Policy: Accountability & Transparency Policy

Department: Office of the CAO

Effective Date: November 29, 2007

Revision Date: August 8, 2013

Review Date: April, 2014 & April, 2019

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for the delivery of the County’s activities and services in accordance with the principles as outlined herein.

2. Legislative Authority

Section 270(1) of the Municipal Act, 2001, as amended, requires a municipality to adopt and maintain a policy for 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.

Section 224(d.1) of the Municipal Act, 2001, as amended, states it is the role of Council to ensure the accountability and transparency of the operations of the municipality.

3. Statement

The County of Bruce acknowledges that it is responsible to provide good government for its stakeholders in an accountable and transparent manner by:

a) Encouraging public access and participation to ensure that decision making is responsive to the needs of its constituents and receptive to their opinions;

b) Delivering high quality services to our citizens according to accepted best practices;

c) Promoting the efficient use of public resources and in ensuring a process of continuous improvement; and

d) Commitment to providing information disclosure, subject to any limitations established under the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.
Accountability, transparency and openness are standards of good government that enhance public trust. They are achieved through the County of Bruce adopting measures ensuring, to the best of its ability, that all activities and services are undertaken utilizing a process that is open and accessible to its stakeholders. In addition, wherever possible, the County of Bruce will engage its stakeholders throughout its decision making process which will be open, visible and transparent to the public.

3. Definitions

Accountability means the principle that the County municipality will be responsible to its stakeholders for decisions made and policies implemented, as well as its actions or inactions.

Transparency means the principle that the municipality actively encourages and fosters stakeholder participation and openness in its decision making processes. Additionally, transparency means that the municipality's decision making process is open and clear to the public.

Stakeholder
Any individual person, organization or entity that has an interest or stake in the County's actions.

4. Requirements

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

4.1 Financial Matters

The County will be open, accountable and transparent to its stakeholders in its financial dealings as required under the Act. Some examples of how the County provides such accountability and transparency are as follows:

- Budget Process
- Corporate Business Plans
- Corporate Performance Measures (Key Performance Indicators)
- External/Internal Audits
- Procurement Policy
- Annual Review of Fees and Charges By-law
- Asset Management
- Community Grant Program
  - Remuneration By-law
- Sale of Real Property Policy
• Municipal Performance Measures Program
• Long Term Financial Planning

46.2 Internal Governance

County of Bruce administrative practices ensure specific accountability on the part of its employees through the following initiatives:

- Code of Conduct for Council
- Integrity Commissioner
- General Employment Policies and Procedures
- Code of Conduct Ethics for Staff
- Health and Safety Policy
- Joint Health and Safety Committees
- Performance Management and Evaluation

46.3 Public Participation and Information Sharing

The County of Bruce ensures that it is open and accountable to its stakeholders through implementing processes outlining how, when and under what rules meetings will take place. The County’s meetings will be open to the public when and as required under Provincial Legislation or County By-laws, and members of the public will have an opportunity to make delegations or comments in writing on specific items at these meetings. In addition, the County has adopted policies which ensure that participation by the public can be meaningful and effective through timely disclosure of information by various means including print, media, websites, etc. Some specific examples include:

- Procedure By-law
- Notice Policy By-law
- Corporate and Departmental Strategic Plan
- Delegation of Powers and Duties Policy
- Records Retention
- Planning Processes
- Publication of Agendas, Minutes
- Live-streaming of Council and Committee meetings
- Appointment of an Integrity Commissioner
- County of Bruce Website
- Accessibility Policy

- A registry of all pecuniary interests declared by members of Council is kept in the Office of the CAO and posted on the County’s website

46.4 Legislative Accountability and Transparency Requirements

The County of Bruce is accountable and transparent to its stakeholders by fulfilling various legislated responsibilities and through disclosure of information. The following are some provincial statutes that govern how the County conducts its business in a public, accountable and transparent manner:
- Municipal Act, 2001
- Municipal Conflict of Interest Act
- Planning Act
- Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
- Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act
- Employment Standards Act
- Highway Traffic Act
- Emergency Management & Civil Protection Act
- Long Term Care Homes Act
- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act
- Ontario Works Act
- Housing Services Act
- Occupational Health and Safety Act