Committee of Whole

Meeting Date: **November 9, 2021**

Submitted by: **Chris Bailey, Manager of Information Technology Services**

SUBJECT: **MUNICIPAL MODERNIZATION PROGRAM – INTAKE 3 UPDATE**

BACKGROUND:

The Ontario government reaffirmed its commitment to work in partnership with municipalities to strengthen communities and support vital public services during the virtual 2021 Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) conference.

Premier Doug Ford, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Steve Clark and Ministers, Associate Ministers and Parliamentary Assistants held virtual meetings with hundreds of municipal officials. They discussed key issues including housing affordability, broadband expansion, and how the province will continue to support municipalities and keep communities safe during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

During this year's AMO Conference, Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister Steve Clark announced a third intake of the Municipal Modernization Program (MMP). Municipalities can benefit from this provincial funding for digital modernization and other projects that will help deliver services more efficiently.

ANALYSIS:

Intake 3 of the Municipal Modernization Program follows the same format as the previous two intakes and is split between implementation and third-party review streams. As part of Intake 3, Middlesex County submitted applications for four projects. Two projects for the implementation stream and two projects for the review stream.

Middlesex County ITS submitted a review-stream application for an Information Technology Services Master Plan. The intent of the proposed project is to provide a comprehensive assessment of current Information Technology Services within Middlesex County, supported Local Municipalities, Strathmere Lodge, Middlesex County Library and Middlesex-London Paramedic Services. The Master plan will provide actionable recommendations to ensure efficient, effective, and sustainable service delivery. The Master Plan will help staff make informed decisions; ensure consistency in decision-making process; provide a long-term step-by-step guide for future

improvements; and provide a formal process for documenting and prioritizing ITS projects. Costs savings and efficiencies will be achieved through strategic decision-making that will help manage current and future technology services.

Middlesex County Community Services, Economic Development and Planning departments submitted a third-party review stream application regarding a Middlesex County Attainable Housing Review. In 2019, the County heard directly from residents that lack of affordable housing and lack of rental housing were the top 2 most pressing housing issues in Middlesex County. The recently updated County of Middlesex Economic Development Strategy Update (2021-2025), which involved extensive community and business engagement, identified that the lack of diverse and affordable housing is impacting the ability to attract and retain talent. Project deliverables would include a Report Appendix of wording that, in plain language, summarizes the housing issues and options for the public/citizens so that the County and local municipalities could include this information on their websites. It has been identified, through public consultation (Community Safety and Well Being Plan, Homelessness and Housing Strategy) that it is often unclear where the public can gain access to information and services related to housing. The proposed third-party review project would examine the Housing Continuum (Emergency Shelter, Short-Term Supportive Housing, Long-Term Supportive Housing, Subsidized Rental Housing, Rental Housing, Ownership Housing) and identify gaps in the provision of housing and a corresponding municipal strategy for attainable housing. It would further examine the factors that influence housing shifts and identify the factors that can be locally influenced.

Middlesex County, Middlesex Centre, and Thames Centre submitted a joint implementation stream application regarding the modernization of how budget reports are both generated and presented to municipal staff, Councillors, and members of the public. The intent of the proposed project is to improve the presentation format of budget reports while decreasing time spent generating these reports. This is to be accomplished by procuring and configuring purpose-driven budget reporting software which leverages existing technology used at each site.

Middlesex County Library submitted an implementation stream application for Library Service Modernization. Changing demographics are placing increasing pressures on rural communities, including the ability to provide essential services through the public library. In Middlesex County, the Library's Comprehensive Community Library Strategy has effectively addressed these pressures and needs in the largest communities. However, enhancing and extending service at some of the smaller branches is an ongoing challenge. Restricted open hours are not always convenient for the community, and valuable resources (collections, computers, space etc.) are unused most hours of the day. The Administration of Middlesex County Library are proposing the implementation of a library technology service that incorporates the use of technology to support greater community access to library resources and services, while complementing current staffed hours. The proposed project is the installation of site monitoring and resource self-check systems that integrate with the Library's existing software and database. Through the implementation of this system, Middlesex County

Library will expand open hours and services to rural residents while leveraging existing resources and combining them with state-of-the-art technology to modernize the library's service delivery model.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC FOCUS:

This report aligns with the following Strategic Focus, Goals, or Objectives:

Strategic Focus	Goals	Objectives
Cultivating Community Vitality	Advance a diverse, healthy, and engaged community across Middlesex County	• Promote and support community wellness • Innovate social and community services
Connecting Through Infrastructure	Ensure communities are built on a sustainable foundation that is connected and thriving	• Encourage and advocate, through partnerships, the construction of scalable, equitable broadband infrastructure, recognizing our unserved and underserviced areas • Commit to a sound asset management strategy to maintain and fund critical infrastructure • Use County infrastructure in an innovative way to provide a seamless service experience for residents
Strengthening Our Economy	Encourage a diverse and robust economic base throughout the county	• Create an environment that enables the attraction and retention of businesses, talent, and investments • Attract visitors to Middlesex County
Promoting Service Excellence	Innovate and transform municipal service delivery	• Anticipate and align municipal service delivery to emerging needs and expectations • Engage, educate and inform residents, businesses, and visitors of county services and community activities • Collaborate with strategic partners to leverage available resources and opportunities • Build organizational capacity and capabilities

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Middlesex County Council accept this report as information relating to Intake 3 of the Municipal Modernization Program.