

Halifax Regional Council
Committee of the Whole
October 22, 2002

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: 
Councillor Diana Whalen, Chair, Council Status Sheet Committee

DATE: October 10, 2002

SUBJECT: Council Status Sheet

ORIGIN

The Status Sheet was initially developed as a tool to track the status of items that had been discussed at Council and referred to staff/or external organizations to obtain further information. A report would then be brought back to Council for a decision on the matter.

The Status Sheet is continually reviewed and items are removed as reports are presented and accepted by Council. Despite the regular updating of the list, the status sheet has continued to lengthen as requests for new reports routinely exceed the requests that have been met at any given meeting.

To seek some resolution to this issue, Council established a Joint Committee of Council members and staff members. Their objective was to review the issues around the Council Status Sheet and come back with recommendations to improve its usefulness as a tracking tool for Council and staff.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the following improvements regarding the Council Status Sheet be implemented to enhance Council's decision making and ability to respond to community issues and concerns within a reasonable timeframe..

1. **The format of the Council Status Sheet be revised to include additional information to enhance its usefulness.** (Please refer to template - Attachment # 1).
2. **Average response time for a staff report should be adjusted from two to three weeks.** (Please refer to flow and Gantt Charts Attachments # 2, 3 & 4)
3. **Requests for Information that arise at Council meetings should provide clear direction to staff.** (Please refer to Council Request for Information Sheet. Attachment #5)

BACKGROUND

The Council Status Sheet Committee was formed in January of 2002 with representation from Council, CAO/DCAO's Office, Senior Management Committee and the Clerk's Office. The Committee upon completing a scan of the issues developed the following mission statement and objectives:

Mission Statement :

To review the Council Status Sheet and other tools and processes that provide Council with information in order to recommend improvements that will enhance their decision making and ability to respond to community issues and concerns.

Objectives

1. Reduce the size of the status sheet (number of outstanding reports).
2. Review and recommend improvements to the tools and processes relating to the Council Status Sheet.
3. Review and recommend improvements to Council Reports (format and content).
4. Improve time lines to Council requests.
5. Review and recommend improvements to the Council Agenda.

DISCUSSION

As a result of the review process, the Council Status Sheet Committee developed eight recommendations to improve it's efficiency and effectiveness. They are as follows:

1. **Revise the format of the Council Status Sheet to include additional information to enhance its usefulness.** (Please refer to attached template).
 - The addition of a **staff comment column** will enhance communications between staff and Council by providing an opportunity for updates on issues listed on the Status Sheet. This column will also list the staff person assigned by the Business Unit director to complete the report.
 - **Listing the district number** will improve our ability to sort and track information.
 - **Action required/ responsibility** column should have a more detailed description.
2. **Average response time for a staff report should be adjusted from two to three weeks.** Currently within the two week time frame, staff have five working days to complete the report in order to get the report to the D/CAO and CAO for review and signing. (Please refer to flow and Gantt Charts.)
3. **Requests for Information that arise at Council meetings should provide clear direction to staff.**

When Council requests information from staff at a meeting of Council, the Mayor or CAO should clarify the method of response (recommendation or information report, email, telephone call, meeting or oral presentation at the next meeting of Council).

- If a report is required, the destination should be clarified. ie: Regional or Community Council.
 - If a report from staff is being requested through a motion of Council, the Councillor should put the request in writing with the appropriate level of detail.
 - Business Unit (Director) should be identified for each report.
4. **Staff will improve processes around responses to issues.** Improvements will include a more integrated approach by Business Units, better reporting methods and more timely responses.
 5. **More work needs to be done in the area of Staff - Council Relations.**
 6. **There should be additional education provided for Staff and Council with respect to requesting and receiving information.**
 7. **Status sheet does not need to be circulated as a part of the Council package. It is recommended that it be sent to Council periodically as a support document. Both staff and Council can also access it on the r:/ drive.**
 8. **The process regarding the removal of items from the Status Sheet must be communicated to the organization. (Staff/Council) (See attachment #6)**

This report has requested that Council approve the first three recommendations, with the remainder to be addressed by the administration.

The CAO in his Goals and Objectives Statement has made a commitment to strengthen Council-Staff relations. In support of this goal, Senior Management will ensure improvements are made regarding the administrative processes around staff's response to issues. Improvements will include a more integrated approach by Business Units, better reporting methods and more timely responses. In addition, the quality of staff reports will also be addressed.

The Municipal Clerk's Office will continue to maintain the Status Sheet on behalf of the organization. The process for removing items from the Status Sheet has been articulated and will be communicated to the organization.

If Council approves the above noted recommendations, staff will begin to implement the changes to the Status Sheet by November 22, 2002.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications at this time.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

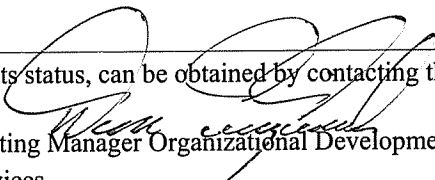
ALTERNATIVES


1. Council could choose not to accept the recommendations.
2. Council could choose to abolish the Council Status Sheet.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Council Status Sheet Template
2. Council Report Time line
3. Flow Chart Council Reports
4. Flow Chart Council Correspondence
5. Councillor Request for Information
6. Removal of Status Sheet Items

Additional copies of this report, and information on its status, can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

Report Prepared by:  Catherine Mullally, Acting Manager Organizational Development
Human Resources Services

Report Approved by:  _____
Councillor Diana Whalen, Chair, Council Status Sheet Committee

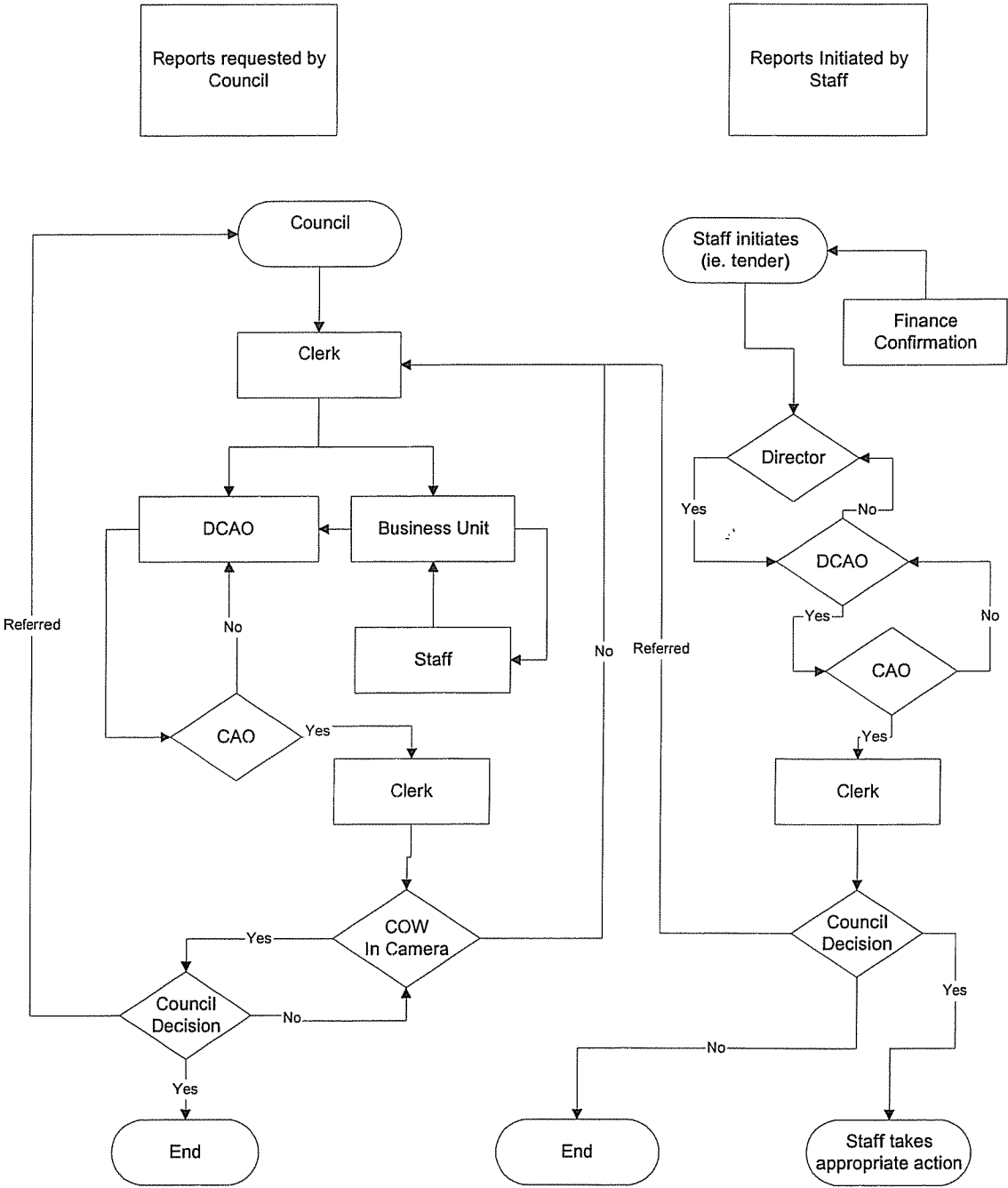
Report Timeline - Reports Requested at Council Meeting

	Week 1							Week 2							Week 3							Week 4	
	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Mon	Tue		
Start	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10	Day 11	Day 12	Day 13	Day 14	Day 15								
Council Request																							
Clerk's Office																							
Dir/D/CAO																							
Staff																							
Director																							
D/CAO																							
CAO																							
Clerk's Office																							
Council Pkg																							
Council Meeting																							

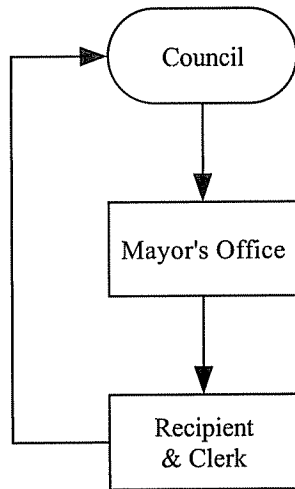
Legend

Council	
Clerk	
DCAO/CAO	
Director	
Staff	
Council Request	
On Agenda	
Package Out	
Council Meeting	

The Flow of Council Reports



Correspondence requested by Council



Councillor Request for Information

Included on Agenda
(Submitted to Municipal Clerk's Office
by Noon Thursday)

Added Item
(Submitted to Municipal Clerk's Office
by Noon Monday)

Date of Council Meeting:

Subject:

Request:

Reason:

I would like this response as:

- Email to Mayor and/or Councillor/Municipal Clerk's Office
- Memo to Mayor and/or Councillor/Municipal Clerk's Office
- Information Report to Community Council Regional Council
- Recommendation Report to Community Council Regional Council

Councillor (*Name*)

District (*Number*)

**Removal of
Status Sheet Items**

