizens around-the-clock, and consists of three main activities.
2. Options are presented to adjust the current service level, by increasing or decreasing the level of service provided and associated budget costs.

Strategic Goals

This report supports the Strategic Goals of Quality of Life, Continuous Improvement, Asset and Financial Sustainability, and Sustainable Growth. Defined service levels ensure the City is making informed financial decisions and investing in services that matter to citizens. Work to define service levels and attach unit costs for informed decision making has been a priority of the Administration for the last three years as part of the Continuous Improvement Strategic Goal.

Background

At the May 15, 2017, meeting of the Governance and Priorities Committee, the Administration committed to bring forward a series of service level documents on core services. Fire Services was identified as one of the core service lines to bring forward for consideration prior to the 2018 Business Plan and Budget deliberations.

This report supports the current service level template, approved on June 12, 2017, to ensure consistency among all service levels. The service level template communicates two key messages:

1. Information for citizens, Committees, and City Council about “what we do”, “why we do it”, and “how much it costs” for each service line.
2. Viable options to the current state of service levels, entitled “what else is possible”.

Moving to defined service levels supports Service Saskatoon by focusing on citizen-centric service and clearly defining “what you can expect from us”. It also supports the shift to multi-year budgeting by having well understood service levels and costs to ensure accurate budgeting in the future.

Report

Fire Services Current Service Level

The Saskatoon Fire Department (SFD) manages the entire Fire Services service line, which is a core function of the City. Municipal governance, public safety needs, and best industry practices set by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and Occupational Health and Safety, shape the level of service provided by Fire Services.

The SFD includes a total of 334 specially trained staff to support and provide 24-hour fire and special emergency response in conjunction with an Emergency telephone and dispatch system. It also focuses on preventing emergencies and reducing the loss of life and property, through education, engagement, and extensive inspection and enforcement programs. The SFD provides community-focused services to create a safe and comfortable environment for the residents of Saskatoon.

Currently, the Fire Services service line consists of three main activities:

- Fire and Special Rescue Operations
- Prevention, Inspection, and Investigations
- Public Education and Community Engagement

Attachment 1 provides additional detail on each activity’s guiding service attributes and customer values, intended outcomes, and customer performance measures. Supporting information explains each activity in more detail, including order of priority for responding to complaints and conducting inspections. The activity cost to provide the current level of service, and estimated unit costs are included as a base for making informed future decisions.

Municipal Benchmarking Network Canada (MBNCanada)

MBNCanada’s 2015 Performance Measure Report includes data from 15 municipalities from across Canada¹. The Fire Services Area provides information on six metrics in its public report. The cost metric reported is “Total Fire Cost per Staffed In-Service Vehicle Hour”, which refers to staffed vehicles available to respond to emergency calls. In 2015, nine municipalities reported on fire service metrics resulting in an average total cost of \$297/hr. The City’s total fire cost per staffed in-service vehicle hours was right on par at \$297/hr. The difference between the City’s cost and that of the municipalities within the MBNCanada metric can in part be attributed to the costing formula for

¹ Calgary, Winnipeg, Thunder Bay, Windsor, London, Hamilton, Waterloo, Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, Halifax; as well as the Region of Durham, York, Halton, and Niagara.

reporting². A common performance measure in MBNCanada is Fire Station Notification Response Time 90th Percentile (min:sec). In 2015, the median was 6:37 and the SFD responds within 6 minutes and 17 seconds, ranking 4th out of nine cities.

Service Level Improvements and Adjustment Options

In March 2014, the SFD undertook one of the first programs that addressed the City of Saskatoon's continuous improvement strategy. Continuous improvement initiatives were developed after conducting a thorough review of the department. Examples of improvements include:

- Deployment analysis for fire station placement resulting in significant savings.
- Recommended fees for service.
- Detailed service and program reviews in 2015 and 2016 that identified efficiencies and service improvements found in: staff allocation, revision of training and specialty programs, and response configuration.
- In 2016, a Fire Prevention Internal Process Review resulted in prioritized property complaints and a pilot project for long grass and weeds.

This experience gained within the Fire Department has helped increase understanding and ownership for continuous improvement within the corporation, and intends to continue to evaluate and deliver an efficient, safe, and best practice service level.

Attachment 1 provides options to adjust the Fire Services service level and budget if interest exists. Option scenarios include status quo, and those that increase or decrease the current service level to varying degrees. Four option scenarios include:

1. Status Quo

- Impact and Risk: None. No change in service delivery or current budget.

Options to reduce the service level include:

2. A reduction in current service level for Community Engagement

- Impact: Reduction in the overall cost of the service line.
- Risk: Contrary to current citizen expectations by reducing the Fire Departments community engagement at public events.

Options to increase the service level include:

3. An increase in building inspections completed with more resources to meet the demand. An additional inspector that is assigned solely to fire building inspections is estimated to increase building inspections completed by 14%.

4. An increase in fully trained staffing at the technical level for special rescue.

- Impact: Service improvements within this service line generally support emergency response and safety of citizens.
- Risk: Budget increases would be required to support improvements.

² Detailed costing formulas for MBNCanada metrics are only available to members of the organization.

Options to the Recommendation

The Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development and Community Services may direct the Administration to investigate further options to reduce or increase the Fire Services service level and budget prior to making a recommendation to City Council for the 2018 Business Plan and Budget deliberations.

Communication Plan

The approved service levels will be communicated using the Service Saskatoon citizen centric simple language model so citizens know what services they can expect. Service Levels provide an opportunity for the public to learn more about the City's operations and the costs to deliver the services, enabling them to provide feedback and input into how the City can deliver services more efficiently.

Financial Implications

Depending on which service level option is selected for 2018, a change in funding may be required as per the options outlined in Attachment 1.

Other Considerations/Implications

There are no policy, public and/or stakeholder involvement, privacy, environmental, or CPTED implications or considerations.

Due Date for Follow-up

A follow-up report summarizing the outcomes of all core service level decisions will be presented to City Council during the 2018 budget deliberations.

Public Notice

Public Notice pursuant to Section 3 of Policy No. C01-021, Public Notice Policy, is not required.

Attachments

1. Attachment 1 - Service Level for Fire Services

Report Approval

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Reviewed by: Morgan Hackl, Fire Chief, Saskatoon Fire Department

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