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## Municipal Policy Handbook Program

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**References:** *Municipal Government Act, RSA 2000, c M-26 (MGA), s. 201 (1)(a)*  
MGA s. 203  
MGA s. 207 (b)  
MGA s. 209  
Strathcona County Bylaw 2-95: Chief Commissioner's Bylaw

**Cross-reference:** GOV-002-021 Mandatory Review of Bylaws and Policies

### Policy Statement

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Policies, Directives, and Procedures are created by Strathcona County to set out a standard of performance or to address a discretionary duty the County will or will not meet. They address recurrent issues to provide broad guidelines setting out the level and manner of service the County will perform to.

Strathcona County will have a system for organizing Policies, Directives, and Procedures that allows for efficient approval and review and will assist residents and employees in understanding Council's direction on recurrent matters. This system will establish municipal programs and services, and set service levels. It will also be used to establish the County's business and strategic priorities and, where appropriate, to mitigate risk.

Collectively, this system of Policies, Directives, and Procedures will be known as the Municipal Policy Handbook.

### Purpose

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The purpose of this policy is to establish a framework to organize and present the County's various Policies, Directives, and Procedures in a manner that will be easy to follow, easy to approve, easy to find, and will set out whether responsibility approval and creation rests with Council or Administration.

Policies and Directives are useful to assist County employees in making decisions that require judgement on the part of the employee. The Policy or Directive helps provide guidance and consistency when carrying out discretionary duties that Council has chosen to address.

### Definitions

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**Policy** – a statement from Council about a discretionary duty or standard of performance the County will or will not do. It addresses recurrent issues to provide guidelines setting out the level and manner the County will perform service. A Policy cannot be used where a bylaw is required.

**Directive** – an action-oriented statement from the Chief Commissioner. Directives are intended to address recurrent issues, deal with issues that affect employees, and address

internal issues that have interdepartmental impact. Directives relate to matters that have been delegated to the Chief Commissioner by legislation or bylaw.

Procedure– a description of how administration will carry out the standards set out in both Policies and Directives. Authority to create and revise procedures will rest with the Chief Commissioner, except where Council directs itself or the Chief Commissioner directly.

Policy Record – a record of the approval and review history of each Policy in order to track the official development of Policies. This section will not form an official part of a Policy, but will be appended to each Policy for information only, and will be maintained by administration.

## Guidelines

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In order to choose the most appropriate document type the following should be considered:

1. A Bylaw is appropriate when:
  - a. Council is delegating responsibility (under the MGA Council can only assign responsibility by Bylaw)
  - b. Residents are being required to do or not do something, or there is a direct financial requirement of residents, such as levying of fees
  - c. Provincial or Federal legislation requires that a matter be dealt with by Bylaw
2. A Policy is appropriate when:
  - a. Residents are being informed of the County's position on a matter
  - b. Council is setting the Policies and Programs of the County
  - c. Council is providing information to residents on what standards of care the County intends to provide (or not provide)
3. A Directive is appropriate when:
  - a. An issue that would be otherwise be dealt with by Policy, but the authority to deal with the subject has been delegated to the Chief Commissioner
  - b. A Policy statement would be made in respect of the implementation of the Policies and Programs of the County
  - c. Supervising and directing the activities of the employees of the County
  - d. Considering the hiring, firing, disciplining, terminating, demoting, or transferring of employees of the County
4. A Procedure is appropriate when:
  - a. Explaining how to accomplish a task; when specific steps are set out
  - b. Assigning responsibility for a task to a department or a particular position
  - c. Listing the steps that administration will take to give effect to a Bylaw, Policy, or Directive

The objective of Policy is to:

1. Assist council in its delivery of robust and transparent governance in line with Council's role of setting a municipality's policy and programs as defined under section 201(1)(a) if the *Municipal Government Act*, RSA 2000, c M-26
2. To facilitate the development, implementation, and review of Policies to support the execution of the Strategic Plan
3. To provide a framework for decision-making in line with the will of Council

Policy principles support the development of consistent, transparent, and robust Policies and aim to assist in the development of all Policies and Directives. The principles of good policy development are:

**Principle 1: Policy informs decision making and contributes to achievement of the outcomes sought from the Council's and the Corporation's Strategic Plans**

Policy is directly aligned to the achievement of an identified benefit or outcome, and informs decision making accordingly. It will reflect good governance practices and accord with legal, environmental, social and financial requirements.

**Principle 2: Policy is evidence based**

Policy development is informed by sound research and analysis, and an understanding of outcomes achieved by similar policy. Opportunities exist to test policy outcomes on a project or at a localized level prior to its adoption.

**Principle 3: Policy is developed in consultation with key stakeholders**

The contribution of key stakeholders in the policy initiation, development and review processes, broadens input, adds rigour and helps to achieve greater acceptance. Stakeholders may include Councilors, residents, businesses, or Administration.

**Principle 4: Decision-making is undertaken in line with policy, and exceptions are formally approved**

A core principle of sound policy governance is that decision making occurs in accordance with endorsed policy which in turn reflects endorsed strategic outcomes. Further, where exceptions are made, they are formally endorsed as such with a clear indication of whether the exception is for that matter only, or is to be ongoing and require an amendment to redress the policy. Amendments to Policy must be made by Council Resolution, and amendments to Directives or Procedures must be approved by the Chief Commissioner.

**Principle 5: Policy is readily translated to operating guidelines**

Policy objectives fully address the subject matter and are written with clarity that enables their ready translation into operating guidelines and effective and efficient implementation. Administration can request of Council that a policy be revised or reviewed where its translation into operating guidelines is found to be difficult or inadequate. Council may initiate policy development and review at any time through a resolution of Council.

**Principle 6: Policy outcomes are measurable**

Measures are developed and supported which enable assessment of the efficacy of a policy and its contribution to the outcomes and benefits sought. Where possible these measures should relate to the Strategic Plan outcomes.

**Principle 7: Policy is readily accessible**

Policy is readily accessible to Council, the Administration and to the public. The accessibility of policy documents will assist with compliance and the consistency and transparency of decision making and community education of Council's policy position.

**Policy Record**

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**Date of Approval by Council:** April 28, 2015      **Resolution No:** 151/2015

**Next Review Date:** April 23, 2021      **Policy No:** GOV-002-031

**Last Review Date:** April 23, 2018      **Replaces:** N/A

**Administrative Review:** Legislative and Legal Services