

**Section: Operational Policies**

**Subject: Accountability and Transparency Policy**

**Policy Number:**

**Version: 1**

**Review Frequency: As required**

**Approved by: Council**

**Approval Date: July 18, 2018**

**Application: Accountability and transparency policy as required under the Municipal Act, 2001 as amended**

**Notes:**

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**Legislative Authority:** *Ontario Municipal Act, 2001 as amended*

*Section 270. (1) A municipality shall adopt and maintain policies with respect to the following matters, one of which is:*

*5. The manner in which a municipality will try to ensure that it is accountable to the public for its actions, and the manner in which the municipality will try to ensure that its actions are transparent to the public.*

*And Section 224(d.1) of the Act also states it is the role of Council to ensure the accountability and transparency of the operations of the municipality, including the activities of the senior management of the Municipality.*

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**Intent:**

The intent of this policy is to comply with S.270 of the *Act*. This policy will provide guidance for the delivery of the Municipality's activities and services in accordance with the principles as outlined herein. The principals of accountability and transparency shall apply equally to the political process for decision making and to the administrative practices of the municipality.

### **Policy Statement:**

North Middlesex Council acknowledges that it is responsible to provide good government for its community stakeholders in an accountable and transparent manner by:

- Encouraging public access and participation to ensure that decision making is responsive to the needs of its constituents and respectful to their opinions;
- Delivering high quality services to our constituents; and
- Promoting the efficient use of public resources.

Accountability, transparency and openness are standards of good government that enhance public trust. They are achieved through the Municipality adopting measures ensuring, to the best of its ability, that all activities and services are undertaken utilizing a process that is open and accessible to its community stakeholders. In addition, whenever possible, the Municipality of North Middlesex will engage its stakeholders throughout its decision making process which will be open, visible and transparent to the public.

North Middlesex Council also acknowledges that there will be matters that due to their very nature must be considered at meetings that are not open to the public, and when these occasions occur, the Municipality of North Middlesex commits to compliance with the statutory requirements regarding closed meetings under S.239 of the Municipal Act, 2001 (the Act)

### **Definitions:**

“Accountability”-The principle that the Municipality of North Middlesex will be responsible to its stakeholders for decisions made and policies implemented, as well as its action or inactions.

“Act” – is the *Municipal Act, 2001* S.O. 2001, as amended, and its regulations;

“Council” is the Council of the Corporation of the Municipality of North Middlesex

“Committees” are committees appointed by the Council for the Municipality of North Middlesex.

“Employees” are all employees of the Municipality of North Middlesex.

“Meeting”- Any regular, or special or other meetings of council, of certain local board or a committees, where a quorum is present and where members discuss or otherwise deal with matters in a way that materially advances the business or decision making of the relevant body.

“Municipality” is the Corporation of the Municipality of North Middlesex.

“Transparency”-The principle that the Municipality of North Middlesex actively encourages and fosters stakeholder participation and openness in its decision making process. Additionally, transparency means that the municipality’s decision making process is open and clear to the public.

### **Guidelines:**

#### **“A”- Financial Matters**

The Municipality of North Middlesex will be open, accountable and transparent to its stakeholders in its financial dealings as required under the *Act*. Some examples of how the Municipality of North Middlesex provides such accountability and transparency in its financial matters are as follows:

- Internal/external audit
- Reporting/statements
- Long term financial planning
- Asset management
- Purchasing/procurement
- Disposition of surplus property
- Budget process

#### **“B”-Internal Governance**

The Municipality’s administrative practices ensure specific accountability on the part of its employees through the following:

- Performance management and evaluation
- Hiring policy
- Orientation/continuing education
- Health and safety
- Work/life balance
- Compensation/benefit
- Commitment of senior management to ensure that administrative practices and procedures recognize Council’s commitment to accountability and transparency

### **“C”-Legislative Requirements**

The Municipality is accountable and transparent to its stakeholders by fulfilling various legislated responsibilities and through disclosure of information. The following are some of the provincial statutes that govern how the Municipality conducts its business in a public, accountable and transparent manner include but are not limited to:

- Municipal Act, 2001, S.O. 2001, c. 25
- Building Code Act, 1992, S.O. 1992, c 23
- Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997, S.O. 1997, c. 4
- Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act, 2002, S.O. 2002, c. 33
- Municipal Elections Act, 1996, S.O. 1996, c. 32,
- Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.9
- Municipal Conflict of Interest Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. M.50
- Occupational Health and Safety Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. O.1
- Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. P.13
- Drainage Act, R.S.O 1990, c.D.17
- Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. M.56
- Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, 1996, S.O. 1996, c. 1,
- Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002, S.O. 2002, c. 32

Although the list of policies, practices, procedures, bylaws and referenced legislation in this policy are not complete Council is committed to being accountable and transparent to its stakeholders in every aspect of its operations.

### **“D” Public Participation**

The Municipality of North Middlesex ensures that it is open and accountable to its stakeholders through implementing processes outlining how, when and under what rules meetings will take place. The Municipal meetings will be open to the public when and as required under the Act, and members of the public will have an opportunity to make delegations or submit comments or letters in writing on specific items at these

meetings. In addition, the Municipality will follow guiding principles for public involvement as required under different legislation which will ensure that participation by the public can be meaningful and effective by encouraging participation that is:

- Accessible to information and decision making
- Inclusive, not exclusive
- Purpose driven
- Respectful of time and financial constraints
- Open communication
- Adaptable
- Respectful of for diverse interests
- Regularly evaluated

### **“E” – Disclosure of Information**

The Municipality is committed to timely disclosure of information by various means including print media, websites, etc. Some examples include:

- Staff Reports to Council that include reference to the Community and Corporate Strategic Plan
- Municipality’s Website [www.northmiddlesex.on.ca](http://www.northmiddlesex.on.ca)
- Use of various communication methods (newsletters, brochures, print and local newspapers)
- Direct communication with constituents (both verbal and written)
- Development of corporate communication strategies
- Public meetings and open houses on municipal initiatives
- Engagement of the public through an effective public consultation process, so as to receive and not just convey information