Committee Report

To:	Warden Matrosovs, Chair and Elected Officials
Committee Date:	March 21, 2025
Subject / Report No:	PDR-SJM-19-25
Title:	Hybrid Planning Services Model Update
Prepared by:	Randy Scherzer and Scott Taylor
Reviewed by:	Kim Wingrove
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	Member municipalities in Grey County

Recommendation

1. **That report PDR-SJM-19-25 be received; and**

2. **That correspondence be sent to each member municipality in Grey County, requesting any interested municipality to indicate its support in-principle for a hybrid planning service delivery model by no later than May 9, 2025.**

Executive Summary

In 2024, Grey County began a project to improve the planning process and recommended efficiencies at the County level, with suggestions for municipal improvements as well. Several process improvements have since been made at both the County and municipal levels.

As part of these discussions, staff were also directed to research a centralized planning services delivery model. A few closed and open session staff reports were presented in the summer and fall of 2024 on a centralized model. Based on the feedback received, staff are now investigating a hybrid service delivery model. Under this new model, the County could provide planning services to some municipalities for both County and municipal planning matters, while other municipalities would remain status quo with a two-tier planning service delivery model.

This report provides a summary of, and responses to, the municipal feedback received on the centralized service delivery model. The report also outlines how a hybrid model could function, and some next steps for investigation of a hybrid model.

Staff are recommending that this report be received and that any interested municipalities provide in-principle support resolutions for investigating the hybrid model further. For those municipalities that provide no response, County staff will assume that they do not wish to participate in a hybrid service delivery model. Municipalities also have the option to pass a resolution opting out of further investigations of a hybrid service delivery model.

Background and Discussion

In February 2024, County staff presented report PDR-CW-03-24 which explored potential planning efficiencies at both the County and municipal levels. Since then, a number of those planning efficiencies have been implemented at both levels. Coming out of that efficiency's discussion, through some subsequent closed session staff reports (in June and August of 2024), County staff were directed to investigate options for a centralized planning services delivery model. Reports PDR-CW-52-24 and PDR-CW-63-24 provided; updates to Council, requested comments from municipalities, and direction to continue investigating the matter. Through report PDR-CW-63-24, County Council supported the following recommendation:

1. *"That report PRD-CW-63-24 be received; and*
2. *That staff be directed to continue to investigate the planning efficiencies staffing model based on approximately two thirds of the member municipalities participating; and*
3. *That staff be directed to arrange a joint, open session council meeting with member municipalities to provide a summary of the comments and questions received regarding the potential centralized planning service delivery model and to identify potential next steps and options."*

Links to the above-noted open session staff reports can be found in the Attachments section of this report.

Since the summer 2024 discussions, County staff have also had discussions with Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) staff. MMAH staff offered some verbal comments and perspectives on planning models they see across the province. MMAH staff did not offer formal written comments and noted that the Ministry typically does not get involved in operational service delivery reviews. If there was a request to the Ministry for increased delegation of approval authority responsibility, then the Ministry may take a more 'hands on' role in providing feedback.

Staff also invited feedback from the public and the development industry, through an engagement page on the County's website found here. Staff received some written and verbal feedback on the centralized planning service delivery model. Some comments were received in writing, some of which were supportive of investigating the model further. Other comments, including the Blue Mountain Ratepayers Association noted they were not in support of a centralized planning model. One developer also noted that they were in support of the model for municipalities with smaller planning departments, but not in favour for municipalities with larger existing staff complements. Some developers offered verbal comments to suggest that the model was worthy of investigating further, however they were reticent to put comments in writing for fear of alienating municipal staff and councils who are currently providing their planning approvals.

In response to report PDR-CW-52-24 municipalities shared their comments with the County. A link to a summary of those comments, along with a County staff response has been included as Appendix 1 to this report. These comments were summarized at a very high-level in report PDR-CW-63-24, but the Municipal Comment Response Table in Appendix 1 provides more detail on the comments received.

Municipalities were not asked to declare whether they would like to be a part of the centralized service delivery or not. However, Town of The Blue Mountains Council passed the following resolution on the matter.

> *"THAT Council receive Staff Report PDS.24.134, entitled "Grey County Centralized Planning Services Model – Staff Feedback";*
>
> *AND THAT in consideration of Staff Report CS-24-073, while respecting comments on the County of Grey's proposed centralized planning service model, Council direct staff to provide a copy of this report in response to the County's request for comments and the following motion on the matter, to Grey County Council and Planning Staff, the County Clerk, the County's CAO and Deputy CAO;*
>
> *AND THAT Council requests that the County develop a centralized planning service model that excludes The Blue Mountains;*
>
> *AND THAT Council requests that the County consider a hybrid, phased approach to this model that would start with lower tiers that would benefit from the model, especially for municipalities with sole practitioner planners or consultants, with opportunity for monitoring, feedback and evaluation;*
>
> *AND THAT Council requests that the County, together with The Blue Mountains, consult with the Province on the proposed centralized planning services model prior to implementation and share all comments and/or feedback received through this consultation with member municipalities at the level of their respective council."*

Based on the above motion from the Town, as well as the direction received through report PDR-CW-63-24, a centralized service delivery model which includes the County and all nine member municipalities is no longer being investigated. At the direction of County Council, staff have pivoted to investigating a hybrid service delivery model, which would see the County potentially provide planning services to some, but not all, member municipalities. The remainder of this staff report will focus on a hybrid service delivery model.

Additional Municipal Staff Feedback

As noted above, municipalities provided comments through staff reports and council resolutions. However, in early 2025 County staff had further discussions with municipal planning staff, as well as the municipal CAOs.

From a municipal planning staff perspective, there is not a consensus on either a centralized or hybrid service delivery model. While some municipal staff support further investigating a hybrid service delivery model, others expressed concerns with doing so. A summary of the concerns expressed is as follows:

- Will the new model result in more timely planning decision-making,
- What are the actual efficiencies to be gained through a new model,
- What will happen to the 'planning adjacent services' provided by municipal planners under the new model, will remaining municipal staff be left to fill those roles,

- Will the new model create inefficiencies and broken relationships between planners and other supporting municipal staff such as operations, engineering, parks and recreation, etc.
- Will the new model be more cost effective,
- Will municipalities be left paying more, to support other municipal functions that may no longer be handled by planners in the centralized model,
- Will there be adequate in-person service delivery hours in each municipal office,
- Where will municipal staff joining the County team be working from, and will there still be the opportunity to work remotely,
- What happens to municipal staff who choose not to join the new model,
- Why is this process being 'rushed' and why the need for a decision until all information is known,
- Municipal staff haven't been adequately consulted on the new model,
- What will happen with existing processes such as development review or pre-submission consultation processes,
- Software, IT, and records management concerns,
- Will the new model have adequate planning policy staffing levels,
- Should development and planning policy be integrated,
- What will the staffing levels be, and when will there be an organizational chart,
- Will the new model have adequate administrative support,
- What happens with agreements and legal needs,
- Municipalities need input on hiring and performance review of County staff serving municipal planning functions,
- A hybrid model could put planners in a conflict scenario where two municipalities disagree on a planning matter,
- Still too many unknown details on how a hybrid model would work,
- What does implementation look like, will it be phased in,
- Will there be an opportunity to exit the hybrid model, should a municipality try it, and determine it doesn't work for them, and
- It may work for some municipalities but wouldn't be a good fit for my specific municipality.

There have also been some supportive comments from municipal staff who welcomed the opportunity to be a part of the model and looked forward to career growth opportunities.

From a municipal CAOs perspective, there were mixed opinions, including but not limited to the following:

- That they would like to see a new model implemented as soon as possible based on current staffing levels or pending staffing and consulting changes,
- At a CAO-level they see merit, but their planners had concerns about the new model,
- Happy with current planning service levels, and see little need for change at the moment,
- If my municipality 'opts out' now, could we still join the model at a future date, and
- Council is supportive, not supportive, or undecided at this stage.

How would a Hybrid Planning Service Delivery Model Work?

There is precedent for hybrid planning service delivery models in other two-tier municipal governments. Locally, Wellington County uses such a model whereby some municipalities have planners at the County and municipal level, whereas for other municipalities the County provides the planning services, and there are no municipal planners.

This model, if pursued further, could work as follows.

1. Municipalities would be given the option of receiving planning services from the County, or continuing with the status quo of planning services at both levels.
2. For those municipalities that do choose to receive planning services from the County (hereafter referred to as 'participating municipalities'), they would enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the County which would spell out the terms of service delivery.
3. For each of the participating municipalities there would be in-person planning service office hours, based on what was negotiated in the MOU and the need in any given municipality. In some instances, this may necessitate full-time in office service delivery (i.e., 5-days a week), versus other municipalities may only need one or two days a week.
4. Existing planners at a participating municipality would become County planners, who would deliver County and municipal planning services in those participating municipalities.
5. Planners would be assigned to a given municipality such that there would be some consistency in service delivery, and for relationships to be forged with municipal staff and municipal council. In some cases, this may align with the municipality they're already working for (pre-hybrid model). In a hybrid model, one planner may work across multiple municipalities, or where workload demands, or staffing changes occur, the hybrid model would allow other planners to 'fill in' as needed. For example, if planner 'A' was serving municipality 'Z', but that municipality got very busy, then the model would allow planner 'B' to be pulled in from elsewhere to also assist municipality 'Z'. Conversely if municipality 'Z' was less busy, then planner 'A' may be called upon to help out elsewhere. These same changing workload demands could apply both to development and policy planning needs.
6. For the participating municipalities, no approval authorities would change between the County and municipalities, i.e., municipalities would still approve zoning amendments, minor variances, site plans, etc. For the status quo municipalities, there would also be no change in approval authority jurisdiction.
7. Planning applications in participating municipalities would be filed directly with the County, and a County fee would be required for said applications. In order to do so, the County would need to update its Fees and Services by-law, and participating municipalities may need to reciprocally amend their by-laws accordingly. Municipalities would also have the option of charging a municipal fee, to recoup associated municipal costs.
8. County staff would handle the pre-submission consultation, inquiries, and application processing for planning applications in participating municipalities. County staff would prepare and present reports to municipal councils and committees, who would still render those decisions.

9. For status quo municipalities, the County would still; provide comments on municipal applications, provide planning ecology services, and render decisions* on subdivisions, condominiums, part lot control, official plans, and official plan amendments.
10. Further details on financials will need to be addressed once it is determined which municipalities will be participating municipalities, versus which will remain status quo. County application fees and general levy would continue to fund the status quo municipalities, while participating municipalities would be funded through; (a) new County application fees on municipal applications, and (b) some fee for service municipal levy contributions. For item (b) this may be similar to current services some municipalities already purchase from the County, such as geographic information systems (GIS) services.
11. Staff working under the hybrid service model would work in municipal offices, the County administration building, and through a hybrid manner. Staff joining the County team would be given similar salary and vacation entitlements, as well as a comparable benefit package. The County Planning department is a part of the County's non-union employee group.
12. Depending on the number of municipalities who choose to participate in the hybrid model, some staffing positions would be appointed, whereas other staffing roles may require an internal competition i.e., current municipal and County employees would be invited to apply for certain positions. As per earlier discussions, those participating municipalities would retain any existing directors, administrative assistants, and GIS / planning technicians, unless otherwise spelled out differently in the MOUs. Planners at the junior, intermediate, senior, and working planning manager levels would join the County team for those participating municipalities.

    **Approvals differ in the City of Owen Sound who is already the delegated approval authority on some of these planning matters.*

Next Steps and Further Information Required

Following the joint council meeting on March 21, municipalities will be asked to indicate to the County whether they want to give 'in-principle support' to being a part of a hybrid service model, or whether they wish to remain status quo. County staff are asking that such in-principle support resolutions be received by end of day on May 9, 2025. Municipalities will not be committing to participation through such in-principle support and will be given the opportunity later in the process to fully 'opt in' or 'opt out'. County staff need to get an indication of who may be a part of the model or not, for the purpose of determining staffing levels, financial implications, further consultation needs, etc.

For those municipalities that provide no response, County staff will assume that they do not wish to participate in a hybrid service delivery model. Municipalities also have the option of opting out of further investigations of a hybrid service delivery model.

Beyond the in-principle support resolutions, staff have identified the following next steps, should there be a desire to investigate a hybrid model further.

1. Set up one-on-one discussions with potentially participating municipalities with both the municipal planner(s), relevant department heads (where applicable), and CAO in attendance to discuss;
    a. Desired service levels under a hybrid model,
    b. Current 'planning adjacent services' being offered by municipal planners,
    c. Internal municipal processes, such as development review committees,
    d. Council / Committee structures and relationships,
    e. Delegated staff approvals,
    f. Existing municipal planning budgets, software, etc.,
    g. Understand current contracted services such as municipal peer reviewers on retainer,
    h. Desired timing for implementation,
    i. Any major planning projects in the coming years (e.g., official plan or zoning by-law reviews, special studies/projects, etc.),
    j. Transition considerations as it relates to existing files, appeals, and special projects, and
    k. Any concerns or questions that pertain to a hybrid model.
2. Draft MOU templates for consideration by County and municipal councils. Staff believe that large portions of the MOUs will remain the same from municipality-to-municipality. However, there will be some service level details that will vary between municipalities, e.g., the number of in-person office hours per municipality based on need.
3. County staff would meet with other counties that offer hybrid service delivery models to learn from their current models, and collect examples of MOUs, where counties are able to share.
4. Propose an organizational chart once it's known which municipalities are participating.
5. Within the MOUs, there would need to be some transition provision considerations, such as how existing applications in process would be handled, existing appeals to the Ontario Land Tribunal, as well as software and records management considerations.
6. Work with County/municipal Finance, IT, Human Resources, Legal Services, and Clerks staff on additional details to inform Council's decision making on the new model.
7. Update the County's Fees and Services By-law. This may be done prior to any implementation, or could be done early into the implementation of a hybrid model.
8. Determine appropriate implementation dates, and whether that would be an 'all-at-once' implementation for participating municipalities, or a phased implementation. For those municipal CAOs in favour of the new model, many suggested implementation in early 2026, but an exact timeline has not yet been established.

Should there be (a) no desire to further investigate a hybrid service delivery model, or (b) limited interest in investigating such a model, then this whole process may 'end' following either the joint council meeting on March 21, 2025, or following the receipt of the in-principle support resolutions.

The original forecasted planning efficiencies were based on all nine member municipalities and the County working together. Should there be a majority of municipalities that want to pursue a hybrid model, then staff still see a number of efficiencies to be gained from the model. However, should there only be a small subset of municipalities wishing to pursue a hybrid model, then it may not be worth investigating further.

Should there be no further investigations of a hybrid model, then staff at both the County and municipal levels can continue to focus on planning efficiencies and improvements to existing processes as identified in County staff report PDR-CW-03-24.

Legal Considerations

None at this time.

Financial and Resource Implications

Any financial and resource implications will be explored as part of the future staff report. Financial and Resource Implications are not anticipated in the 2025 budget, should there be direction to move forward with further investigations into a hybrid model. However, there are many factors that will feed into the total cost and resourcing of the model which are not yet known. Should the model move forward with in principle support from some municipalities, staff anticipate detailed discussions with those municipalities along with the detailed costing. The MOUs and costing investigations will also require discussions on service levels and what services are currently offered by each municipality, including the requested service levels going forward under a potential hybrid model.

Should implementation be considered in 2026, there may be the need for an interim funding model or transfer payments during the initial phases of a hybrid model. While this has not been determined yet, this could include asking participating municipalities to allocate their existing planning services budget to the model (or portion thereof), or to allocate existing planning revenues to the model, until such time as the County's Fees and Services By-law is updated. There may be costs required in the 2026 budget to update the Fees and Services By-law.

IT, HR, legal/agreement review requirements, as well as other staffing considerations will also need to be considered via those detailed discussions, the MOUs, and future staff reports on this matter.

Relevant Consultation

☒ Internal: CAO, Clerks, Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology, Legal Services, and Planning

☒ External: Member municipalities in Grey County, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, external counties, the development industry, and the public.

Appendices and Attachments

Appendix 1: Municipal Comment Response Table*

PDR-CW-63-24 Centralized Planning Service Delivery Model Update

PDR-CW-52-24 Investigating a Model for Planning Efficiencies and Shared Service Delivery

PDR-CW-03-24 Planning Efficiencies Report *Note: there are many references to a centralized service delivery model in Appendix 1, including in the County staff responses. These references

are in response to the original centralized service delivery model concept. This concept has since evolved into a potential hybrid service delivery model concept. For the sake of responding to the original municipal comments, there are still references to the centralized model, but such responses shall now be read with the understanding that a hybrid model is now what's being considered.

Appendix 1: Municipal Comment Response Table*

Comment Received	Originating Municipality	County Staff Response
1.0 Impact on Other Municipal Departments		
1.1 Input from other departments: Staff are unable to provide full comments on each of the topics requested. Information may be required from other divisions and departments, such as Records Management, IT, and Human Resources	• Owen Sound	This can be investigated further as part of the potential next steps.
1.2 GIS: The hours of GIS staff have not been considered	• Owen Sound	This can be explored further as part of the potential next steps.
1.3 Collaboration with other departments: The potential impact on other municipal departments and staff is an important consideration. A vast majority of development applications require significant coordination with Engineering Services and Public Works and Building Divisions. How will the proposed model ensure the integrated approach will continue to provide integration and does not result in a disjointed approach with potentially significant frustration for developers?	• Owen Sound • Georgian Bluffs • Southgate • Hanover • Meaford	The planning centralized model will need to be structured to ensure that the relationships and processes with other local municipal staff are integrated into the new processes. It is proposed that planning staff would still be involved with this coordination, would be available to meet and discuss with local municipal staff. The proposal would be to have at least one planner available in-person at each municipal office during the regular office hours specified in the future memorandum of understanding (MOU).
2.0 Service Delivery and Customer Service		
2.1 Planning Ecologists: The nine-member municipalities within Grey currently share the two (2) Planning Ecologists. It merits note that these planners were intended to be funded through application revenues and not be supported by the tax levy. Assigning the ecologists to proposed hubs further reduces the level of service that would be provided with potential negative impacts on application timelines.	• Owen Sound	The level of existing service provided by the Planning Ecologists will remain unchanged with this new model.
2.2 Policy Planning Complements: The County model dedicates less than 0.5 FTE of staff time to policy planning. The County report acknowledges that consultants may be required to support this policy work. This will further prevent the municipality from directly steering policy development to ensure that it is consistent with municipal long-term strategic visions. On the Policy Planning side, the team is undersized to cope with major Planning Act changes (typically there have been 3 to 4 per year).	• Owen Sound • Southgate	The proposed Planning Centralized Model is designed to provide flexibility and resiliency to be able to respond to increases in application volumes for any given municipality as well as to allocate resources for any specific policy projects. The policy planners are not proposed to be divided by individual municipality, rather their time and resources will be allocated to specific policy projects and initiatives as they arise. For example, if the City of Owen Sound had an Official Plan (OP) update scheduled for a specific year, then this would be incorporated into the workplan for the policy planners and resources would be assigned to it accordingly. Depending on the volume of OP updates and other policy initiatives in any given year, there may need to be a shift in planning staff time to be able to work on the various projects (e.g. shifting development planners/flex planners to assist with policy projects/initiatives if time permits) or consultant support may be required to support policy projects/initiatives. The new model would not prevent municipalities or the County from using external consultants on major policy projects, where capacity or expertise does not exist in-house. The new model is

		expected to reduce the need for consulting resources, but not completely eliminate the need.
2.3 Staff Qualifications: The service level reductions include fewer staff and staff who have lower qualifications (Planning Technicians vs RPPs) than the current model. This could be a significant issue. How will the County ensure the complement of planners for municipalities will have the required staff to undertake all planning matters without causing significant delays?	• Owen Sound	The exact staffing levels of the proposed model are not yet fully known. The proposed model, as shown in the August 2024 closed session report, was a proposal, but the County is open to feedback on what the exact staffing levels and qualifications of said staff should be. Should the County explore a hybrid model, i.e., providing centralized services to some member municipalities, but not all municipalities, then it will depend on which municipalities are involved, and the current staffing levels for said municipalities. For those municipalities that sign onto the model, planners at all levels, with the exception of directors and administrative assistants, would join the County's centralized planning department. However, one of the central tenants of the model is to allow for career growth through having a series of stratified planning positions, which include entry level, intermediate, senior planners, and managers. Although not explicitly shown in the new model, the ability to occasionally hire co-op or planning students could also be explored in the new model. Entry level planners may not be required to be a full Registered Professional Planner (RPP), but rather be eligible to become a RPP. Senior planners or managers will be required to be RPPs. Depending on recruitment challenges, an entry level planner may start as a technician, but the preference would be an RPP-eligible planner. The intent is not to look at staffing reductions or lesser qualified planning staff. County staff do however acknowledge the national shortage in planners, and would note that future recruitment could be a challenge under both the existing or future centralized models. The County's philosophy of "growing our own" staff will be implemented to ensure proper succession planning and career growth. Individual learning plans will be established to ensure growth potential.
2.4 Model Efficiencies: Supportive of the new model being a more efficient way of delivering services and is keen to better understand what the efficiencies look like. What are the exact list of expected efficiencies?	• Georgian Bluffs • Southgate • Hanover • Chatsworth	The level of efficiency, or even definition of efficiency, may come with different perspectives depending on the audience. For example, efficiencies may relate to response times, application processing times, or may also be tied to financial efficiencies. For example, in the past some developers have stated that they would be happy to pay higher application fees, if it meant their applications were processed in a reasonable timeframe. In order to explore this topic further, staff will need to understand what's desired from member municipalities, the development industry, and residents, as each will have different perspectives on efficiency. Broadly speaking, the proposed list of possible efficiencies are as follows:

		1. Avoiding duplication of review and processing efforts by having a single planner and planning department receive and process an application(s) associated with a proposed development (e.g. subdivision application and a zoning amendment application), rather than having both municipal and County Planners reviewing the same application materials. 2. Efficient 'one-stop' customer service for inquiries and applications. Rather than having to speak with municipal and County staff, landowners could speak with a single planning department to get answers to their planning questions. 3. More in-house policy expertise, which means less use of consultants, and greater retention of institutional knowledge. 4. The ability to better share information between municipalities. Most planning issues are not unique to one municipality. As such if municipality 'A' develops a solution under the centralized model, and can share with municipality 'B' then this saves municipality 'B' time and money in finding a solution. 5. Greater resiliency to (a) staffing changes, and (b) high vs. low development levels. By having a larger team, the proposed model would make individual municipalities less susceptible to delays where a planner(s) leaves the municipality, or is off on an extended absence, especially in cases where a municipality has one or two planners. In peak times more staff could be allocated to development files in a given municipality, whereas in slower times, said staff could be allocated to another municipality or to policy planning/research. 6. The ability to attract and retain staff who may wish to be part of a larger planning team, and see growth within a single organization. Having a larger team covering a broader geography may also given opportunity for a wider array of planning issues, e.g., a planner currently only working in an urban area, could also be exposed to rural planning or vice versa, or similarly a development planner could also be exposed to some policy planning. 7. The ability to provide greater peer-to-peer mentoring and career development. 8. Some training opportunities or conferences offer group discounts. Having a larger planning team may allow the County and participating member municipalities to utilize those discounts, and/or to offer in-house training where there's a critical mass to do so.
2.5 Local Input: How would services be delivered to ensure local representation was still able to shape planning decisions? Who sets the customer service standards – the County? Municipalities? Both?	• Owen Sound • Georgian Bluffs • Southgate • Hanover • Meaford	Through the new model, no approval authorities are proposed to change, i.e., municipalities would still approve consents, minor variances, zoning by-laws/amendments, site plans, etc., while the County would still approve subdivisions/condominiums outside of Owen Sound, and official plan amendments. There may be potential to explore some staff delegated approvals

		for some of these files, but the new model is not looking to assign greater approval authority to the County. With respect to customer service standards, it is anticipated that such standards could be spelled out in the future memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the County and participating member municipalities. This MOU would also include intervals for review of the MOU, including service delivery standards. In order to help inform these future MOUs, should the model proceed further, it would be helpful if municipalities could provide the County with their current inquiry response / application processing timelines or process flows, as well as any related statistics on these matters.
2.6 Reduction of Consultants: Supportive of the potential for centralized services to enable municipalities that are reliant on consulting support services for all or part of their planning work to reduce that reliance	• Georgian Bluffs • Southgate	Acknowledged.
2.7 Response Timelines: What is the expected turnaround for inquiries/responses? For application submissions? How will this be interlinked with County staff under this model?	• Southgate	The exact response timing and application processing timings are not yet known, but the expectation is that if the new model is established, it would be a similar level of customer service, if not improved, to what currently exists. Response times may also fluctuate, in times of peak demand, just as they currently do. Timing and customer service levels are expected to be spelled out in the MOU.
2.8 Service Delivery Issues: Who is the point of contact with the County to deal with service delivery issues/failures? How will these be escalated if issues are not addressed or the solution is not acceptable to the Municipality? What about an RPP's professional conduct expectations (Code of Conduct)?	• Southgate	The MOU will spell out a communication chain between municipal staff and a centralized or hybrid planning department. This MOU could include provisions for regular communications/meetings at the director or senior staff level, as well as protocols for conflict resolution. A fulsome escalation protocol has not yet been established. However, one potential escalation pathway could see things first discussed at a manager level, or escalated to a director, followed by the CAO, or ultimately Council, should the matter not be addressed earlier. The specifics of this escalation protocol could be spelled out in the MOU. RPP's professional conduct expectations will not change under the new model, i.e., RPPs at any level will still be bound by the Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP) and the Ontario Professional Planners Institute's (OPPI) code of conduct and membership by-laws.
2.9 Planner Ownership: How will the County deal with potential issues of "planner ownership" (i.e., Joe is my planner. I want him.)	• Southgate	The County is open to suggestions on how to deal with such issues in this regard. The intent is that whomever the planner is, they will be providing municipality 'x' with a similar level of customer service, as any other planner would. In some cases, planners would likely be assigned to a municipality, and in other instances a planner may be shared or float between municipalities. As to 'who gets assigned where' this will depend on experience levels, need in a given municipality, and where current and future planners are geographically located (i.e., if a planner was currently living in Owen Sound, then it may not make sense to assign them to Southgate).

		The model is also being designed to add some flexibility to adapt to changing workload levels between municipalities, or between policy and development planning. The ability to promote from within is also a key component of staff retention and growth under the proposed model. As such, there may be opportunities where staff may temporarily shift between municipalities or divisions to adjust to workload demands. There may also be internal promotions that see a staff member shift roles or even municipalities within the department.
3.0 **Office Hours and Location**		
3.1 In-Person Customer Service: Currently, Planning Staff are available to answer questions and inquiries at the front counter, Monday to Friday from 8:30am to 4:30pm. This level of service may differ from other lower tiers in Grey County and benefits members of the public who require basic zoning information to build a deck, shed, or small addition and allows collaboration among staff. How will the County model address and ensure the continuity of in-person customer service? How often are planners in the office at each hub?	• Owen Sound • Southgate • Hanover • West Grey • Chatsworth • Meaford	Customer service levels will be spelled out in the future MOUs. Based on feedback received, County staff are recommending that the hub model, as presented in the August 2024 closed session report, be abandoned. Instead staff recommend that any participating municipality be assigned regular office hours for the planners covering that municipality. In some cases, where demand dictates said office hours may be 5 days a week, as is the current standard in some municipalities. In other cases, there may be regularly scheduled office hours e.g., the planner is in office on Tuesdays and Thursdays, where the demand is lower. In these instances, appointments could be booked for the 'in office' hours. Even where full time customer service cannot be offered, the intent would be that planners are easily accessible via phone, email, and or virtual meeting methods. Beyond the peak times, where a floating planner may be necessary, the intent would be to provide a continuity of planning staff to any given municipality, i.e., if planners 'A' and 'B' are assigned to municipality 'X', then they will regularly be served by planners 'A' and 'B', and not have a rotating cast of planners on any given day or week.
3.2 Service When Planner is Not In-Building: The proposed centralized planning model could result in reduced staff hours to continue to provide this service five (5) days per week and/or customers needing to visit more than one location to obtain the necessary information. How will service be provided when a planner is not in the office? Will appointment service be available?	• Owen Sound • Southgate • Hanover • Meaford	As per the response to 3.1 above, it is anticipated that regular office hours will be provided in any participating municipality. The intent is not to require landowners or applicants to visit multiple planning offices to get service. Where 5-day a week service is not feasible, then appointments, or phone/virtual service can be provided.
3.3 Staffing Complements: It is hoped that any new model will see roles for all existing staff. What would be the eventual staff complement of a centralized model and how does that compare to the current state? How will staff complements be kept whole with the same entitlements when many municipalities vary in what they provide?	• Georgian Bluffs • Hanover • Meaford	The final staff complement will depend on (a) which municipalities participate in the model, and (b) which staff decide to join the centralized team. As per the response to 2.3 above, beyond directors and administrative assistants, the intent is that the planners from the participating municipalities would become part of the centralized team. County Human Resources (HR) staff will work with municipal HR staff to ensure that similar or better vacation entitlements and compensation are carried over. Benefit packages currently vary across the County and member municipalities, so benefits may not be exactly the same, but are expected to be comparable. Preliminary work has been conducted to review wages and benefits and this will

		be updated with 2025 COLA increases as approved with all participating municipalities.
3.4 Changing Staffing Needs: What if the Development Team has extra capacity? What if the proposed staffing levels are not enough? How quickly can the County respond to increasing the staffing need? What if we don't need all the planning staff (reference to preliminary County planning staff model research that noted Grey County has a higher number of planning staff in consideration of both County and municipal staff)?	• Southgate • Hanover • Chatsworth	If the development team has extra capacity, the intent would be that some development planners assist with policy work or special projects. The situation would be similar if the policy team has extra capacity, i.e., some policy planners may then assist with development planning. Adding future staff would be subject to budget approval by Council, and potential updates to MOUs (depending on the funding model agreed upon). It is the intent of the central staffing model that all participating municipalities staff will have a position within the new Central Planning department.
3.5 Space Needs: If a hub has no room for planners, who will pay for the space expansion? If a municipality is looking at new facilities, will the County provide funds for the planning space? This model may solve some municipal space needs by freeing up offices of planners working elsewhere	• Southgate • Meaford	As per the response to 3.1 above, staff are recommending that the hub model be abandoned in favour of regular office hours in each participating municipality. As part of the MOU, the County and member municipality would work together to spell out space needs for any given municipality. Determining whether lease fees will be required for space in existing municipal offices will also be determined at the MOU stage.
3.6 Remote Work: Will planners still be provided with an opportunity to work from home/remote?	• Southgate	The County maintains a remote work policy. Remote work agreements are signed annually. The ability to work hybrid is based on departmental needs and individual work performance. Work performance must be equivalent to performance efficiency within the traditional work environment to be supported.
3.7 Overtime: How will the County address overtime should engagements or meetings occur outside of normal work hours?	• Southgate	The County has an overtime and flexible work hours policies for all non-union staff members. Applicable rules will be applied to all over-time worked. The most common is time banked to be taken as future time off entitlements.
3.8 Hub Locations: Where will the office hubs be located? Within the Municipal Office or County space?	• Hanover • West Grey	As per the response to 3.1 above, staff are recommending that the hub model be abandoned in favour of regular office hours in each participating municipality. It is anticipated that such space would be in existing municipal facilities, with the exception of those staff working out of the County Administration building in Owen Sound.
3.9 Floaters: How will you determine which planners are floaters vs. in more consistent locations? Will there be consideration for floaters who will have varying work locations?	• Hanover	The determining factors for floater planning staff will still need to be assessed. Criteria for a floater vs. a consistent work location may include the following: 1. Skill level / qualifications, 2. Preferences of staff members, 3. Living locations of staff, 4. Criteria as set out in the MOU, 5. Staffing demands in a given municipality, 6. The ability for remote service, 7. Etc.

		Further to the response in 2.9 above, the new model is also being proposed to provide flexibility, such that staff can adapt to changes in workload, or changes in development vs. policy pressures. There will need to be some flexibility built into the model to adapt to changing conditions.
4.0 Development Application Process and Reporting to Councils/Committees		
4.1 Site Plan Approvals: This model, as currently proposed, provides little information on site plan control and heritage planning. Within the Bruce County Planning Model, site plan approval remains with the lower-tier municipalities. Given that the proposed County model is based on the Bruce County model, the City would likely need to have staff working locally to undertake site plan approval. This would be a cost outside the County model. How will the County model ensure that municipal best interests are respected in Site Plan approvals and that they are integrated with municipal capital planning and other municipal processes? How will the structure integrate financial and other local impacts on an application type that is delegated to staff? Is it anticipated that planning staff will be required in lower tiers to support this work?	• Owen Sound	The centralized model, or a hybrid model, could borrow from the approaches in other counties, e.g., Bruce, Wellington, Huron, etc. but can be tailored to meet the needs of Grey County and the participating member municipalities. As per the response to 2.5 above, approval authority is not proposed to change through the new model. Site plan control would continue to be approved at the municipal level. As part of internal discussions at any given municipality, each municipality can delegate the appropriate staff person to approve site plans i.e., director, clerk, CAO, etc. As part of the MOU, the County and member municipalities can discuss the relationship between a centralized planning team, and the necessary staff resources at the municipal level, such as operations, engineering, parks & recreation, etc. It may be that there is a County application fee for *Planning Act* applications, but that there is also a municipal review fee to cover off some of those roles such as operations or engineering that remain at the municipal level. The exact financial model of a centralized or hybrid model is not yet known, and will not be known until it is determined which municipalities may be participating and which may not. With respect to other roles filled by municipal planners such as heritage review, community improvement plan application intake/review, etc. such services would need to be assessed as part of the MOU negotiations to determine what's best handled at the County versus municipal level. County staff may need to sit down with each potentially participating municipality to better determine who currently offers which service, beyond *Planning Act* applications and policy work attributed to official plans and zoning by-laws.
4.2 Application Timelines: Timelines associated with processing development applications appear longer with the County than with the city.	• Owen Sound	The County and all nine member municipalities currently have varied staffing levels, and council-reporting requirements. As per the response to 2.7 above, the exact response timing and application processing timings are not yet known, but the expectation is that if the new model is established, it would be a similar level of customer service, if not improved, to what currently exists. Response times may also fluctuate, in times of peak demand, just as they currently do but the service model will be designed to respond to peak times through flex planners and being able to reallocate staff resources.
4.3 Policy and Development Planning: The County model proposes separating policy planning from development planning, but there is a real benefit to having those who undertake development planning also participate in policy development. Knowing how a policy will be implemented and will	• Owen Sound	The County is open to feedback on how best to handle policy and development planning. If they are separated divisions, the two divisions would need to be closely connected with regular communications between them. The County is open to exploring how other municipalities outside of Grey approach policy and

'work on the ground' is key to developing good policy. How will the proposed County model integrate development and policy planning?		development planning. Based on discussions with other planning departments it appears that the two are often separated, but there are pros and cons to both approaches i.e., separated divisions vs. joint policy/development staff. County staff concur that good policy staff must also have an understanding of implementation and how the policy is working on the ground. As noted elsewhere, staff also see the merits of a new model having flexibility to move between development and policy planning, depending on demand/workload. By building this flexibility into the system, it should give many planners the ability to gain experience and understanding in both the development and policy realms.
4.4 Delegated Tasks: There are other matters that have been delegated to staff by Council, including technical Planning Act applications, such as part lot control, final approval of Plans of Subdivisions, and undisputed consents. How will the proposed County model address these staff delegated matters, ensuring that the approvals and coordination are integrated at the local level?	• Owen Sound • Hanover • Meaford	As per the response to 2.5 above, approval authority is not proposed to change through the new model. Where there is an existing staff delegated approval, the MOU could spell out how that approval gets handled under a centralized model, i.e., does it continue to rest with the same municipal staff role, a different municipal staff role, or other.
4.5 Pre-consultation Requests: How will pre-consultation requests work given the tie in with municipal staff?	• Southgate	Pre-consultation requests would be handled by the centralized planning department in consultation with municipal staff such as engineering, operations, parks & recreation, etc. This would be similar to the current model in that sometimes when a municipality is fielding development inquiries, they may need to reach out to the County Planning or Transportation Services to consult on the impacts to County Road.
4.6 Committee of Adjustment: Committee of Adjustment must remain as a local appointed committee per municipality. Confirmation is also required that the secretary – treasurer role for Committee of Adjustment remains local.	• Hanover	Committees of Adjustment would remain at the municipal level. The future MOU could spell out how best, and who fills the secretary – treasurer role.
4.7 Planning Advisory Committees: Planning Advisory Committees for the municipal level – what would the function, role, and attendance of planning staff be?	• Hanover	This could be spelled out as part of the future MOU. Should municipalities wish to retain a municipal planning advisory committee, then centralized planning staff could attend on an as needed basis. In some cases, municipalities may choose to eliminate their local committees in favour of the County's Planning and Economic Development Advisory Committee.
4.8 Relationship with Council/CAO/Directors: With the new model, this relationship is expected to be at arms length, which can be considered a pro or a con.	• Meaford	Acknowledged. As per the response to 2.8 above, the MOU will spell out a communication chain between municipal staff and a centralized planning department, as well as an escalation protocol. This MOU could include provisions for regular communications/meetings at the director or senior staff level, as well as protocols for conflict resolution.
5.0 **Finance/IT/Legal/HR Matters**		

5.1 Potential Cost Increases: The County report notes that staff cannot guarantee that the model would result in cost savings or speedier decisions. It would be most unfortunate to implement this model only to have the cost increase. At that point, it would be hard to reverse the model as significant resources (financial and human) would be required to make this transition.	• Owen Sound • Meaford	Acknowledged. The goal is to provide consistent or better customer service at a similar cost. The model does not propose any increased staffing levels, and as such a similar number of salaries and total overall cost is anticipated which would be offset by application revenue and other cost-recovery arrangements worked out between the County and the participating member municipalities (see Section 5.2 below). The exact cost is not yet known, given that (a) it is not yet known if the model will move forward, and (b) if it does move forward, which municipalities will be participating.
5.2 Financial Analysis: As part of the analysis of the model, further financial analysis is required to understand costs that would be uploaded, costs that are currently within the Planning Division that would need to be reallocated to "home" divisions and how fees would be accounted for and costs that will remain with lower tiers to support planning work locally. How will the County provide a financial analysis of the model such that this does not remain unknown until after the model is implemented? Will lower tiers have input on the establishment of fees and charges relating to Planning Services?	• Owen Sound • Georgian Bluffs • Southgate • Hanover • Chatsworth	Acknowledged. As per the responses to 2.8, 3.3, 3.4, and 5.1 above, there are many factors that will feed into the total cost of the model. Should the model move forward in principle, staff anticipate that each municipality will be requested to state whether they are conditionally supportive or not. Once the County knows how many are conditionally supportive, then draft MOUs can be established, along with more detailed costing in consultation with the member municipalities. Along with the detailed costing, will also come a discussion on service levels and what services are currently offered by each municipality, including the requested service levels going forward under a potential new model. Once municipalities have been presented a draft MOU and detailed costing, they will be required to either commit to the centralized or hybrid model, or stick with their current model. County Council would also need to approve a future fees and services by-law update. As per the response to item 4.1 above, this would not preclude municipalities, through their own municipal by-laws, from also charging a municipal review fee to cover any local municipal costs.
5.3 Unsupported allocations: How would allocations that were not supported by planning fees be allocated out?	• Georgian Bluffs	This has not been determined yet. This could be difficult to determine until the County knows which municipalities are participating or not. As per the response to 5.2 above, a conditional support may be requested first in order to allow for a more in depth costing of a centralized or hybrid model.
5.4 Interim Funding: Would an interim funding approach be required while planning fees are migrated?	• Georgian Bluffs	There could be the need for an interim funding model or transfer payments during the initial phases of a hybrid or centralized model. While this has not been determined yet, this could include asking participating municipalities to allocate their existing planning services budget to the model (or portion thereof), or to allocate existing planning revenues to the model, until such time as a County fees and services by-law is updated.
5.5 Associated Municipal Costs: The County report notes that the County levy may be increased to cover the increased costs of a larger Planning department. Municipal budgets would need to account for the loss of revenue from planning applications. Municipalities would have significantly less control over the fees that would need to be levied for Planning Act matters at the local level, as it would appear that the County would recommend the required fees.	• Owen Sound • Southgate • Hanover • Meaford	Acknowledged. See responses to 5.1, 5.2, and 5.4 above.

5.6 Funding Models: Supportive of a funding model that sees municipalities responsible for the costs incurred within their municipality where no one municipality is subsidizing any other municipality. Costs for service should be linked to the services provided where possible.	• Georgian Bluffs	Acknowledged. The County will explore an equitable model, just as it currently does for the provision of GIS services. County staff note that the demands of any one municipality can fluctuate from year-to-year. Furthermore, one of the key benefits of the new model is pooled resources. For example, if municipality 'A' invests in a new comprehensive zoning by-law, then municipality 'B' may benefit from the work and lessons learned from municipality 'A's' new by-law when municipality 'B' updates their by-law. County staff also believe there are certain economies of scale that come from a joint or hybrid service model, that may otherwise be difficult to achieve as each individual planning department.
5.7 Software Programs: Municipalities have various software programs that would require integration, and some are undergoing significant expense and effort to acquire. There is no guarantee that the proposed County planning model will incorporate the existing lower-tier software applications, and municipalities may be required to switch to a new system chosen by the County. How will the County model determine what software to use? If that software is different from the current systems used, who will undertake the integration of all municipal files into the new system, and will there be any opportunity for reimbursement to the lower tiers for recently invested software?	• Owen Sound • Southgate • Hanover	Acknowledged. Consultation will be required with municipal planning and IT staff, as well as County planning and IT staff. Should a centralized or hybrid model move forward, there may be an interim approach where the County and each participating municipality continues to use their exiting software platforms until a decision can be made on the appropriate platform to be used on a go forward basis. File integration and records management would need to be discussed with both IT and clerks staff. Any discussions on reimbursement are premature at this stage.
5.8 Networks: Will County planners expect to have access to local IT networks? How will data safely be maintained if an external staff member is accessing a Township network? Will the County accept some risk/liability if an issue is caused?	• Southgate	Consultation will be required with municipal/County IT and clerks staff with respect to network access, safety, records management etc. These details could be spelled out as part of the MOU process.
5.9 Conflicts: In the past, municipalities have appealed decisions from another municipality. With shared hubs, this has the potential to set staff up to be in some conflicts between political decision-makers that may jeopardize their professional standard of practice as required by OPPI. How will these potential conflicts be addressed?	• Owen Sound	See the responses to 2.8 and 4.8 above. First and foremost, planners will be bound to their independent professional planning opinions, as well as their obligations to the public interest, OPPI, and CIP. There may be instances where a professional planner's recommendation, is contrary to the position of their municipal council, or County Council. In those instances, either council could be required to seek outside planning advice to defend their position. These scenarios can already arise in the current framework, and are also encountered in other municipal realms, i.e., two municipalities use the same external legal counsel, and where conflict arises between the two, both have to seek additional independent legal advice.
5.10 Staff Retention: It has been hard to attract and retain staff in a small team. The ability for a larger team, with a broad range of skills and opportunity for growth and development will allow the County to attract and retain employees and that through stability, relationships across Grey County will improve with developers and community, leading to more consistent decisions that help to reduce red tape.	• Georgian Bluffs • Southgate	Acknowledged – this is potentially one of the biggest benefits of a centralized or hybrid model.
5.11 Staff Recruitment: Would this model provide an opportunity to begin recruiting for new graduates from planning schools to create a supply of knowledgeable staff?	• Southgate	The new model will allow for recruitment across multiple streams including but not limited to new graduates. See also the response to 2.3 above, with respect to co-op or student hires.

5.12 Mentoring Opportunities: The model has the potential to build team mentoring/development capacity, along with building general capacity for peak period of application volume. This should assist with succession planning. How will mentoring be provided if the teams are spread out?	• Southgate	With the ability of virtual work environments (Teams/Zoom) to assist in meeting across a larger geographic space we do not anticipate issues with mentoring. The County participates in an Ontario municipal wide mentorship program originated by Innisfil. The mentorship program has been successfully matching mentors and mentees across the Ontario municipal work environment. The County has also organized an informal planning mentorship group which meets monthly with planners from across the County, municipal, and private-sector levels as both a peer-to-peer knowledge sharing and mentoring opportunity.
5.13 Compensation: Will this impact local planning staff salaries? Planners may potentially see an increase in compensation. It is a benefit to move from a variety of employers to one with a definitive pay structure versus many.	• Southgate • West Grey	No planner will be negatively affected by a reduction in salary. When the model has been finalized the County will ensure that we consult with Gallagher and Associates our third-party non-union compensation advisors to ensure our compensation structures are appropriate.
5.14 Relationship Management: The County is underestimating the level of capacity needed for relationship management. These will be a major level of time/investment as this rolls out.	• Southgate	The County is well placed to manage relationships across a large geographic area as staff do that every day across our many facilities and departments. Relationships with the development industry, residents, and councils are also important. Having planners regularly present to municipal councils and committees is just one manner in which both the relationship and trust will be built. Change management processes will be implemented to ensure that staff and management are ready to move to a centralized model.
5.15 Managing of Teams: Given the size of each development team, is it reasonable for the senior planners to manage the other planners and still do projects? There would be limited project capacity given management/mentoring needs	• Southgate	Workloads and management levels will be assessed as the project proceeds.
5.16 Hiring and Performance Evaluation: Will municipalities be involved in the hiring and performance evaluation of planners?	• Southgate	Performance management will be conducted by the planner's direct supervisor. The County has a goal-based annual performance cycle that is focused on departmental and individual priorities, professional development, and mentorship. Recruitment of planning positions will be conducted by the County. Assessment of efficiency and overall program goals involve local municipalities.
5.17 Subcontractors: Are the planners going to be considered subcontractors or are they treated as other municipal staff?	• Southgate	Planners under a central model will be County employees.
5.18 Deputy Director/Manager Positions: Are the new Deputy Director and Manager positions being posted externally for fair and open competition? Is the Director's position going to be open for competition? If not, why?	• Southgate	Recruitment or assignment of positions has not been established. The County wants to ensure that all individuals have a position in the new model. Once the full model is determined strategies for placement will be determined.
5.19 Administrative Assistants: What will the role of the current Administrative Assistants be?	• Chatsworth	The model as currently laid out would have Administrative Assistants stay at their respective municipal and County levels. Depending on the final outcome of the model, there may still be the need for some administrative support at the municipal level, e.g. booking office hours, assisting with mailouts, etc. The final

		details of the support needed (if needed), could be determined as part of the future MOUs.
5.20 Loss of Employees: If planners decide they no longer wish to remain if the model is pursued, how will this be addressed?	• Southgate • Hanover	The planner would receive a severance package pursuant to the Employment Standards Act.
5.21 Staff Training: How will planners be trained in work that they currently have no experience to deliver?	• Southgate	A professional development and training plan will be put in place. Annual plans are developed in conjunction with staff. Having a spectrum of diverse skillsets will also allow planners to learn from one another as they grow in their roles, or work towards future promotions.
5.22 Professional Development: This model has the potential to increase professional development opportunities. Some member municipalities have isolated planners with fewer mentorship opportunities, less training budget, etc. The model may provide greater knowledge of other municipalities and the ability to grow within the County. However, the opposite may occur and some member municipalities may lose opportunities currently enjoyed by staff for external training or events.	• Meaford	Each County department has a fulsome education budget appropriate to the departments need for maintaining professional designations and succession planning. There are several committees and events that the County maintains that are not planning specific however may interest employees in the central planning model. Annual development plans will be created for each of the planning department team members.
5.23 Termination Pay: Will termination pay need to be provided to planning staff when they shift from municipality to the County? How will we mitigate perceived constructive dismissal?	• Hanover	The focus of the centralized planning model is to maintain current compensation and benefits for all members who will be participating. This will mitigate any perception of constructive dismissal.
5.24 Approved Leaves: What if there is a current municipal planning staff member on an approved leave when the transition to a centralized model occurs?	• Hanover	Approved ESA leaves will be maintained as is to not disrupt current benefits for insurance/income replacement. Positions will be offered and effective the date a leave concludes. More research will need to be conducted for staff on extended long-term disability. HR staff will consult with each other from County to municipality and determine the best path forward.
5.25 Errors and Legal Implications: What is the anticipated process if a minor or major error occurs by County staff doing planning work for the Municipality? How will legal liability and resolution of any claims or damages be addressed? How will the County make efforts to mitigate the impact to the relationship or reputation of the Municipality?	• Southgate	The County has an indemnity policy for all staff who might make an honest mistake in the conduct of their work duties. If such an error takes place, we will work as a team to mitigate any reputational damage. RPPs and candidate members also carry professional liability insurance through their professional memberships.
6.0 Municipal Record Keeping		
6.1 Physical Records: If implemented, comments from the Municipal Clerks Division regarding file sharing/records management should be obtained. How will physical records be managed?	• Owen Sound • Southgate	Acknowledged – see also the responses to 5.7 and 5.8 above. Further discussions between IT and clerks will be needed here. Additional details could be included in the MOUs in this regard. County staff could further investigate how other centralized or hybrid counties handle record keeping in this regard.
6.2 Emails: How will emails be managed? Some municipalities have policies on record keeping of corporate email as they pertain to municipal issues.	• Southgate	Acknowledged – see also the responses to 5.7, 5.8, and 6.1 above. Any staff in a hybrid or centralized model would be County staff, and as such would be bound by the County's records retention policies and have a County email address. However, there may be overlap with municipal policies as well, e.g., records retention on a County-staff authored municipal council planning report. Municipal/County freedom of information requests would also need to be

		assessed in this regard as well. Additional details could be included in the MOUs in this regard. County staff could further investigate how other centralized or hybrid counties handle emails in this regard.
7.0 Timelines or Transitional Considerations		
7.1 Hybrid Model: There may be some merit in re-establishing a previous County model in which the County provided in-house planning services for some lower-tier municipalities. This hybrid model may be beneficial for municipalities that currently rely on sole practitioner planners or planning consultants and which do not have Engineering divisions because they do not have urban settlement areas serviced by municipal water, sewer and stormwater management systems. A hybrid model that begins with a few municipalities and is phased in, would allow the model to be scaled up over time and reviewed to determine financial impact and other success measurables.	• Owen Sound	County staff received direction on November 28, 2024 through staff repot PDR-CW-63-24 to continue to investigate service delivery models. The hybrid option is one of the models being investigated. There will be further discussion on the hybrid model as part of the joint council meeting in March.
7.2 Level of Support Needed: Is there a critical mass of support of lower-tier municipalities to realize the efficiencies of a centralized model? If so, how many must participate to realize these efficiencies?	• Georgian Bluffs	See response to 7.1 above. At this stage County Council has not set a firm threshold for what that critical mass of support needed would be, but staff expect further discussion on this as part of the joint council meeting in March.
7.3 Phase-in Potential: Would the change be considered permanent, or would there be potential for a pilot or phased-in approach? What would the risks and benefits of this be?	• Georgian Bluffs	The County is open to implementation options in this regard, which may include either phasing or a pilot approach. If the change is not permanent, there will need to be a minimum trial period (e.g., 3-years) in order to work through any start-up issues as well as ascertaining success and efficiencies. Maintaining full-time permanent employment for any member municipal planner joining employment at Grey County is important to ensure that we avoid any perception of constructive dismissal.
7.4 Process Mapping: Will the County be doing a process mapping exercise for various planning applications? If yes, should the mapping exercise show that various municipal processes differ? Will the County want a standardized model or provide a model that is municipality focused? Who will complete the processing mapping?	• Southgate • Hanover	County staff can complete some process mapping in this regard. While County staff recognize that each municipality is unique, there would need to be some standardization of processes in order to attain some of the desired efficiencies and aid in implementation. The future MOUs will also help define future processes.
7.4 Opting-Out: What options will be available should a municipality desire to opt out of this agreement? Will there be a period that municipalities must remain in the system to make this work? Could the County take the position that the system is working and provide no opt out clause?	• Southgate	See responses to 2.5 and 7.3 above as it pertains to regular review of the MOU and permanency of a new model.
***7.5 Roll-Out*:** How quickly will the roll out of service take place?	• Southgate	A timeline has not yet been established.
7.6 Service Level Agreements: Why are only two options (status quo and County-lead model) being considered? Could a third option be considered with service level agreements and service assistance provided between local municipalities (i.e., where one municipality can assist another)? If so, could this not be negotiated between all the local municipalities and include cost recovery/assistance and address potential legal and liabilities issues?	• Southgate • Chatsworth	See response to 7.1 above. Service level agreements between municipalities could also be investigated, just as some municipalities already share building services staff.
7.7 Applications In Process: What is the transition plan for applications in process?	• Hanover	This will need to be determined and detailed as part of the initial MOU.

7.8 Focus Group: A Director's Focus Group could be created to provide further input for questions and clarifications throughout the exploration phase.	• Hanover	Acknowledged – staff are happy to explore this further following the joint council meeting in March.
8.0 Other Roles Served by Municipal Planners		
***8.1 Planning Adjacent Work*:** Municipal planners serve many other roles beyond development application processing and policy review. This other work may be considered "planning adjacent work". What is the anticipated availability of the Planning staff within the proposed County model to support planning adjacent work in lower tiers? Will there be services that the County will establish as "not being offered"?	• Owen Sound • Southgate • Hanover • Meaford	Acknowledged – see response above to 4.1.
8.2 Special Projects: On many special projects, municipalities use cross-department, multifunctional teams. Will planners be available under the proposed model to resource cross-departmental, multifunctional teams on special projects, studies, etc.?	• Owen Sound	County staff see merit to participation in such municipal special projects. The MOUs could spell out what capacity is available for such project participation.
9.0 Municipal Agreements		
9.1 Municipal Plans: How will municipal agreements such as plans of subdivision or site plan approval be addressed under the new model? Will staff be required locally to support this work and how will this be integrated with other divisions?	• Owen Sound	This has not been determined yet, and will need to be (a) further investigated, and (b) detailed as part of the future MOUs. Most likely there would still need to be municipal staff support required for such agreements including possibly clerks and legal advice with support being provided by County planners.
9.2 Document Consistency: Municipalities may rely on consultant support in developing zoning bylaws and official plan work. These documents may be very similar, and benefit from the experience of other local Grey County municipalities, but when working with consultants, the municipality does not necessarily benefit from this shared experience. It would be easier to access this shared value in a centralized model where the same policy planning team would be able to extend support to all lower-tier municipalities. This would also enhance consistency to residents.	• Georgian Bluffs	Acknowledged – this is potentially one of the biggest benefits of a centralized or hybrid model.
9.3 Document Updates: A clear framework for document updates such as Zoning Bylaws and Official Plans is needed. Knowledge of all municipalities respective Official Plans and Zoning Bylaws will be challenging.	• Hanover • Meaford	Acknowledged – this will be challenging, but also an opportunity for some standardization and peer-to-peer learning. Staff have discussed this matter with both Bruce and Huron Counties who have shared both challenges as well as opportunities for efficiency and 'not reinventing the wheel' when looking at official plan and zoning by-law updates.
10.0 Future MOU Considerations		
10.1 MOU Content: Developing service agreements or memorandums of understanding with each of the participating lower-tier municipalities would be critical in ensuring that services were accountable to local needs. Municipalities will want to see and have the opportunity to shape such agreements and would value the ability for these to be individually established to allow for individual needs of municipalities to be reflected. The MOUs need to clearly define responsibilities and roles, including the authority for decision making. They should also include consideration on municipal staff interaction/communication, financials, physical work spaces and conflict resolutions.	• Georgian Bluffs • Hanover • Chatsworth	Acknowledged – see also the response to 5.2 above. Staff agree that the MOU's/service agreements will be critical and will be worked out between the County and each participating member municipality.

10.2 Additional Services: What if a municipality wanted to take on new services that would be outside of the service arrangements?	• Southgate	This would need to be discussed between the municipality and the County as part of a potential MOU update.
11.0 Communications and Reporting		
11.1 Planning Stats: Will the County be reporting planning stats (application volumes)?	• Southgate	Yes in order to offer full transparency, this is a reasonable request, which can be met.
11.2 Council Visits: Will the Director or Deputy CAO be making regular visits to local municipal councils to check-in and give a 'state of planning'?	• Southgate	See the response to 2.8 above. The future MOU will spell out a communication chain between municipal staff and a centralized or hybrid planning department. This MOU could include provisions for regular communications/meetings at the director or senior staff level, updates to County and local municipal councils, as well as protocols for conflict resolution.
11.3 Report Templates: Will planners be providing reports in County or Municipal report/presentation formats?	• Southgate	This could be spelled out as part of the future MOU, but staff anticipate it will be a mix i.e., depending on the council or committee the report is being presented to, it would be in the format of that council or committee.
11.4 Public Communication: What is the communications strategy to advise the public of these changes?	• Southgate	Should the model progress forward, there can be further public communications here. Currently the County has a page on its website with information on this model, and seeking feedback. https://www.grey.ca/government/special-projects/centralized-planning-service-delivery-model
12.0 Other		
12.1 Lobbying Power: There may be increased lobbying power (ROMA/OPPI/AMO/Provincial or Federal Government)	• Southgate	Acknowledged
12.2 Remaining Unknowns: There are too many unknowns, and because of those questions, if the reform is implemented, the law of averages dictates that there will be a better change of unseen costs arising through all these 'grey' areas. These will only be found when the system is operating. Further, I don't want to see any lower-tier municipality lose autonomy in planning. Historically, the person or organization holding the purse strings has the last say, or at least more of an influence.	• Southgate	Acknowledged – see the response to 5.2 above, which outlines some potential next steps and investigation areas.
12.3 OLT Courts: Will planners be made available in the event of appeals to Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) or the courts, and at whose expense? A framework is needed.	• Southgate • Hanover	Acknowledged – see the answer to 9.1 above. This will need to be further investigated and spelled out as part of the future MOUs, both as it pertains to future OLT matters, but also existing OLT matters. These considerations would pertain to planning staff and legal resources. While nothing has been determined yet, staff anticipate being able to make planning staff available for OLT matters, provided staff capacity exists. As it pertains to external legal counsel, that would likely have to remain the responsibility of the approval authority, i.e., municipalities would still be responsible for providing legal resources where their council or committee made a decision that was appealed or failed to make a decision on a planning matter that was appealed.

*Note regarding Appendix 1: there are many references to a centralized service delivery model in Appendix 1, including in the County staff responses. These references are in response to the original centralized service delivery model concept. This concept has since evolved into a potential hybrid service delivery model concept. For the sake of responding to the original municipal comments, there are still references to the centralized model, but such responses shall now be read with the understanding that a hybrid model is now what's being considered.