



**Date:** Wednesday, December 13, 2023

**From:** Carly Craig, Acting Clerk

**Subject:** 2023 Annual Accessibility Update - 2019-2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan Objectives

**Report** COR2023-58

This document and its attachments are public and available in an accessible format upon request.

## **Recommendation**

That report COR2023-58 be received for information.

## **Background**

The Township's [2019-2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan](#) includes the 4 standard areas contained within the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR): customer service, information and communications, employment, and design of public spaces.

In August of this year, Council approved the updated [2024-2028 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan](#), which will come into effect on January 1, 2024.

The Township is required to report on the progress of its Multi-Year Accessibility Plan on an annual basis under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

As we commence the final weeks of the plan, below is a full report on the objectives of the existing plan before its expiry on the 31<sup>st</sup> of this month.

## **Analysis**

### **Standards Area #1 – Customer Service**

Strategy 1 – Update and Improve Existing Accessibility Policies

In August of 2023, Council approved a new Accessible Customer Service Policy and Integrated Accessibility Standards Policy. These policies address service animals, service disruption and customer feedback as committed in the Plan.



## Strategy 2 – Improve Availability of Accessible Documents

The Corporate Services Department has made significant advancements in digitizing records in 2022 to support this work, including complete digitization of the Township's cemetery records.

Staff have been in contact with accessible document software providers to investigate how to provide traditionally inaccessible documents in more accessible formats.

This work is anticipated to continue throughout the 2024-2028 Multi-Year Plan.

## Strategy 3 – Update Training to Reflect Policy and Service Standards

Newly onboarded staff receive accessible customer service training via HR Downloads and this work is continuous. The updated Integrated Accessibility Standards Policy and 2024-2028 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan include greater commitments to training programs and were adopted by Council in 2023. It is expected that this work will commence in early 2024.

## **Standards Area #2 - Information and Communications**

### Strategy 1 – Improve Accessibility to Council and Committee Agendas, Minutes and Meetings

The Township continues to utilize its agenda management software, eSCRIBE (implemented in 2019). Agendas and minutes continue to include "this document can be made available in other accessible formats or with communications supports as soon as practicable and upon request". eSCRIBE publishes agendas and minutes in accessible formats such as HTML. Less accessible report attachments (such as site plans) will be investigated with work under Strategy 1 where documents may be made more accessible with software aid.

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Council met virtually, or in a hybrid manner to ensure business continuity while gathering restrictions were in place. Council meetings were livestreamed to ensure that members of the public could observe meetings or could register to participate in the meeting, through Microsoft Teams as a delegation or public registrant. While these restrictions are no longer in place, Council meetings continue to be hosted in a hybrid format and live-streamed for the convenience of residents and to ensure our meetings are accessible to those without transportation and those without an internet connection. This practice remains in place and will continue for the foreseeable future as spoken to in the Township's Procedure By-law and Electronic Participation Policy.



Further upgrades to Council Chambers have been included in the 2024 Draft Budget to continue this work and will further improve accessibility.

#### Strategy 2 – Improve Mechanisms for Customer Feedback and Notice of Service Disruption

The Township communicates any service disruptions through all communication channels including social media, website, email, newsprint, and telephone where possible. In 2022 the Township implemented an additional communication tool for customer feedback and inquiries. The web-based form provides an additional channel to provide information, in addition to the feedback form. The tool, “ContactGB”, also has communication mechanisms within it to communicate service disruptions which will be developed further in 2023.

Improvements have also been made in 2022 to the Township’s Accessibility webpage, including an updated feedback form in an accessible word format, as well as the introduction of an embedded web form on the page.

The updated Integrated Accessibility Standards Policy addresses and improves mechanisms for customer feedback and service disruption notice mechanisms.

#### Strategy 3 – Update Township Website to Conform with WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) 2.0 Level AA

The Township’s website has undergone several updates since the adoption of the plan. Monitoring and improvement of the website is continuous. In 2022, a Communications Specialist joined the Corporate Services Department and therefore additional resources have been dedicated to the website for advancement.

A budget request has been presented to Council to support a website rebuild to achieve this work in 2024.

#### Strategy 4 – Review Emergency Management Plan

Council adopted an updated Emergency Management Plan in 2022. The Emergency Plan is available on the Township’s website. Accessibility of emergency management documents will be ensured, part of ongoing work in Standards Area 1 - Customer Service and captured in the 2023 Plan.

### **Standards Area #3 – Employment**

#### Strategy 1 – Review and Update Required Policies

The Township regularly reviews personnel policies associated with accommodations during recruitment processes, accommodations for employees with disabilities, return to



work, and performance management. This work is ongoing, and staff will continue to review and update policies as required.

Major updates to employment-related accessibility and accommodations were included in the updated Integrated Accessibility Standards Policy.

### **Standards Area #3 – Design of Public Spaces (Built Environment)**

#### Strategy 1 – Recreation & Trails Master Plan

The [Recreation and Trails Master Plan](#) was successfully completed by Monteith Brown Planning Consultants Ltd. in 2020. Much of the plan is centered around accessibility and includes accessibility forward goals, including:

- Improving the accessibility of both the Kemble and Kilsyth Community Centres
- Improvements for the accessibility of trails (ie. allow for safe two-way travel)
- Improved accessibility of parks and facilities (ie. barrier free washrooms)
- Increased accessibility training for parks and trails staff and volunteers

Staff will continue to work towards accessibility of all facilities with support of Council through approved budget.

#### Strategy 2 – Implement Full Accessibility for Sarawak Family Park

In 2021, the design concept for an accessible pathway at Sarawak Family Park was reviewed by the Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee.

The project scope was expanded to include an accessible pathway in the community of Derby to improve access from the Community Centre to the park and was completed in 2023. This work is being expanded in 2024 to improve accessibility to other park aspects, including accessible seating.

Other enhancements to improve accessibility at Sarawak Family Park beach are underway including the accessible pathway and Mobi-mat previously approved by Council. The accessible pathway project is on its way to completion as the pre-work has been completed and staff are waiting for asphalt to be laid. Additionally, a tender is being issued to supply a Mobi-mat to enhance waterfront accessibility in 2024.

Accessible upgrades to the seasonal washroom facility at Sarawak Family Park were completed in 2020. Upgrades included:

- Layouts altered for accessibility in both men's and women's washrooms
- Addition of a fully accessible, universal barrier-free washroom (including a change table)
- All doors converted to automatic openers



- Conversion of lights to LED
- Introduction of automatic door locking schedule over night to prevent vandalism

#### **Standards Area #4 – Transportation**

The Township of Georgian Bluffs does not offer transportation services and therefore the standard area is not included in the Plan.

#### **Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee**

The Township of Georgian Bluffs continues to work with the Grey County Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee. The Committee's goal is to identify, prevent, and remove barriers from municipal services, by-laws, policies, programs, and facilities. As per legislated requirements, the committee is comprised of 50% plus one (1) persons with disabilities, political representatives, staff, and interested members of the public.

The Township engaged the consultation of the committee on various projects within the 2019-2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and will continue this commitment through the 2024-2028 Multi-Year Plan.

#### **Financial Impact**

N/A

#### **Strategic Priorities**

The Township will strive to be a leader in municipal and customer service excellence. We will continue to offer remarkable service to those we serve. This includes goal 5.2 to create more accessible meetings to encourage citizen engagement.

The Township of Georgian Bluffs is committed to building community through investment in recreation and community centres, and flexible use of community centres and playgrounds.

#### **Conclusion**

Respectfully Submitted:

Carly Craig, Acting Clerk



### Report Approval Details

Document Title:	COR2023-58 - 2023 Annual Accessibility Update .docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Dec 7, 2023

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Brittany Drury, Director of Corporate Services

Niall Lobley, Director of Community Services