

NO: **R026**

COUNCIL DATE: **February 23, 2015**

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## REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council**

DATE: **February 16, 2015**

FROM: **Manager, Sustainability**

FILE: **0512-02**

SUBJECT: **Sustainability Charter Update**

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## RECOMMENDATION

The City Manager's Office recommends that Council receive this report as information.

## INTENT

The purpose of this report is to provide information about progress in updating the City's Sustainability Charter.

## POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Approved by City Council in 2008, the Sustainability Charter is the overarching policy document for the City, providing a comprehensive lens to guide City initiatives, programs and plans. It is considered good practice to review and update the Sustainability Charter on a regular basis as a means to keep it current and to reinforce the City's leadership in the area of sustainability. Updating the Charter also provides an opportunity to refresh the branding of the document, as well as refine its organization.

## BACKGROUND

On September 29, 2008, Council received Corporate Report No. R175; 2008, titled "Surrey Sustainability Charter" and approved the Sustainability Charter as the overarching policy document for the City. The Charter defines sustainability as:

*"Meeting the needs of the present generation in terms of the socio-cultural systems, the economy and the environment, while promoting a high quality of life but without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".*

The vision and goals of the Charter provide high-level guidance toward becoming a more sustainable City. Part 3 of the Charter, "The Scope of Sustainability", identifies actions required to implement the sustainability Vision, Goals and Action Framework in the Charter. With respect to this section, the Charter notes that: *"The Scope of the Sustainability Charter will be maintained as a living document that summarizes specific actions the City intends to take to achieve sustainability. Council will amend the Scope of the Charter as proposed actions and priorities evolve over time".*

In partnership with a broad spectrum of community stakeholders, the City has made considerable progress in each of the three pillars of sustainability over the past six years since the adoption of the Charter. On July 21, 2014, Council received Corporate Report No. R131; 2014, titled “Sustainability Charter Progress Report for 2013”, which highlighted accomplishments to date in implementing the Vision, Goals and Objectives of the Charter. This report included a status report based on the Sustainability Dashboard, which showed progress on 78 sustainability indicators and targets as shown in Table 1 below:

**Table 1: Status of Sustainability Indicators and Targets – 2013**

<b>Pillar</b>	<b>Indicators on target</b>	<b>Indicators Stable</b>	<b>Indicators off target</b>	<b>No target</b>	<b>Insufficient Data</b>	<b>Total</b>
Economic	9	4	0	11	4	28
Environmental	8	0	0	6	1	15
Socio-Cultural	10	8	4	12	1	35
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>78</b>

Key sustainability deliverables since the Charter’s approval include:

- the Corporate Emissions inventory (created in 2009 and updated annually);
- the Corporate Emissions Action Plan (2010);
- sustainability indicators and targets based on the work of a community task force (2010);
- the online Sustainability Dashboard (2012); and
- the Community Climate Action Strategy which includes a Climate Adaptation Strategy and the Community Energy and Emissions Plan (2013).

On February 24, 2014, Council received Corporate Report No. R022; 2014 titled “Sustainability Charter Update”, which outlined plans to update the Sustainability Charter over the next year so as to ensure that the City maintains a leadership position in the area of sustainability.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Internal Engagement**

Following Council’s approval of the Charter update process, a period of internal staff and senior management engagement was undertaken. This included a staff survey, a series of interviews with senior management and staff, and a staff workshop held in October 2014, the results from which are outlined below in more detail.

With 700 City staff responding to the survey, results showed that:

- 54% of respondents considered themselves extremely or moderately familiar with sustainability;
- 96% were very or somewhat interested personally in sustainability;
- 84% said it is very important or important for City to pursue sustainability; and
- 64% were aware of Charter, and many use it in their work.

Staff indicated that the Sustainability Charter addresses an important issue and shows a clear vision initiative and consideration for future, but that it is somewhat complex and they are not always clear on their role with respect to its implementation. At a general level, there is high support from staff for sustainability initiatives, and a desire for more information, resources and involvement, which the Sustainability Office will continue to respond to in partnership with other departments.

Interviews were then conducted in late summer by the Whistler Centre for Sustainability (WSC) with 20 City staff and all senior management team members. All interviewees were very knowledgeable about sustainability and indicated that sustainability is a priority for the City. Sustainability considerations are being integrated into corporate decisions at some level, with staff mainly referring to the Charter when preparing the Corporate Report section on “Sustainability Considerations”. Identified barriers to integrating sustainability include a lack of resources and understanding by staff.

An internal workshop was held in October 2014 with the senior management team and all interviewed staff to review results of the interviews and consultant recommendations, and discuss how to further embed the Charter and sustainability into City operations and decisions. The interviews and workshop, along with consultant advice, resulted in the following recommendations with respect to the Charter update:

- Refocus the Charter at a higher level with a more succinct vision, outcome-oriented goals, and possibly strategic directions (3-5 year strategies);
- Keep Actions (if any) separate from Charter, for example in an annual work plan;
- Simplify and ensure consistency of language;
- Reorganize the document into systems or themes, possibly aligning with those of the Sustainability Dashboard and OCP; and
- Integrate indicators and targets into the updated Charter, and continue to use these metrics to report on progress toward or away from goals.

More broadly, it was recommended that the City deepen its integration and decision-making by embedding Charter goals into planning processes (e.g., structure departmental work plans and processes to achieve Charter goals); creating a decision framework that more effectively encourages consideration of goals and trade-offs; and engaging and communicating more effectively with staff (e.g., training opportunities, staff meetings). This longer term work is ongoing and is being led by the Sustainability Office.

While it was initially anticipated that the vision and goals would remain unchanged along with the Action Framework of the Charter (the three pillars, timeframes, and spheres of influence), internal engagement has identified that some refinement of the existing vision and goals is needed to provide clearer direction on linkages to the Charter. Following the October workshop, staff have begun to identify tentative Charter themes - seeking to align with the Dashboard and OCP - as well as high level goals under each theme. Consideration is also being given to modelling the Charter’s refined vision on that presented in the updated OCP.

## **Community Engagement**

The Sustainability Charter was developed in collaboration with residents, businesses, other community stakeholders, Council and staff from across all Departments. To date, limited community engagement has taken place for the Charter update: a sustainability poll was completed on City Speaks early in 2014, and Kwantlen Polytechnic University student focus groups were held as part of a class project completed in the fall of 2014.

Community input will therefore be obtained in 2015. The focus of the engagement will be on the refined vision, goals, and strategic directions. The Charter update will involve engagement with relevant City Advisory Committees such as the Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee, Social Planning Advisory Committee, and Agriculture and Food Security Advisory Committee. Former members of the Sustainability Indicators and Targets Task Force - which included a cross-representation of City organizations and individuals with a keen interest in sustainability - will also be invited to attend theme-based workshops to be held in April 2015. The workshops are intended to get community input on draft revised goals and to prioritize these goals. Engagement will also take place at the April 2015 Party for the Planet event and other planned City events in 2015. Ongoing broad input will be obtained through City Speaks and social media, such as the Sustainability website and LinkedIn page.

It is expected that the process to update the Charter will be completed by the end of 2015. The updating process is being managed by the Sustainability Manager with the assistance of a Steering Committee made up of senior staff from Parks, Recreation and Culture, Engineering, and Planning and Development. Ongoing guidance will be provided by SMT, with regular reports to Council.

## **SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS**

The Sustainability Charter should be updated from time to time to ensure that the Charter remains current in relation to evolving information, so that it is an effective base upon which to build other City plans and policies, and to ensure that the City remains a leader in the area of sustainability.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Sustainability Charter is the overarching policy document for the City, providing a comprehensive lens to guide all City initiatives, programs and plans. A process to update the Charter is being undertaken over the next year to ensure that the City maintains a leadership position in the area of sustainability.

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