

Policy Statement

1. The City recognizes that clearly outlined relations between elected and appointed members of the City and City staff is necessary to ensure good governance and to maintain a high level of public confidence in the administration of the City.

Purpose

2. The purpose of this policy is to define clear roles, responsibilities and respectful communication protocols between Members and municipal employees, ensuring effective governance, political neutrality of staff, and operational integrity of the City's administration. This policy establishes appropriate channels for direction and information (primarily through the City Manager and designated officials), supports a safe and respectful workplace, and ensures compliance with applicable Ontario legislation and City Codes of Conduct.

Scope

3. This policy applies to:
 - a. all members of Council and Committees and to all employees of the municipality as defined below; and
 - b. all members of the River District Board of Management, due to the reporting relationship between the River District Board and City employees, whereby City employees provide support for the River District Board.

Definitions

4. For the purposes of this policy,
 - "City" means the City of Owen Sound, and a reference to the City is a reference to the geographical area or The Corporation of the City of Owen Sound as the context requires;
 - "City Clerk" means the Clerk of the City;
 - "City Manager" means the Chief Administrative Officer of the City'

“Committee” means a committee as identified in the City’s Board and Committee By-law and includes the River District Board of Management but excludes Community Committees as defined in the by-law;

“Council” means the Council of the City;

“Director” means the City Manager, the Director of Community Services, the Director of Corporate Services, the Director of Public Works & Engineering, the Fire Chief, the Chief Curator, or any one of the above, and any designates thereof;

“Employee” means City of Owen Sound full-time employees, part-time employees, contract or seasonal employees, students, volunteers, and agents and consultants acting in furtherance of the City’s business interests;

“Member” means a member of a Committee or Council as outlined above; and

“Recording Secretary” means the individual who performs the role of the Clerk for a Committee”.

Policy

General obligations

5. In all respects, members and employees must:
 - a. relate to one another in a courteous, respectful and professional manner;
 - b. understand their respective roles and responsibilities, and appreciate and respect the roles and responsibilities of the other parties;
 - c. work together to produce the best results and outcomes for the City and always for the collective public interest of the City; and
 - d. act in a manner that enhances public confidence in local government.

Roles and responsibilities of Members

6. Members acknowledge and agree that:
 - a. Council as a whole is the governing body of the City and a collective decision-making body;
 - b. members are representatives of the entire City;
 - c. employees serve the whole of Council rather than any individual member;
 - d. members govern, provide political direction and make decisions as the City;

- e. members must respect the administrative and managerial chain of leadership by;
 - i. directing any questions or concerns in relation to the administration or management of the City to the City Manager;
 - ii. giving direction to employees only through a resolution or by-law of Council; and
 - iii. refraining from becoming involved in the management of the daily operations and its employees;
- f. members will use employee time effectively, which includes but is not limited to referring essential matters to employees for reports via resolution, requesting publicly available information, etc.;
- g. employees will undertake projects only if they have been directed to do so through a resolution or by-law and as assigned by their supervisor;
- h. whenever possible, members should discuss issues with employees and advise of questions prior to public meetings where the issue will be heard. Questioning or constructive criticism will be undertaken with courtesy, respect and professionalism. In no event will there be any attempt to humiliate, berate, disparage or denigrate employees. Members will refrain from publicly criticizing employees in relation to their intelligence, integrity, professional practice, competence or otherwise;
- i. members will not deliberately or falsely damage staff's professional reputation and all members shall show respect for the professional capacities of the staff of the City;
- j. members will request advice from the City Clerk or Recording Secretary about the appropriate wording of motions;
- k. members will request information regarding meeting agendas or minutes from the Clerk or Recording Secretary;
- l. as individual members, each member has no greater access to records or information held by the City than any member of the public and members cannot access records or information otherwise protected from disclosure by the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* unless done in accordance with the process set out in that statute;
- m. employees are not expected to provide information or take action outside of regular administrative business hours, except in extenuating circumstances;

- n. certain employees are statutory officers and have specific statutory authorities, duties, powers and responsibilities that cannot be interfered with or deviated from;
- o. members must not compel employees to engage in partisan political activities or subject employees to threats or discrimination for refusing to engage in such activities;
- p. members will not use, or attempt to use, their authority for the purpose of intimidating, threatening, coercing, commanding or influencing any employee with the intent of interfering in the employee's duties, including the duty to disclose improper activity;
- q. members will be respectful of the role of employees to advise based on political neutrality and objectivity and without undue influence from any individual member;
- r. members must at all times comply with the City's Code of Conduct; and
- s. members must at all times comply with any policies relating to Council and Committees.

Roles and responsibilities of employees

- 7. Employees acknowledge and agree that:
 - a. Council is the collective decision-making and governing body of the City and is ultimately responsible to the electorate for the good governance of the City;
 - b. employees must implement Council's decisions and establish administrative practices and procedures to carry out Council's decisions and any duties specifically assigned to them by Council;
 - c. employees will assist Council in their decision-making process with respect to its decisions, policies and programs by providing Council and Committees with information based on professional expertise, research and good judgment in a professional and timely manner;
 - d. staff serve the whole of Council or the whole of a Committee rather than any individual member;
 - e. all members are equal and will be treated as such and always with courtesy, respect and professionalism;
 - f. employees will refrain from becoming involved in the policy and decision-making process, outside of ensuring that members are provided with the information necessary to make their decisions and that members are aware of any issues that may impact such decisions;

- g. employees will diligently and impartially implement decisions made through resolution or by-law;
- h. employees must not speak publicly on any matter respecting any decisions or policies without authorization to do so, and without limiting the generality of the foregoing, must not publicly criticize any decision or policy;
- i. employees must refrain from publicly criticizing members in relation to their intelligence, integrity, competence or otherwise; and
- j. employees must, at all times, comply with any policies relating to employees that may be implemented from time to time.

Complaints

- 8. The City Manager or City Clerk are responsible for receiving complaints or concerns related to this policy.
- 9. Upon receipt of a complaint or concern, the City Manager or City Clerk will notify:
 - a. in the case of an employee, the applicable Director;
 - b. in the case of the City Manager, Council;
 - c. in the case of a member, the Integrity Commissioner.
- 10. Handling of complaints must 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.

Policy review

- 11. The Manager of Human Resources will review this policy:
 - a. every five (5) years to ensure effectiveness and compliance with current business processes; or
 - a. sooner, if required, based on legislative changes.
- 12. The Manager of Human Resources is authorized to make such administrative changes to this policy as appropriate to keep the policy current. Any revision to the policy's intent must be presented to Council for consideration.

Related Information and Resources

Internal

- 13. Accountability and Transparency Policy;
- 14. Code of Conduct for Council members;

15. Code of Ethics for Municipal Employees
16. Procedural By-law
17. Workplace Violence, Harassment and Sexual Harassment Policy

External

18. [Criminal Code of Canada](#)
19. [Municipal Act, 2001](#)
20. [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#)
21. [Ontario Human Rights Code](#)

Appendices

22. N/A

Revision History

Authority	Date	Approval	Description of Amendment
Council	2019-10-28	By-law No. 2019-175	
Administration	2026-01-19	Manager of Human Resources	Formerly policy CrS-HR67, flipped to new template. Updated terminology to plain language.
Choose an item.	Click or tap to enter a date.		