Report to Council

Department:	Office of the CAO
Division:	Office of the CAO
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Prepared by:	Kate Giurissevich, Chief Administrative Officer
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Subject:	2023-2027 Strategic Action Plan Annual Progress Report
Number of Pages:	4

Recommendation(s)

That Report CAO-2025-03 entitled 2023-2027 Strategic Action Plan Annual Progress Report prepared by Kate Giurissevich, Chief Administrative Officer dated January 12, 2026, be received for information.

Purpose

A Council directed Strategic Action Plan is an essential tool which establishes overall direction and priorities, aligns organizational efforts, and supports future decision making. The purpose of the report is to provide a progress update to Council on the status of the initiatives identified in the 2023-2027 Strategic Action Plan.

Background and Discussion

The development of the 2023-2027 Strategic Action Plan included extensive preparation, engagement, and outreach. The Town retained Linton Consulting, who led the consultation and development process to identify the key strategic priorities beginning in March 2023 and the process was designed to be inclusive and took a multimodal approach. The approach included

workshops with Council and Administration, as well as surveys to gather feedback from residents, businesses, organizations, and employees.

When asked what local government services were most important to residents and their household, out of nearly 500 survey participants below were the top 3 responses.

- 84% - Safe and well-maintained roads
- 77% - Parks, Trails playgrounds and open spaces, and
- 76% - Timely communication from the municipality.

In addition, the survey asked all participants to list their top 6 reasons why Essex is a great place to live. Below are the top 6 responses:

- 46% - Outdoor spaces, parks, and trails
- 45% - Small town feel
- 36% - Waterfront
- 36% - Recreation and Sport Facilities
- 35Z% - Community Safety/Low Crime Rate
- 32% - Vibrant Downtowns

From the consultation, workshop and surveys, the consultant worked with Council and Administration to establish four (4) key values for the Town's 2023-2027 Strategic Plan:

1. Safe and Reliable Infrastructure,

2. Jobs and Economic Opportunities,

3. Welcoming and Caring Community, and

4. Responsible and People-Focused Government

Each value was further broken down into recommended priorities and actions based on the cumulative feedback from all who were engaged during the consultation process and can be viewed at www.essex.ca/en/town-hall/strategic-plan.aspx

Annual progress reports will be prepared to update Council and the community on the progress being made towards the Strategic Plan's actions. This reporting process facilitates an important dialogue between Council and Administration on projects and issues of importance to the organization and community. This progress report is not meant to be a complete description of the works completed by Administration during the past year as staff are also engaged in delivering core services and participating in other significant Town initiatives.

Updates on each objective and initiative are attached to this report. As can be seen, all the priorities are not mutually exclusive. Although initiatives are grouped under the most relevant of the four values, many support the achievement in goals of multiple areas. In addition, all values are listed on each council report and Administration will mark which value the report may relate to. This ensures that the Strategic Plan is part of all decisions made.

Attached is the Strategic Plan Progress Tracker, which outlines action items for the duration of the plan, with a goal of completing all items by the end of 2026. As of December 31, 2025, all projects have been initiated, 64% have been completed, and over 85% are at least 50% complete. This progress highlights the Town's commitment to accountability, sustainability, and responsibility in achieving the plan's goals and objectives within this term.

Continued dialogue on initiatives and their relevancy, the need to re-assess initiatives, determination if we continue with all or implement a pivot strategy in these dynamic times is crucial for the plan's success.

Finally, it continues to be critical that the leaders of the municipality, both elected and administrative, understand the priorities when considering the policies and future direction of the municipality. The elements of a strategic document identify the Town's priorities, which in

turn provide the framework for the future allocation of funds, development of work plans, reports, and dedication of resources.

Financial Impact

Administration will continue to identify financial impacts associated with recommended actions, and remaining work plan actions will be incorporated into future budgets for Council's consideration.

Consultations

Town of Essex Senior Management Team

Link to Strategic Priorities

- ☒ Embrace asset management best practices to build, maintain, and continuously improve our municipally owned infrastructure.
- ☒ Leverage our Town's competitive advantages to promote jobs and economic investment.
- ☒ Take care of our natural environment and strengthen the sense of belonging to everyone who makes Essex "home".
- ☒ Deliver friendly customer service in an efficient, effective, and transparent manner while providing an exceptional working environment for our employees.
- ☒ Build corporate-level and community-level climate resilience through community engagement and partnership and corporate objectives.