



Policy	CAS-018 Council–Director Communication Protocol
Approved By:	Council
Approval Date:	Monday, April 28, 2025 Council/CAO IC Meeting

Council–Director Communication Protocol

PURPOSE

To clarify appropriate communication channels and practices between Council and Directors, this protocol promotes transparency, respects the legislative framework under the *Community Charter*, and supports efficient governance within the one-employee model where the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) leads staff operations.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all elected officials and all Directors within the organizational structure of the District. It does not apply to communication through Council or Committee meetings or formal Council resolutions.

POLICY STATEMENTS

1. Definitions

- **CAO (Chief Administrative Officer):** The sole employee of Council, responsible for overall administration of District operations in accordance with Section 147 of the *Community Charter*.
- **Director:** A senior manager who reports directly to the CAO and oversees a District department.
- **Routine Inquiry:** A request for factual or clarifying information that does not involve direction, decision-making, or evaluation.
- **Directive:** Any instruction, suggestion, or implication that staff take specific action, allocate resources, change course on Council direction or change work priorities.

2. Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles reflect the values that underpin respectful and effective communication between Council and municipal Directors. These principles support a culture of mutual respect, accountability, and shared purpose in service of the community.

(a) Collective Governance:

- Council collectively sets policy; collectively provides direction through motions and collectively receives information they need for decision making.

(b) Equal Access:

- Equal access to information around the Council table is important; all Council members operate with the same facts.

(c) Respect for Roles:

- Respect and connection between Directors and Council is positive.
- Directors take action under the leadership of the CAO; Council respects staff roles and responsibilities.

(d) Efficient Use of Resources:

- The CAO should be copied on communication between an individual member of Council and a Director to ensure effective resource and fiscal management, the messaging is consistent and there is no misunderstanding by the team of the intent of the Council member.
- Curious questions from Council members to staff do pull critical resources away from the District.

(e) Timely and Accurate Information:

- Council receives accurate, timely information to enhance decision-making.
- Council receives updates when agreed upon timelines change.

(f) Work-Life Balance:

- We want to be a workplace that prioritizes work/life balance; absent emergency situations, we respect the working hours of staff.
- Staff are encouraged to participate in community events and are residents when they do so.

(g) Culture of No Surprises:

- Whenever possible, advance notice of questions on staff reports or proposed motions is given to support thoughtful and prepared responses.

3. Channels to Meet Council Communications Needs

3.1 LEVEL 1 - Channels for Council Access to Directors

Council and Committee of the Whole Meetings

- Directors attend these meetings to provide professional analysis, operational context, and policy advice through staff reports presented to Council. These are the primary venues where Council receives information to support its governance role.

Workshops and Briefings

- Organized through the CAO, these sessions (sometimes Special meetings) provide opportunities for more in-depth, informal discussion of emerging issues, strategic planning, or complex policy matters where staff input is valuable before formal decision-making.

Budget Planning Sessions

- Directors contribute directly to financial planning by presenting departmental needs, pressures, and priorities in alignment with Council's strategic direction.

Annual Departmental Updates

- Directors provide departmental update to Council annually as a valuable opportunity for transparency, relationship-building, and alignment on priorities. Directors will share what their

department has accomplished, what's currently underway, and what's on the horizon, all within the context of Council's strategic direction and approved budgets.

Annual Long Service Recognition Events

- These events allow Council to acknowledge and celebrate staff contributions and years of service in a respectful and collegial setting.

Annual "Pizza in the Park" (or alternative informal gatherings)

- Organized as informal opportunities for team-building and community, these events help foster a healthy and respectful working relationship between Council and the broader staff team, including senior leadership.

Breaking Bread Together

- Semi-Annual Supper with Council helps foster a healthy and respectful working relationship between Council and the senior leadership team.

3.2 LEVEL 2 - Channels for Individual Council Member Access to Directors

- To schedule Advisory Body meetings or discuss technical logistics related to agendas. *No need to copy CAO.*
- To clarify factual details within an existing staff report.
- To provide advance notice of questions for an upcoming meeting.
- To inquire about routine public information that any member of the public could ask. (e.g., hours, service status).
- To confirm publicly available timelines or operational processes already published.
- To access background materials already on record and publicly accessible.
- As Council Liaisons, to coordinate with Staff Liaisons to advisory bodies. *No need to copy CAO.*
- To draft and submit a Notice of Motion (in line with Handbook protocols). *No need to copy CAO.*

4. EXAMPLES

In Scope Communications Scenarios

- A Member of Council emails the Director of Engineering and Public Works to ask when paving will begin on a publicly listed road project. (Yes, where the information is not available on the District's information sites)
- A Member of Council emails the Director of Community Building and Planning asking them to explain the difference between a development permit and a variance. (Yes)
- A Member of Council emails the Director of Parks, Recreation and Culture for a copy of a publicly available policy on tree removals. (Yes)
- A member of Council emails the Director of Corporate Services seeking clarification of information contained within a staff report on an upcoming agenda. (Yes)

Out of Scope Scenarios – Requires Alternate Process or CAO Involvement

- Direction Setting: Any request that implies policy direction or resource allocation; *members can advance these items through the Council Motion process.*

- Research Requests:
 - If a response can be provided verbally and within 15 minutes: *may proceed.*
 - If it requires more than 15 minutes, *it should be elevated via Council motion.*
- A member of Council is seeking information that is Confidential or related to Personnel: *this must go through the CAO.*
- A Council member wishes to explore history and cultural information on a District initiative to determine whether an issue needs to be addressed (e.g. community gardens in Oak Bay); *this request must go through the CAO. It may be an appropriate topic for an upcoming departmental update or Council workshop.*
- A member of Council asks the Director of Finance to adjust the draft budget to include more funds for a local group; *this can be raised when sitting as Council.*
- A member of Council asks the Director of Community Building and Planning if certain scenarios could be incorporated into a staff report coming forward to Council; *this can be raised when sitting as Council.*
- A Member of Council asks the Director of Engineering and Public Works to prioritize snow removal on a specific street; *this can be raised as a policy discussion when sitting as Council.*
- A Member of Council emails a Director to pass along a service request from a constituent; *the constituent should be directed to the Service request portal to ensure fair, equitable service delivery.*
- A member of Council emails a Director with a complaint about staff performance; *this should be directed only to the CAO.*
- A member of Council invites a staff member for coffee, lunch, or other one-on-one social engagements. *Social interactions between Council and staff are supported through structured and inclusive events, such as those described in Level 1 interactions.*

Protocol Adherence

All parties; Council, CAO, and Directors, are expected to adhere to these protocols to foster:

- Clear and consistent communication,
- Respect for professional boundaries, and
- Effective execution of Council's strategic direction.

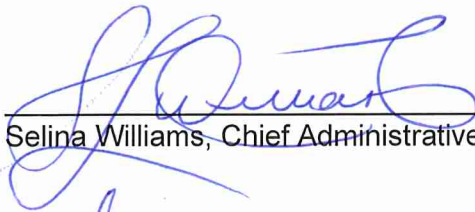
If uncertainty arises about an interaction, Council members and Directors are encouraged to consult with the CAO for guidance.

Procedure

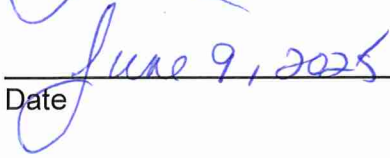
- Council members should submit questions etc. via email to the Director to facilitate ease of ensuring the evenness of information for all members.
- Directors should respond via email to all members of Council summarizing the request, and copying the CAO, within 2 business days, or sooner if related to an upcoming meeting. If more time is required, Directors should acknowledge receipt and provide an expected timeframe.
- If a Council member's inquiry becomes interpretive, advisory, or directive, the Director will pause the conversation and notify the CAO.
- Directors may redirect the Council member to the CAO if a question Requires more than 15 minutes of research, touches on confidential, strategic, or personnel matters, or may result in inequitable access to information.

5. Related Policy, Legislation, and Agreements

- *Community Charter S. 147*



Selina Williams, Chief Administrative Officer



Date

