



COUNCIL-STAFF RELATIONS POLICY

(Revised April 2026)

Town of Hearst

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1. Introduction

Section 270 of the Municipal Act, 2001 requires the Municipality to adopt and maintain a policy with respect to the relationship between Members of Council and the officers and staff of the Municipality.

The Municipality has adopted this Council-Staff Relations Policy to ensure that the Municipality is in full compliance with the above-noted section.

2. Scope and Intent

This Policy shall apply to all municipal staff, officers and Members of Council.

The intent of this Policy is to ensure that the relationship between Members of Council and the officers and staff of the Municipality is co-operative and supportive with a clear understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities.

3. Definitions

« Member(s) of Council » means a member or members of the Municipal Council of the Corporation of the Town of Hearst.

« Municipality » means the Corporation of the Town of Hearst.

« Officer(s) » means a person who holds a position of responsibility with definite rights and duties prescribed by statute or by-law.

« Staff » means any of the following :

- i. A person, not including Members of Council, who performs work for the Municipality for wages;
- ii. A person who supplies services to the Municipality for wages;
- iii. Such other persons as may be prescribed who perform work or supply services to the Municipality for no monetary compensation.

4. Clarifying Roles

Role of Council :

- **Policy Focus:**
 - Represent the Municipality, provide direction and create policy.

Role of Senior Management :

- **Direction Focus :**
 - Liaison between Council and staff direct implementation of Council's policies, hire and develop a team of competent staff.

Role of Staff and Other Officers:

- **Implementation Focus:**
 - Research policy and programs, give best professional advice, implement decisions of Council, fulfill statutory duties, follow directions of Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) who generally oversees the operations of the municipal organization.

5. Guiding Principles

a) Members of Council are Public Figures, Not Staff and Officers

Once a matter is proposed or decided, staff should only comment on matters of fact or history in discussing issues with the public and the media. Dealing with the media is generally part of an elected representative's job, unless staff is authorized to do so by Council.

b) All Members of Council Are Equal

Regardless of how they interrelate with Members, staff and officers must avoid favoritism and the appearance of favoritism. Differences in experience and abilities amongst Members of Council are irrelevant – they all must be treated equally.

c) Respect the Chain of Command

Members of Council must understand they have no individual capacity to direct staff to perform, or not perform functions or duties. The CAO is responsible for staff and officers – Members of Council who need to engage with staff and officers must do so through the CAO. This would include both in person, verbal, written and electronic messages. Staff must respect the decisions of Council. Staff should not publicly speak against Council or criticize decisions or policies of Council.

d) Make Good Use of Staff's Time

Members of Council should use the resources of staff and officers judiciously. Reports cost taxpayer money and take staff and officers time away from other issues or problems that may need attention. Members should be discouraged from asking for reports as a means of getting past an unhappy public delegation. The public respects political courage and decisiveness.

e) Council Time is Valuable

Members should not allow presentations by staff or officers to consume all of the time they have to debate various issues. Such presentations should, to the extent possible, be concise. Members of Council should understand they can take any one or more of the following actions where appropriate:

- Pass on an audio-visual presentation;
- Urge staff or officers to be more concise;
- Require multiple public delegations with essentially the same point to select a spokesperson, or to impose a limited speaking time, or to provide information in advance or in written form; and/or
- Enact « curfew » procedures for Council deliberations.

f) Represent the Whole Community

Members, together with the Municipality's staff and officers, work for the public good. Decision-making by Members should be based on complete information and unbiased recommendations from staff and officers. Members should, in addition to such information and recommendations, rely on their own judgment and show leadership in their decision-making.

g) Control Anger

Members of Council should avoid the temptation to play up divisions or conflicts. Staff and officers shall not be the target of derisive/vexatious comments/behaviour/conduct. The public expects Members to do the job that they have been elected to do. The public expects staff and officers to do the job that they have been hired to do. Comments on staff and officer performance shall be directed through the appropriate confidential performance reviews.

h) Politics or Management – Not Both

Council provides direction, staff and officers give professional advice and implement Council's directives. Members of Council are not elected to be technical experts nor to act in their professional capacities. Likewise, staff and officers are not politicians. Advice comes from staff, policy and service delivery decisions are made by Council.

i) A Formal Relationship

Staff and officers shall treat Council as a collective decision-making body. Staff and officers shall not communicate directly with individual Members on municipal business, rather they must communicate on such matters through the CAO. Information from the CAO shall be communicated to all Members. Staff and officers shall stay out of political lobbying.

j) Professionalism

Members of Council, staff and officers must treat each other with professionalism. When Council requests that staff and officers appear before Council, they must comply and be prepared for any questions Council has. Advance notice of questions to staff provides an opportunity for staff to provide quality reports and advice.

k) Respect

Members of Council shall work hard at fostering a climate of mutual respect. Each must be respectful of others' intelligence and professional duties. Members, staff and officers must understand that they all face different, often unique, challenges and recognize their overarching goal is to serve the best interest of the Municipality.

6. Complaints

The Municipal Clerk shall be responsible for receiving complaints/or concerns related to this Policy. Upon receipt of a complaint and/or concern, the Clerk shall notify :

- a. In the case of staff and officers other than the CAO, the CAO;
- b. In the case of the CAO, Municipal Council; or
- c. In the case of a Member of Council, the Integrity Commissioner.

Handling of complaints shall be done in the manner set out in the applicable Code of Conduct or policy.

Where there is a discrepancy between this Policy and the applicable Code of Conduct, the applicable Code of Conduct prevails.