

Ready, Resilient and Resourceful Committee Report

DATE: Tuesday, March 29, 2022

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: UPDATE REGARDING COVID-19 BUSINESS REINTEGRATION AND REOPENING PLAN

FROM:

Nick Spensieri, City Manager

ACTION: FOR INFORMATION

Purpose

To provide an update regarding the City's COVID-19 Business Reintegration Plan for staff who have been working remotely during the pandemic. This report also provides an update for the re-opening of City Hall and the Joint Operations Centre to the public.

Report Highlights

- As the cases and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have begun to ease or stabilize in Ontario and with the province's announcement to lift the majority of restrictions, the City is preparing for staff currently working remotely to return to the workplace effective April 19, 2022.
- In addition, the City is preparing to re-open City Hall and the JOC to the public effective May 2, 2022. As per the Business Integration Plan, the City will continue to provide staff with a safe and healthy work environment.
- Given high productivity levels and lessons learned during the two years of the pandemic, the City will leverage a hybrid workplace model that optimizes both on-site and remote workplace approaches. The hybrid workplace model positions the City as a progressive employer of choice.
- While maintaining quality service standards and service excellence for our citizens, the hybrid model allows for better staff work/life balance, retention and attraction of talent, optimized processes and procedures, benefits of online virtual service delivery, and reduced costs and savings for future facility and space needs.
- As per the Service Vaughan Strategy, the City continues to enhance its commitment to service excellence and an exceptional service experience for citizens, whether services are provided in person, on the phone, via email or online virtual methods.

Recommendations

1. That the Update Regarding COVID-19 Business Reintegration Plan and Reopening report be received.

Background

World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic:

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 as a pandemic. From the onset, the City of Vaughan closely monitored the evolving situation and initiated numerous measures to ensure the safety of residents and City staff. Throughout the pandemic, the City has ensured that quality services are delivered for families, businesses, and citizens.

On March 17, 2020, the City declared a state of emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since that time, many staff have continued to report for work in City facilities each day due to their work's essential and critical nature. However, where operationally feasible, approximately 700 staff were reassigned to remote-based work and have remained operational and highly productive while working from home.

Since the pandemic's beginning, the City has taken a disciplined, responsible and measured approach to close - and now gradually reopening - City facilities and amenities. The decision to keep select facilities closed was essential to protect the health and safety of citizens and staff.

Business Reintegration Plan developed to support a safe return to the workplace for staff:

The Business Reintegration Plan (BRP) was developed to support the cautious and gradual return to the office workplace for staff. The BRP and its implementation framework for returning to the workplace and reintegration were developed by the City's COVID-19 Emergency Operations Committee sub-committee. It is supported collectively by members of the City's Emergency Management Team and Joint Health and Safety Committees, in consultation with documentation from public health agencies and safe work associations. This Plan is in conjunction with the City's Health and Safety program and Health & Safety Directive for Worksite Visits During COVID-19. The BRP was presented to Council at the May 2021 RRR Committee.

While facilities were closed to the public, advances have been made to ensure all facilities are safe upon return and re-opening. As staff continue to uphold and advance "healthy" municipal buildings while facing new and unprecedented challenges, the BRP has helped prepare for the return of staff to the workplace and the re-opening of all facilities.

Previous Reports/Authority

- [COVID-19 Business Reintegration Plan \(May 18, 2021\)](#)

Analysis

As the current COVID-19 environment stabilizes business reintegration and reopening plans are underway:

This report provides Members of Council with an update regarding the City's plan to return staff who are currently working remotely back into the workplace and update on re-opening City Hall and the JOC to the public.

In collaboration and consultation with all departments across the City, the Facility Management department, the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer, the Office of Communications and Economic Development, and the Office of Transformation and Strategy have led the implementation requirements of the BRP to help support and shape the transition to the "new normal" workplace for City staff and guide the Corporation to best prepare for the return of employees, while ensuring the transition is both safe and efficient.

In developing the BRP, extensive work has been undertaken on the physical building and facility engineering interventions; workplace modelling research; research and survey analysis of staff engagement; reviews of policies, processes and procedures; development of staff guidance and training; health and safety protocols; and communications materials, toolkits and supports to enable effective reintegration back into the workplace.

Phase 1 of the BRP was activated as of November 1, 2021, allowing up to 30 per cent of staff working remotely to return to the workplace. However, given the impact of the COVID-19 Omicron variant, limited staff were allowed to return to the workplace as of December 2021. Phase 1 has been reinstated now that the Omicron variant and COVID-19 have stabilized. Community Centres and Vaughan Public Libraries reopened to the public on January 31, 2022. As well, as of March 1, 2022, the City Playhouse Theatre opened to the public at full capacity for rentals with an audience.

Based on the current COVID-19 environment and the announcement by the province to lift the majority of restrictions, Phase 2 of the BRP which allows for approximately 50% of staff to return to the workplace will be activated on April 19, 2022.

The plan's final phase, the "new normal" state, will be activated on May 2, 2022, allowing all staff to return to the workplace and enable public admittance into City Hall, the JOC and the Vaughan Animal Shelter. This will also allow for the first Committee of the Whole meeting via the hybrid model in Council Chambers, providing in-person and virtual capabilities for Council and the public.

The following is an overview of the elements of the updated BRP and each of its phases (Based on current known circumstances and the stabilizing of the pandemic):

Phase 1 Effective Nov 1, 2021	Phase 2 Effective April 19, 2022	New Normal Effective May 2, 2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 30% maximum person load at City Hall and JOC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately 50% maximum person load at City Hall and JOC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Staff expected to return to workplace with Hybrid Model and AWA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No public admittance COVID mandatory active entry pre-screening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No public admittance COVID passive pre-screening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full public admittance to all facilities COVID passive pre-screening Council Chambers open for Hybrid Model (in-person and on-line capabilities)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited staffing in workstations Spacing and scheduling requirements Physical distancing practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No limited staff in workstations No spacing Scheduling requirements to optimize use of space No physical distancing requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No limited staff in workstations No spacing Scheduling requirements to optimize use of space No physical distancing requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Masking required when in common areas or moving about 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No masking requirements Masking is voluntary for staff if they choose to wear one 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No masking requirements Masking is voluntary for staff if they choose to wear one
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cleaning and Disinfecting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cleaning and Disinfecting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cleaning and Disinfecting

The “New Normal” for Staff – Hybrid Model with AWA:

As of May 2, 2022, under the “new normal” environment, the City will leverage the lessons learned during the last two years in response to the pandemic. The “new normal” will be based on a more flexible and responsive staffing and service delivery model. In addition, full implementation of the City’s Alternative Work Arrangement (AWA) Policy which was approved just before the pandemic, will allow for a hybrid model. This will optimize the benefits of work from home and other alternative work arrangements for our staff while maintaining quality service standards and service excellence for our citizens.

As reported to the RRR Committee in May 2021, staff productivity has remained high throughout the pandemic. For the approximately 700 staff who have been working remotely, many benefits have been realized and some challenges. The hybrid workplace model and the AWA positions the City as a progressive employer of choice. While maintaining quality service standards and service excellence for our citizens, the hybrid model allows the City to remain highly productive while providing staff greater flexibility which could lead to better staff work/life balance, retention and attraction of talent, optimized processes and procedures, benefits of on-line virtual service delivery, and reduced costs and savings for future facility and space needs. It also allows for much-needed in-person interaction, collaboration and face-to-face contact between staff and our citizens.

The “New Normal” for Citizens and Businesses with an Omni-Channel approach:

In October 2021, Council approved the new Service Vaughan Strategy which includes a citizen-centric service approach that allows citizens and businesses to interact with the City through a variety of means (an omni-channel approach) including in-person, on the phone, via mail/email, and through virtual on-line portals and services. The foundation of the strategy is an enhanced service experience with consistent quality that effectively meets our citizens' needs.

As presented to Council in October 2021, the Service Vaughan Strategy includes the closure of multiple service counters and consolidation into an integrated one-stop Access Vaughan service counter in the front entrance of City Hall. This also consists of a self-serve digital station and meeting rooms for one-on-one in-person services for citizens. The completion of construction and logistics for the integrated service is anticipated for July 2022 completion. As City Hall will reopen to the public in May 2022, an interim service counter and service areas will be provided to meet, greet and service the public when they arrive in person.

Financial Impact

N/A

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

Vaughan continues to work with York Region and the York Region Public Health Unit throughout the COVID-19 emergency response. In addition, the City is working with all the municipalities in York Region to share information about business reintegration plans and continued alternative work arrangements and hybrid work from home approaches.

Conclusion

This report provides the RRR Committee with an update regarding the Business Reintegration Plan and plans to re-open City Hall and the JOC to the public.

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- In addition, the City is preparing to re-open City Hall and the JOC to the public effective May 2, 2022.
- As per the Business Integration Plan, the City will continue to provide staff with a safe and healthy work environment.
- Given high levels of productivity and lessons learned during the two years of the pandemic, the City will leverage a hybrid workplace model which optimizes both on-site and remote workplace approaches.
- The hybrid workplace model positions the City as a progressive employer of choice.
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For more information, please contact:

- Nick Spensieri, City Manager
- Michael Coroneos, Deputy City Manager, Corporate Services and Chief Financial Officer
- Wendy Law, Deputy City Manager, Administrative Services and City Solicitor
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- Zoran Postic, Deputy City Manager, Public Works
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Attachments

N/A

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Approved by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Spensieri', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Nick Spensieri, City Manager