Arran-Elderslie Council Briefing

Community Engagement Strategy – Wards or At-Large Representation

January 27, 2024

Agenda

1. Introductions
2. Project Overview and Objectives
3. Community Engagement – What is it?
4. Existing Council Structure
5. Legislative Framework
6. Wards or At-Large
7. Community Consultation Process

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About Us

➢ Clerks on Call is a municipal management consulting team, offering a range of specialized municipal governance and administration services, including:

- virtual and onsite facilitator-led training for Councils and Staff
- community engagement
- policy and by-law reviews
- mentoring/coaching for municipal Clerks and CAOs

➢ Consultant Team:

- Michelle Smibert
- Michelle Casavecchia-Somers

Project Overview
& Objectives

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Project Overview

- Undertake a community engagement strategy to enable the Council to make decisions about whether to maintain the existing ward structure or to adopt an alternative at-large arrangement.

- Develop and conduct an appropriate public consultation process in accordance with municipality's existing public engagement practices

- Allow the public to offer their perspectives on the present ward system and the alternative at-large system

- Prepare a report that will provide context for the 'preferred' electoral system for Arran-Elderslie

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Project Objectives

Objective:

- To engage the community in determining their 'preferred' electoral structure -- wards or at-large elections.

Key Question:

- *Should future municipal elections be conducted using a ward-based or at-large system?*

Importance:

- Ensures community support for the project outcome.
- Ensures future representation aligns with community needs and values.
- Promotes transparency and trust in the electoral process.

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Community Engagement – What is it?

Community Engagement

- Community engagement is the process of involving individuals, organizations, and groups from a specific community in dialogue, decision-making, and action to address shared challenges, goals, or interests.

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Why Engage the Community?

- Community engagement is fundamental to creating inclusive and effective strategies.

- It helps ensure that initiatives are tailored to the needs and wants of the people they serve.
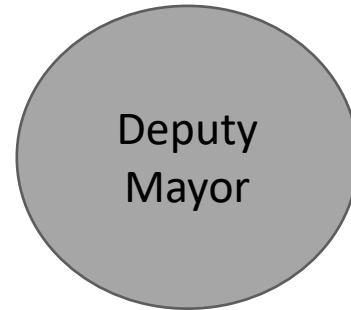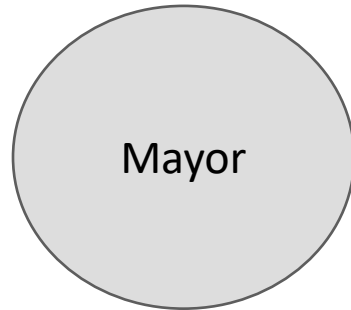
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Community Engagement - Benefits

- Builds trust and transparency and strengthens relationships between stakeholders.

- Encourages informed decision-making by incorporating diverse perspectives.

- Increases the relevance and effectiveness of policies, programs, or projects.

- Fosters a sense of belonging and shared responsibility within the community.

- Promotes sustainable and long-lasting outcomes.

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Existing Council Structure

Existing Council Structure

7 Council Members

Mayor

Deputy Mayor

Ward Councillor

Ward Councillor

Ward Councillor

Ward Councillor

Ward Councillor

- Mayor and Deputy are elected at large
- 5 Councillors are elected by ward

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Existing Ward Configuration

- 5 ward structure
- based on historical municipal boundaries
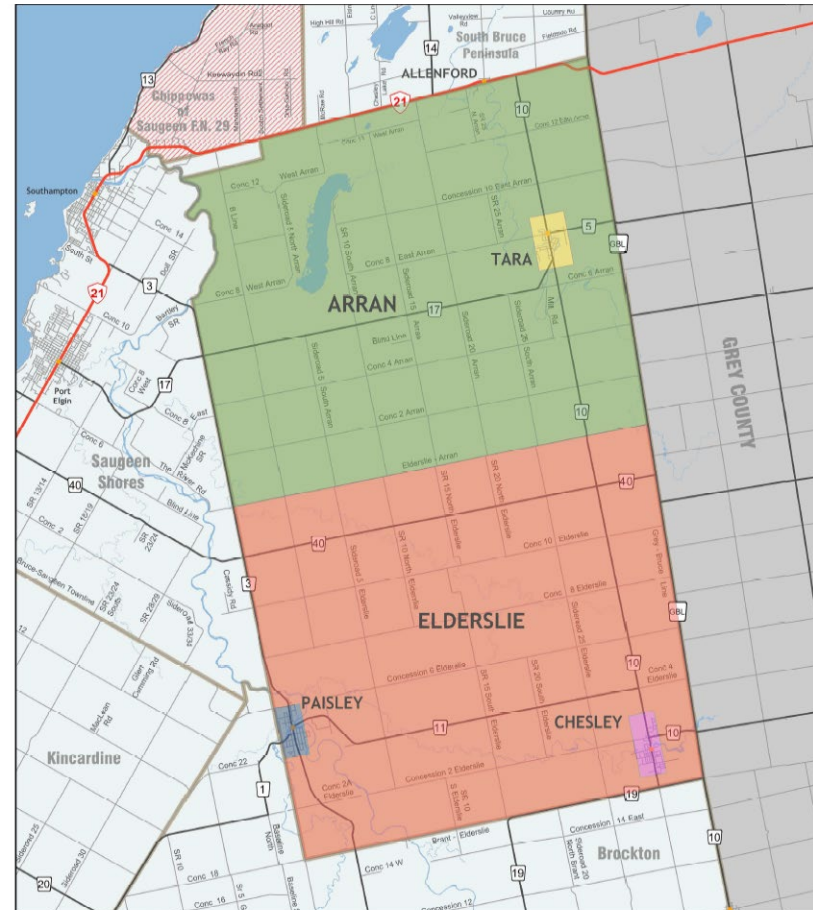
Legislative Framework

Legislative Framework

Ontario's *Municipal Act, 2001* authorizes a lower-tier municipality to:

- define the size of the Council

- determine how Council (other than the Mayor) will be elected – wards or general vote (at-large)

- "divide or re-divide the municipality into wards or dissolve the existing wards"

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Legislative Framework

No stipulated schedule, standardized process or established criteria exist for electoral reviews in Ontario

- Each municipality must set its own terms, parameters, guiding principles, etc. to establish an electoral system appropriate for the community.

- Any changes must be made before the end of 2025 to be in effect for the 2026 municipal election

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Representation Models - Wards/At-large

Representation Models

Ward-based Representation:

Council members are elected to specific geographic districts, representing the interests of the people in that ward.

At-Large Representation:

Council members are elected by all voters in the municipality, representing the community as a whole.

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Community Consultation – Principles

Inclusivity/Accessibility

➤ Ensuring consultation processes are easy to access for everyone, regardless of physical, economic, or social barriers; and that all voices are heard.

Transparency/Clarity of Purpose

➤ Clearly define the objectives of the consultation and ensure participants understand what is being asked of them.

Respect

➤ Value all contributions and create a safe environment where participants feel comfortable sharing their opinions.

Accountability

➤ Demonstrate how community input has been considered and incorporated into decisions.

Collaboration

➤ Working together with the community to co-create solutions.

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Consultation Goals

- Educate the public about the differences between ward and at-large systems.

- Collect data to understand public preferences through surveys, open houses, and discussions.

- Ensure equitable participation from all community segments.

- Build consensus on the most suitable electoral structure.

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Stakeholder Identification

Who to Engage:

- Residents
- Community organizations
- Advocacy groups
- Business leaders
- Council Members

Why:

- Tailored outreach ensures diverse perspectives are included.

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Methods of Engagement

**Councillor
Interviews**

Targeted
discussions
with
community
leaders

Late Jan./Early Feb.

Public Survey

Online and
Paper Formats

Broad
accessibility
for feedback

Available from
Feb. 1 until Feb. 28

**Facilitated
Open Houses**

Interactive
forums for in-
depth
discussion

Paisley: Feb. 12 – 5-7 pm
Tara: Feb. 13 – 3-5 pm
Chesley: Feb. 13 – 6-8 pm

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Project Timeline

Project Kick-off – Council Briefing	January 27 (today)
Council Member Interviews	Late January/Early February
Survey Distribution	Runs from February 1 to February 28
Facilitated Open Houses	February 12 and 13
Data Analysis and Reporting	March/April
Presentation of Final Report	Late April/Early May

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Thank You

Questions/Comments

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