Committee of the Whole

Meeting Date: **August 15, 2023**

Submitted by: **Sarah Savoie, County Accessibility Coordinator**

Subject: **Accessibility Policy and Procedure Changes**

BACKGROUND:

Middlesex County HR 5.01 Accessibility Policy was implemented in 2009 per the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) requirements. The Policy was revised in 2013, 2016, and 2017 to ensure it is aligned with best practices and incorporates all requirements outlined under the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* (IASR). The Policy was recently converted to a Legislative Services Policy 7.01 and has been updated again to better align with the IASR requirements and layout.

In addition to the changes made to the Policy, the following Accessibility Procedures have been incorporated into the Accessibility Policy. The purpose for doing this is to reduce the number of document containing accessibility related information and streamline it into one consolidated location. This makes the information easier to find and more accessible for people with disabilities. As a result, it is recommended that the Accessibility Procedures be discontinued and the changes to the Policy be approved.

Procedures

- Accessibility Feedback Procedure
- Accessibility Training Procedure
- Request for Accessible Formats and Communication Supports Procedure
- Service Animals in the Workplace Procedure
- Support Person Procedure

Note: the Temporary Service Disruption Procedure and the Accessible Maintenance Procedure remain as separate procedures per the IASR requirements and are included as Appendix items in the Joint Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2022-2027.

ANALYSIS:

The purpose of the changes and incorporation of the Accessibility Procedures into the Accessibility Policy is not only to make the information easier to find and more accessible

but it also better aligns with the layout of the IASR. Below is a summary of the changes made to the Accessibility Policy.

Changes to the Accessibility Policy

- Converted from HR Policy 5.01 to Legislative Policy 7.01
- Updated the purpose section and expanded on the existing information to include more details on the legislative requirements for accessibility policies
- Included a Statement of Commitment and Policy purpose section
- Added information on the IASR and AODA requirements
- Added a Scope to outline who the policy is directed towards
- Expanded the Definitions section
- Readjusted the format of the policy to align with the order of the IASR Standards:
  - General Standards
    - Includes accessibility policy, plan, procurement of goods, training, self-service kiosks
  - Information and Communication Standards
    - Includes feedback, accessible formats and communication support, emergency procedures, website and web content, libraries
  - Employment Standards
    - Includes recruitment and selection, employee supports, accessible formats, emergency response info, individual accommodation plans, return to work process, performance management
  - Transportation Standards
    - Includes Middlesex Connect
  - Built Environment and Public Spaces Standards
    - Includes accessibility requirement in the Codes, obtaining services, accessible elements, public consultation
  - Customer Service Standards
    - Includes assistive devices, support person, service animals, notice of temporary service disruptions,
- Included info on reporting requirements and contraventions

Incorporation of the Accessibility Procedures

Service Animals in the Workplace Procedure

- Modified language to align more with the procedure and AODA requirements
- Included general information section

Request for Accessible Formats and Communication Supports Procedure

- Altered the language to include that the County will advise the public of the availability of the accessible formats and/or communication supports, and how to request it

- Definitions in the procedure to be included in Content Style and Design Guide

Support Person Procedure

- Altered the definition to provide examples and state the support person is not required to be a paid individual
- Changed it so fees are waived for support persons in all circumstances
- Added section on confidentiality
- Included what the assessment is based on (ex: determining risk) and that the County will respect the dignity of the individual being supported (in the case where a support person is being required by the County)

Accessibility Feedback Procedure

- Expanded to ensure it includes feedback on goods, services and facilities
- Included reason why feedback is helpful and encouraged
- Included that customers may request assistance and what information should be included

Accessibility Training Procedure

- Added in details on Customer Service training requirements

On July 17, 2023, the Middlesex County Accessibility Advisory Committee reviewed and recommended the proposed changes for Council consideration.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

None.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC FOCUS:

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

Strategic Focus	Goals	Objectives
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 - Strengthen our advocacy and lobbying efforts with other government bodies - Collaborate with strategic partners to leverage available resources and opportunities - Build organizational capacity and capabilities

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Committee of the Whole approve the changes to the Middlesex County Accessibility Policy recommended by the Middlesex Accessibility Advisory Committee;

AND THAT the Committee of the Whole approve the discontinuation of the following Accessibility Procedures and incorporation of the procedures into the Middlesex County Accessibility Policy recommended by the Middlesex Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Procedures:

- Accessibility Feedback Procedure
- Accessibility Training Procedure
- Request for Accessible Formats and Communication Supports Procedure
- Service Animals in the Workplace Procedure
- Support Person Procedure