



# CITY OF WEST KELOWNA STAFF POLICY

APPROVAL DATE:

**DEPARTMENT: COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT DEPARTMENT**  
**SUBJECT: DRAFT COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY**

**NUMBER:**

The City of West Kelowna's Council is committed to a strategic, transparent and inclusive approach to its corporate communications and engagement. This includes building and maintaining trusting relationships internally with city-wide departmental staff, and externally with stakeholders and the public. To serve the public, the City will combine the use of print, electronic and community relations that seeks to inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower internal and external audiences that supports the delivery of strategic public participation (P2) goals.

This Policy underpins Council's and staff's corporate communications and engagement commitment and ultimately supports the delivery of Council's *Strategic Priorities (2020-2022)*.

This Policy has been developed during COVID-19 and remains flexible as communications and engagement conditions change.

## **PURPOSE**

---

The purpose of this Policy is to set out the City's commitment and framework that fosters and promotes communication and engagement in strategic and meaningful ways that will result in:

- 1) Open, honest and transparent communications with less government speak and more community-focused relations
- 2) Accurate and timely information, engagement and reporting our progress
- 3) Responsive internal and external customer service that supports a positive reputation
- 4) Proactive, effective and trustworthy media relations that helps media tell an accurate, balanced and fair story
- 5) Social media engagement that fosters meaningful and respectful awareness and understanding
- 6) Reliable information provided where decisions can be made by our community with feedback considered that helps inform our way forward
- 7) Fiscal accountability in how we reach and engage with our diverse audience in the most effective way as it matters to them
- 8) Recognition as a genuine community partner and leader in adhering to best practices

This Policy is also intended to work in conjunction with other relative Policies across the City. Further, this Policy will be appended to the City's Communication and Engagement Plan and posted on the City's website.

## **SCOPE**

---

This Policy applies to the City of West Kelowna's communication and engagement strategy, plan and activities that are non-legislative in accordance with the *Local Government Act* in British Columbia.

## **POLICY**

---

The City will consider the following factors which shall be used to guide our communication and engagement procedures, our strategy and implementation to benefit our operations and the community:

### **Defining**

- Defining the process, intentions and expected outcomes – strategically planning goals, a meaningful process, materials and aligning staff that together serves the community's interests.
- Understanding opportunities and risk – thoughtful planning that centres on how to best prevent and mitigate issues and minimize risks (misunderstanding, community upset etc.).
- Evaluating community area and impact – understanding who, what, where, when, why, for how long, the intended outcome, what's next, reporting our progress and how to stay connected is critically important in our planning and implementation.
- Defining target audiences – primary and secondary individuals and groups who may have an interest and our responsibility to keep them informed and engaged.
- Defining the type of public participation – inform, consult, involve, collaborate or empower (International Association of Public Participation spectrum) along with how we will be strategic (combining print, electronic and community relations).
- Developing materials, methods and our timing – providing more real-time information that is easy to understand, less text-heavy and more interactive.

### **Implementing**

- Using an integrated communications approach – ensuring departmental staff collaborate internally to plan the most co-ordinated way forward.
- Adhering to legislative requirements – upholding statutory requirements in parallel with non-statutory communications and engagement.
- Clearly outlining the subject matter – using plain language and providing key subject matter experts to help the community understand.

### **Evaluating**

- Ensuring financial accountability – demonstrating how we implement broad reach with local solutions to keep our costs low yet our interactions high.
- Implementing ongoing evaluation – measuring our outcomes against our intent and continuously making adjustments that benefits our community.

## **Communication and Engagement Responsibilities**

1. The City of West Kelowna is the only official source for information related to the City of West Kelowna.
2. Notwithstanding the legislative requirements for communication and engagement, this section outlines non-statutory communication and engagement. Statutory requirements will be addressed by all City departments under the designated Corporate Officer.
3. The City shall not engage in political promotions in its print, electronic or community relations activities. The City shall not publish political campaign information.

4. The City shall use its discretion to post and/or promote third-party information as deemed appropriate.

***Digital Presence*** (such as website, social media, engagement platforms, e-notifications, photography and videography)

- The City shall maintain an accurate website and social media presence that provides access to 24/7 information written in plain language and simple for the public to understand. The City will also provide helpful links to resources to whenever possible to improve customer service.
- The City shall utilize external digital e-subscription services for activities such as providing the public with e-notifications and provide the public with electronic feedback forms. Subscribing to these services shall include the appropriate disclaimer for digital communications and personal information storage.
- The City shall use engagement platforms for active online engagement opportunities with our community including EngagementHQ and Survey Monkey, to provide feedback and insight for informed decision making.
- The City shall not engage in digital interactions, such as responding to social media posts, that the City deems to be disrespectful, defamatory, discriminating, offensive, harassing, threatening or the equivalent. At its discretion, the City shall remove such posts from its social media platforms and shall foster professional, respectful and fact-based exchanges.
- Photographs and video taken by the City in the public domain shall be published in the City's print and electronic material where appropriate. Photographs and video acquired shall be owned by the City.
- In addition to the City's main platform, members of Council may wish to use their own digital media platforms respecting their Code of Conduct as an elected official. The City shall not engage in digital interactions for the purposes of political promotion.

***Print*** (such as handouts, display boards, feedback forms)

- The City shall use a variety of print material to inform and engage the public written in plain language, available at meetings and events and posted on the City's website. The City endeavours to provide local community benefits by using local vendors for its print material where possible.
- Content of material should reflect the magnitude and complexity of the subject matter using plain language and graphics to easily create shared understanding between the public and the City.
- Materials provided the City shall be in English. If French-language requirements exist, with Federal announcements for example, English text will be followed by French text.

### ***Community Relations*** (such as group and one-on-one interactions)

- The City remains focussed on strengthening its relationship with the community, government and organizations with an interest in West Kelowna. The City shall continue to invest in group and one-on-one interactions, increasing and maintaining an inclusive, collaborative and participatory approach to its community relations.
- The City shall conduct ongoing meetings and provide materials that support Council and staff personally informing and engaging stakeholders and the public.
- The City shall take a proactive approach to providing information, minimizing issues, seeking continuous feedback and reporting progress to Council that accurately represents issues and opportunities in West Kelowna.

### **Spokesperson Responsibilities**

#### Members of Council

1. The Mayor is the official spokesperson for the City of West Kelowna.
2. The Mayor may designate the Acting Mayor and/or the West Kelowna as an alternate spokesperson.
3. Members of Council shall consult with the Mayor prior to engaging in media relations activity unless an alternative protocol is established.
4. Councillors may speak to media on issues or opportunities important to them. However, all official City communications would be represented via Mayor and/or Chief Administrative Officer.
5. Correspondence from the public addressed to Council will be received through the Executive Assistant who reports to the West Kelowna. Replies will be promptly led by the Executive Assistant who will liaise with Council and staff and provide a timely and accurate response.
6. For Government and government-related organizational announcements, where funding partners exist, the ascending order of spokespersons for in-person announcements and for print and electronic quotes shall be:
  - 1) Government of Canada
  - 2) Province of British Columbia
  - 3) City of West Kelowna

Deviations from this protocol shall be approved by Federal and Provincial government partners with written agreement by all parties.

7. For joint announcements and events with Westbank First Nation, the City and Westbank First Nation shall develop its procedure on an as-needed basis as part of a continued partnership approach.

8. For regional partners and municipalities within the Regional District of Central Okanagan, the City will work in collaboration with the applicable organization to develop its procedures for integrated communications.

#### West Kelowna Staff

1. The Chief Administrative Officer shall act as the designated staff-level spokesperson as directed by the Mayor.
2. The Chief Administrative Officer may designate management staff to act as an alternate spokesperson, particularly where subject-matter expertise is required.
3. Staff will assist the media by promptly providing timely, accurate and transparent information through the Corporate Initiatives Division. Staff shall not provide official comment to the media in an official spokesperson role unless approved through the Chief Administrative Officer and Corporate Initiatives Division.

#### Policy and Procedure Deviations

This Policy shall be reviewed along with the Communications and Engagement Plan on an annual or as-needed basis. Deviations from the Policy shall be reviewed with the Chief Administrative Officer and the Corporate Initiatives Division to determine if an update to this Policy is appropriate.

CAO Approval:  
Date: