

Climate and environment factors in Town's new procurement policy

Climate change and the environment will be two new factors considered by Aurora Council and municipal staff in the future as they purchase goods and services for the Town.

Council last week approved a new Municipal Procurement Policy, one which is designed, in part, to provide more flexibility, efficiency, and a framework for green procurement.

The green procurement policy sets high-level framework for the Town to use for procurement related to green initiatives, said Procurement Manager Anna Ruberto in a report to Council. This includes considering climate change impacts for the goods and services being procured for eligible procurements. The Town plans to start by focusing on procurements for capital projects and operating initiatives which will include specific climate change considerations based on their budget approval.

The [goal is] expand to more procurements in the future as more green initiatives are approved through capital projects and operating budgets.

Through the new policies, a Procurement Governance Committee will be created to evaluate suppliers should there be a dispute with the product or services.

The Committee will include the Procurement Manager and at least two members of the Executive Leadership Team and Legal Service, where required, said Ruberto. Their main role will be to make decisions related to handling supplier suspensions and procurement protests. Supplier suspensions can relate to the performance of the supplier or a breach of the Supplier Code of Conduct in the Procurement Policy, where a procurement protest occurs when a supplier wishes to challenge the procurement process.

While the new policies were generally received favourably at Council, lawmakers said there was still some room for improvement.

What would we do if somebody, including a Councillor, brought to the Town's attention that one of the companies we're dealing with may be more appropriate not to deal with them? asked Councillor Wendy Gaertner. How would that be brought to our attention and what would we do about it?

The question was fielded by Rachel Wainwright-van Kessel, the Town's Treasurer and Director of Finance. She said that if a Councillor or anyone else brought to their attention a concern about a particular supplier, then procurement would need to investigate and look at the situation and do their own independent investigation.

If there are any concerns, it would have to be brought forward to the Procurement Governance Committee to ensure any appropriate action be taken, she said. We would have to ensure we have the appropriate evidence and we follow [the proper] policy.

Councillor Rachel Gilliland also had a concern: making sure taxpayers get a long life out of products purchased on their behalf. She said she was pleased this was being addressed through the plan.

My big thing was about lifecycle and although the lowest price might seem great and everything might tick a box, the lifecycle of a product just based on how it is designed might be a better investment, she said. I think we all make those choices in life, whether it is a couch, a car, or cutlery there's a reason one might be 20 per cent more than another and I think that is a really good consideration.

I am sure the taxpayers would like you to make a good investment in something that is going to provide longevity. I am glad we're taking that outlook.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter