

Strategic plan goals continue to be met

By Mark PavilonsEditor

The majority of goals continue to be met in King's four-year Corporate Strategic Plan. Staying on track required a lot of dedication and pivoting by Township staff, in light of major challenges presented by the pandemic. Staff provided an update on year two (2020) to councillors, during the last virtual council meeting. The 2019-2022 plan sets out a detailed course of action in four main areas that include a green and sustainable future; investing in infrastructure; cultivating healthy and resilient communities, and innovative service delivery. Performance in these areas and more are measured through Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Township staff is making tremendous progress in the key action items. Staff noted 93% of these are completed or progressing as planned. Only 8% of community benefits are not meeting goals. The biggest gains were made in infrastructure and service delivery. A total of 37.7 kilometres of Township roads were upgraded or improved and 11 park amenities were upgraded. Interestingly, the pandemic resulted in 85 innovations and improvements to certain processes at the Township. Major staff realignment, website improvements and remote working changes have actually increased efficiency in many ways. Staff pointed out that the COVID-19 pandemic did interfere with many areas of the plan. Progress on the 2020 tree management plan was halted, largely due to a hiring freeze in seasonal employees in the parks division. There were also no fossil fuel reductions or savings because the Township had to use more vehicles because of distancing protocols. The Township did, however, see a 300% increase in natural gas savings, along with reduced electricity use. Work was halted on the Community Engagement Plan (CEP) and Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP). The majority (70%) of community benefits in 2020 were heading in the right direction. These included decreased facility emissions and lower energy consumption. Last year's road improvement program saw a 9% increase in roads and bridges in top condition, and a 3% increase in pedestrian/cyclist friendly roads in King. Greater access (17% increase) to broadband and fibre was achieved last year. Online services to the public rose 10% and a whopping 350% increase in community engagement was achieved through virtual and proactive measures. Some 38 new policies and procedures were developed last year. The pandemic cancelled all in-person programs at the Township and this saw a major loss in revenue for the municipality. It wasn't all bad news, as Township staff quickly pivoted and offered many virtual programs and activities, including "Camp in a Box." The end result, however, was a massive, 90% drop in attendance, down to 3,000 in 2020, from 33,000 in 2019. "The Township of King made significant progress in Year 2 (2020) of its four-year Corporate Strategic Plan, despite the challenges faces as a result of COVID-19," staff reported. "Monitoring KPIs and community benefits will continue to drive desired improvements."

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