



Policy

Policy Name:	Accountability and Transparency Policy
Policy Owner:	Office of the Chief Administrative Officer
Approved by:	Council
Effective Date:	January 1, 2008
Date of Last Revision:	June 14, 2023
Review Date:	Beginning of each term of Council
Procedure Status:	Revision to original policy

Purpose:

The Town of Richmond Hill Council and staff are committed to being accountable and transparent in their actions on behalf of the community. This Policy is an overarching accountability and transparency framework within which the Town of Richmond Hill operates. It is in keeping with section 270 of the *Municipal Act, 2001* which requires the adoption and maintenance of a policy with respect to “the manner in which the municipality will try to ensure that it is accountable to the public for its actions, and the manner in which the municipality will try to ensure that its actions are transparent to the public”.

Policy Principles:

To maintain public confidence, Council and staff must act and appear to act openly, honestly, ethically, professionally, impartially and with the best interests of the Town at the forefront of all decisions. In order to be accountable and transparent in actions on behalf of the community, Council and staff will follow these guiding principles in the development of policies, practices and processes related to all aspects of operations:

- Decisions will be made in keeping with all legislated requirements;
- Serving the public interest will be of primary focus;
- Roles and responsibilities will be clearly defined and understood;
- Expectations will be identified and understood and are considered within the capacity of the organization to complete its tasks;
- Clear and timely reporting on actions as required to Council, staff and the public;
- Financial stewardship that aims to achieve a balance between a prudent use of resources and the provision of quality services to the public and that considers both short and long term implications;
- Regular review of roles, responsibilities, capacity and expectations;
- Open access to information regarding Town policies, practices, reports, and decision making processes in keeping with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and other relevant legislation and regulations;
- Regular communication of actions and decisions of the Town to the public.

Definitions:

For the purpose of this policy the following 6 definitions have been provided:

Accountability:

“Accountability” means, the willingness of the Town to be held responsible to the public for decisions made and policies implemented, as well as its actions or inactions.

Council:

“Council” means, the Council of the Town of Richmond Hill.

Member of Council:

“Member of Council” means a member of the Council of the Town of Richmond Hill.

Staff:

“Staff” means, all full-time and part-time persons hired by the Town of Richmond Hill including the CAO, Commissioners, Directors, Managers, Supervisors, Salaried Employees’ Association staff, members of C.U.P.E. Local 905.16 Richmond Hill Unit, members of the Richmond Hill Professional Fire Fighters Association, Local 1957, Administrative staff, contract and temporary employees, students, secondees, and co-op{ placement staff.

Town

“Town” means the Corporation of the Town of Richmond Hill.

Transparency

“Transparency” means, operating in an accessible, open, clear and visible manner which allows the public to follow and understand the decision making process and encourages public participation.

Scope

This policy applies to members of Council and staff. It applies equally to the political process, decision-making and administrative management of the Town.

Policy

The Town of Richmond Hill’s vision, “Richmond Hill, where people come together to build our community” and four goals, stronger connections, better choice, more vibrant and wise management of resources underscore our commitment to being accountable and transparent in our actions on behalf of the community. Our mission, “the Town of Richmond Hill Council and staff are committed to providing exceptional public service to our community”, further reflects this commitment.

Supporting our efforts is a shared belief in the importance of public service and good government. Our values directly align with our efforts to be accountable and transparent and include a belief in treating people with courtesy, accountability, respect and enthusiasm. The Town is also a Character Community and supports the values of good character in our community through: optimism, initiative, perseverance, respect, responsibility, honesty, integrity, compassion, courage, inclusiveness, fairness and humour.

The Town of Richmond Hill demonstrates its commitment to accountability and transparency by providing a sound governance framework comprised of a system of policies, procedures and practices which can be categorized as follows:

1. Legislated Requirements
2. Financial Matters
3. Internal Governance
4. Open Government and Public Participation.

1. Legislated Requirements

The Town of Richmond Hill operates in an accountable and transparent manner by following all legislated requirements. Legislation that applies to the Town includes, but is not limited to the following:

- *Municipal Act*
- *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act*
- *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*
- *Municipal Elections Act*
- *Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act*
- *Planning Act*
- *Development Charges Act*
- *Building Code Act*
- *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*
- *Employment Standards Act*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act*
- *Ombudsman Act.*

2. Financial Matters

Wise management of our financial resources is a priority of the Council and staff of Richmond Hill. We take this stewardship and the roles and responsibilities that come with it seriously. The following are examples of policies, procedures and practices the Town has in place to ensure our financial matters are handled in an accountable and transparent manner:

- Annual Operating Budget and Four Year Budget Plan
- Annual Capital Budget and Ten Year Capital Plan
- Annual External Auditor Report
- Procurement By-law
- Financial Control By-law
- Grants Strategy
- Annual Review of Tariff of Fees By-law
- Sale and Disposition of Land By-law
- Use of Corporate and Communication Resources in an Election Year Policy
- Council Expense Policy and Procedure including quarterly posting of expenses
- Business Expenses and Hospitality Policy
- Conferences and Travel Policy.

3. Internal Governance

The Town of Richmond Hill has established a number of policies, practices and procedures to govern the internal accountability and transparency of operations as follows:

- Employee Code of Conduct
- Hiring of Relatives Policy
- Staffing Policy
- Respect in the Workplace Policy and Procedure
- Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Delegation of Powers and Duties Policy.

4. Open Government and Public Participation

Key to being accountable and transparent is conducting our business in an open manner and encouraging opportunities for the public to be involved in our decision making processes. The following are policies, procedures and practices that ensure the Town is transparent in its actions and that opportunities to participate are encouraged:

- Council Code of Conduct
- Appointment of an Integrity Commissioner
- Appointment of an Open Meeting Investigator
- Procedure By-law
- Notice Policy
- Appointment Policy
- Translation and Interpretation Policy
- Accessibility Policy and Procedures
- Council Vacancy Policy
- Application to Appear as a Delegation Form
- Public Posting of Council and Committee Agendas and Reports
- Live-streaming of Council and Committee of the Whole Meetings
- Town of Richmond Hill Strategic Plan
- Public Conduct and Complaints Policy

Roles and Responsibilities:

Below is a list of roles and responsibilities related to the Accountability and Transparency Policy.

Mayor and Members of Council

- It is the responsibility of the Mayor and Members of Council to ensure that the intent of this Policy, to operate in an accountable and transparent manner, is followed by both Council and staff at the Town.
- They are to strive to meet the principles of accountability and transparency in their daily activities.

Executive Leadership Team (ELT)

- It is the responsibility of ELT (the CAO and Commissioners) to ensure that the actions of staff and the development of all policies, practices, procedures and recommendations to Council are developed following the accountability and transparency framework set out in this Policy.

- They are to strive to meet the principles of accountability and transparency in their daily activities.
- Approve minor housekeeping amendments to the Policy as recommended by staff.

Staff

- All staff is to be aware of and follow the accountability and transparency framework set out in this Policy.
- They are to strive to meet the principles of accountability and transparency in their daily activities.

Monitoring and Contraventions of the Policy

The Town Clerk shall be responsible for receiving complaints and/or concerns related to this Policy. Upon receipt of a complaint and/or concern, the Town Clerk shall notify:

- a) In the case of staff, the Commissioner responsible for the area and the Director of Human Resources;
- b) In the case of a closed meeting, the Meeting Investigator;
- c) In the case of Council, the Integrity Commissioner.