



## POLICY & PROCEDURE MANUAL

<b>SECTION</b>	COUNCIL RELATED POLICIES	<b>POLICY NUMBER</b> 1-02-07
<b>SUB-SECTION</b>	General Corporate Policies	<b>EFFECTIVE DATE</b> Feb 11, 2016
<b>SUBJECT</b>	Accountability and Transparency Policy	
<b>AUTHORITY</b>	General Government Services – January 28, 2021 Council – February 11, 2021 Council – February 26, 2026	

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to comply with Section 270(1)(5) of the *Municipal Act, S.O. 2001*, as amended, which requires that Municipalities adopt an Accountability Policy that determines the manner in which the municipality will try to ensure that it is accountable to the public for its actions and that its actions are transparent to the public. This policy provides guidance for the delivery of County of Dufferin's activities and services in accordance with the principles as outlined herein.

The principles of accountability and transparency shall apply equally to the political process and decision making and to the administrative management of the County of Dufferin.

### DEFINITIONS

The following terms shall have the following meanings in this Policy:

**Accountability** – The principle that the municipality will be responsible to the public for decisions made and policies implemented, as well as its actions or inactions. This principle relates to how Dufferin County Councillors and staff are held to account for their actions, how actions are explained to the public, and the level of detail that is provided to the public in justification of certain actions.

**Transparency** – The principle that the municipality will conduct its business in an accessible, clear, and visible manner and that its activities are open to review by the public, which fosters trust in government, improves service delivery and encourages public participation. This

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principle relates to the ability of members of the public to observe how decisions are made and implemented.

## **STATEMENT**

The County of Dufferin is committed to having procedures and practices in place that make it an accountable and transparent level of government.

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 County at the forefront of all decisions. The following principles ensure accountability and transparency:

- Decisions will be made in keeping with all legislated requirements and will be open, fair, and transparent;
- 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 County 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 County to the public.

## **Policy Requirements**

The County of Dufferin demonstrates its commitment to accountability and transparency by providing a sound governance framework comprised of a system of policies, procedures and practices which are categorized as follows:

### **1. Legislated Requirements**

The County of Dufferin and its operations/governance are accountable and transparent to their stakeholders by fulfilling various legislative responsibilities. The County shall conduct its business within its jurisdiction in accordance with the legislative requirements of Provincial Statutes, Ontario Regulations, and any other applicable law.

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## **2. Financial Matters**

The County of Dufferin and its operations/governance are accountable and transparent to stakeholders in its financial management. Its policies, procedures and practices shall be put in place and monitored to ensure sound financial management and fiscal accountability. This will be achieved through:

- Annual budgeting with multi-year operating and capital plans
- Financial reporting, including an Annual External Auditor Report
- Adopting and adhering to the Procurement of Goods and Services By-law
- Adopting and adhering to the Sale and Disposition of Land Policy
- Adhering to the Council Professional Development Expenses Policy, including annual reporting
- Managing its assets in a fiscally prudent and open manner through the Disposal of Assets Policy
- Maintaining a User Fee By-law
- Conducting a regular review of its activities and finances

## **3. Internal Governance**

The County of Dufferin's administrative practices and policies ensure accountability on the part of its employees through the following initiatives:

- Appointment and retention of competent leadership
- Adoption of a Code of Conduct for all the County's employees
- Establishment of a fair and consistent performance management and evaluation process
- Fair and transparent hiring practices and policies
- Adoption of policies and practices through an equity lens
- Adherence to a continuous improvement philosophy in regards to accountability and transparency

## **4. Open Government and Public Participation**

The County of Dufferin is open and accountable to stakeholders by providing governance in an open manner through communication, consultation, and collaboration. All policies, procedures and practices of the County shall ensure that its operations are transparent and that mechanisms are in place to make residents aware of how decisions are made and carried out and are able to participate in the decision-making process. The following are policies, procedures and practices that ensure the County is transparent in its actions and that opportunities to participate are encouraged:

- Strategic plan/priorities
- Procedure By-Law
- Deputation rules
- Public question period at Council meetings
- Council Code of Conduct

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- Appointment of an Integrity Commissioner and Closed Meeting Investigator
- Notice Policy
- Public Posting of Council Agendas and Reports
- Live-streaming of Council
- Accessibility Policy and Procedures
- Routine Disclosure Policy
- Open Data Policy
- Freedom of Information process
- Delegation of Authority Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Use of several social media platforms to inform public of departmental services and council business
  - Circulations to media outlets and affected parties
  - Updating and maintaining a website with explanations of all of the services provided by the County and a list of contact names and information
  - Use of online community engagement tools

All meetings of Council and its Committees shall be open to the public unless authorized to be closed under the provisions of the *Municipal Act*. County information shall be readily available to the public subject to the requirements of the *Municipal Freedom of Information & Protection of Privacy Act*.

## 5. Roles and Responsibilities

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

### Warden and Members of Council

- It is the responsibility of the Warden 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 County.
- They are to strive to meet the principles of accountability and transparency in their daily activities.

### Senior Management Team (SMT)

- It is the responsibility of SMT (the CAO and Directors) 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.

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### **Staff**

- All staff are 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 Clerk shall be responsible for receiving complaints and/or concerns related to this Policy.

Upon receipt of a complaint and/or concern, the Clerk shall notify:

- a) In the case of staff, the Director responsible for the area and the Director of People & Equity
- b) In the case of a closed meeting, the Ombudsman Office of Ontario
- c) In the case of Council, the Integrity Commissioner

### **Resources**

- Human Resources policies
- Anti-Nepotism Policy
- Respect in the Workplace: Preventing Violence, Harassment and Discrimination Policy
- Remote Work Policy
- Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources Policy
- Health and Safety Policies
- Customer Service Policy
- Privacy Protection Policy