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Town of Aurora

Committee of the Whole Report

No. FIN24-016

Subject: Technology Strategic Plan Update

Prepared by: Michael Mulvenna, Manager, Information Technology

Department: Finance

Date: April 2, 2024

Recommendation

1. That Report No. FIN24-016 be received for information.

Executive Summary

The Technology Strategic Plan recommended a number of actions which support modernizing and evolving the role of IT at the Town.

- 108 of the 116 actions recommended in the Technology Strategic Plan have been completed or are underway
- Key business processes have benefited from the implementation of technology solutions recommended in the plan
- Some of the recommendations were managed differently to adapt to the Town's needs
- The Town is well positioned for the next iteration of the Technology Strategic Plan scheduled for 2025

Background

Council adopted the Technology Strategic Plan in November 2019

In November 2019, Council adopted the Technology Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan is a comprehensive document that identified the need for transformational change for the Town. The plan provided recommendations which focused on five core areas:

1. Offering great, digital services for customers that allow them to interact with the Town using their laptop, desktop, tablet or smartphone
2. Digitizing and simplifying the Town's business processes to support process efficiency and underpin digital customer service
3. Providing mobile tools for the Town's mobile workforce
4. Providing staff with a modern workplace environment – modern and secure tools that help teams collaborate and be productive
5. Becoming a data-driven organization – an organization that uses data from its digitized processes to analyze and optimize efficiency and cost-effectiveness

One of the key recommendations was a new organizational structure for IT that centralized the services in the Information Technology Services division which was at the time in the Corporate Services department.

The five-year plan includes three distinct phases:

1. **New IT:** First, before anything else can be achieved, the Town must reset the technology management model and establish a more collaborative environment. A centralized IT organization has been established which has enabled all technology resources to contribute to a successful implementation of the Strategic Plan.
2. **Process Digitization and Mobilization:** Next, the Town must focus on digitization of its core business processes (HR, Planning, Permitting, Asset and Work Management, Finance) taking the opportunity to streamline and simplify aging paper-based processes. This phase will run from 2020 – 2024.
3. **Optimization through Data and Digital Services:** Then, building upon the digitization of processes, the Town can focus on offering new digital services and using the data from process digitization to become a data-driven organization. This phase will run from 2022 – 2024.

In February 2021, an update on the progress of the plan's recommendations was provided. This update addressed many of the projects that were underway or complete.

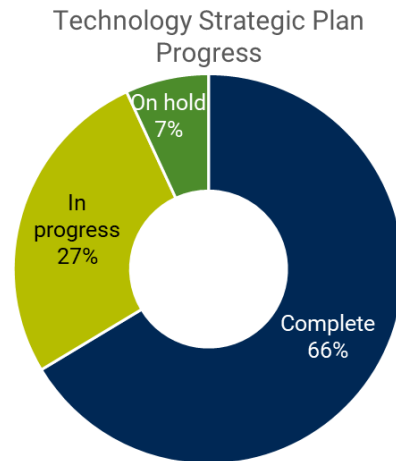
Analysis

108 of the 116 actions recommended in the Technology Strategic Plan have been completed or are underway

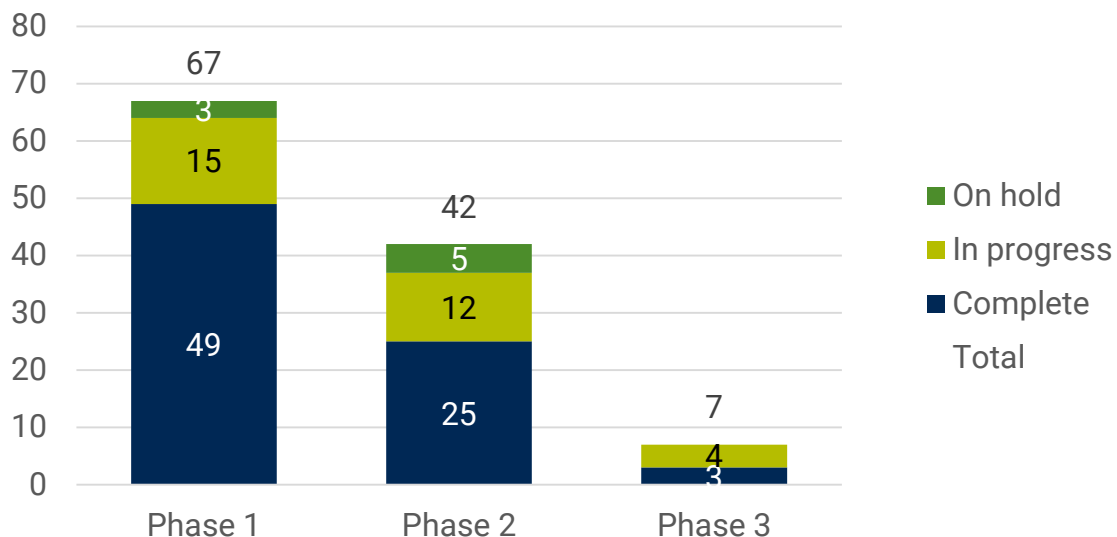
The Town has made significant progress on the actions that were identified in the Technology Strategic Plan. The plan includes 116 recommendations; of those 108 are in progress or underway.

At a high level the recommendations of the plan are 66 percent complete, 27 percent in progress and seven percent are on hold.

The Town has made progress on all three phases of the plan, most of the recommendations in phases one and two are complete and progress has been made on the recommendations in phase three. The chart below shows the overall progress with more details on the status of each specific recommendation included in Attachment 1.



Technology Strategic Plan Recommendations Progress by Phase



Key business processes have benefited from the implementation of technology solutions recommended in the plan

The plan recommended several major projects which are now complete or have made significant progress. These projects included:

- Creating a modernized digital workplace including messaging capabilities, collaborative workspaces, online/digital meetings and upgrades to meeting rooms to accommodate remote working through the upgrade to Office 365 including Teams (and Teams phone). IT has also started converting many of the meeting rooms to Teams enabled rooms which enable hybrid meeting attendance
- Implementation of key business solutions projects including:
 - ADP Workforce Now as the workforce management solution, which is used for payroll, recruitment and will be further expanded to support other HR processes, this system has automated many of the manual and paper-based process in Human Resources and payroll
 - Cityview e-permitting enables residents to apply for a building permit online, electronically submit their drawings to support their building permit, check the status of their application, request a building inspection when their project is nearing completion, submit building complaints (if needed), and pay for the building permit fees online
 - Implementation of the Oracle Fusion financial system which has automated the workflow in all aspects of the procure to pay process and set a foundation of continuous improvement for additional processes and reporting

The upgrade of the customer relationship management (CRM) system is underway. The Town has upgraded the current system to the latest on-premise system and is moving forward with the plan to upgrade to the cloud-based solution with the addition of business intelligence tools to expand the capabilities of the CRM to other departments within the Town.

In addition to these major projects, the Town has implemented:

- Online solutions including digital plans submissions, the Administrative Monetary Penalty System (AMPS) for both parking and non-parking penalties, ArcGIS portal, email billing for water accounts, improvements to where's my plow, and garbage tag ordering

- “Teams Rooms” in several key meeting rooms to enable easy access to online or hybrid meetings
- Digitized many paper forms and manual processes providing staff with greater efficiency in their day-to-day duties
- Migrating the Aurora Public Library to the Town’s Wi-Fi in anticipation of the Aurora Town Square initiative
- Several cybersecurity initiatives, including training, that have further bolstered the Town’s defences

Some of the recommendations were managed differently to adapt to the Town’s needs

The plan recommended some actions which were managed differently to adapt to the Town’s needs at the time, including accelerating projects needed to support remote work during the pandemic. The pandemic motivated the Town to focus more on business solutions which support remote work and automating paper-based processes.

The pandemic pushed ahead the expansion of how staff could connect to Town systems by expanding the use of virtual private network (VPN) tokens, creating and rapidly expanding RDWeb which provided a connection to Town servers and focusing on cloud-based solutions when replacing or upgrading existing software. One key move was rolling out Teams, for internal use, ahead of the Office 365 rollout. These enabled staff to communicate through chat and video calls which enabled staff to maintain productivity while working remotely.

The plan recommended that IT be consolidated under Corporate Services. During 2022 the implementation of the new financial system identified the synergies of bringing the finance function and IT together in one department. This closer relationship with IT, procurement and the two financial divisions provides better oversight on the implementation of other business solutions too. New business solutions require IT support for the implementation, but many also now include payment portals or have financial impacts. This closer relationship within Finance ensures that strong financial controls are met early in the project.

The plan recommended out-sourcing cybersecurity. After exploring the out-sourcing, the Town decided to take a hybrid approach to cybersecurity. The Town leverages the expertise of an outside consultant and has also converted one of the recommended GIS/Business Solutions Analyst positions to a Cybersecurity Analyst. Having this position on-site means the Town can implement any recommendations from the Cybersecurity consultant, implement the latest software, monitor activity and also react to any potential threat immediately.

The plan recommended that the Town “double-down” on Maximo. However, operationally staff found that Maximo was not best suited to the Town’s needs and has been retired. The reasons for the retirement of Maximo include:

- End users found the system difficult to use and did not realize the benefits of the system
- The system is a very complex system which would require additional staff resources to manage on an ongoing basis
- Does not support the cloud-first strategy as it is an on premise system
- The Town uses CityWide for the development of the Asset Management Plan to meet the provincial requirements for the second-generation asset management plan

Going forward the Town is exploring using the asset management system CityWide. This system does include a work ordering system and would then house the asset management plan information and work ordering in the same place. There should also be less of a resource burden on the Town as it is a cloud-based system which is geared specifically to municipalities.

The Town is well positioned for the next iteration of the Technology Strategic Plan scheduled for 2025

The 2024 to 2026 Budget and 10-Year Capital Plan includes a project for the next iteration of the Technology Strategic Plan. The next plan will be able to re-evaluate the next steps for leveraging technology at the Town and address the changing technology landscape including more innovative business processes and leveraging artificial intelligence now that a stronger foundation has been established.

Advisory Committee Review

None

Legal Considerations

None

Financial Implications

There are no financial impacts resulting from this report. Projects to support the implementation of the actions in the Technology Strategic Plan are included in the budget as part of the 10-year capital plan.

Communications Considerations

To inform the public, this report will be posted on the Town's website.

Climate Change Considerations

This report does not have an impact on climate change. Many of the actions which have been completed resulted in more automated processes resulting in the reduction of paper-based processes.

Link to Strategic Plan

The Technology Strategic Plan supports the Strategic Plan guiding principle of **progressive corporate excellence, innovation and continuous improvement**. The implementation of the recommendations also supports the **Community** pillar through **promoting adaptable and flexible services to respond to demographic shifts** as more residents expect quality online experiences with the Town.

Alternative(s) to the Recommendation

Council provide direction

Conclusions

Many of the Technology Strategic Plan's recommendations have been completed or are in progress. The technology landscape at the Town has evolved greatly over the past five years with the move to cloud-based solutions, automation of business processes and providing more web-based access to residents. The next iteration of plan scheduled for 2025 will continue to move the Town forward to optimize the use of technology.

Attachments

Attachment 1: Status of Technology Strategic Plan Recommendations

Previous Reports

CS19-035 Technology Strategic Plan, November 2019

CS21-015 Corporate Technology Strategic Plan Update, February 16, 2021

Pre-submission Review

Agenda Management Team review on March 14, 2024

Approvals

Approved by Rachel Wainwright-van Kessel, Director, Finance

Approved by Doug Nadorozny, Chief Administrative Officer