



Corporate Report

NO: R182

COUNCIL DATE: September 29, 2008

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council** DATE: **September 15, 2008**
FROM: **W. Fraser MacRae, Chief Superintendent
Officer in Charge, Surrey Detachment** FILE:
SUBJECT: **Crime Reduction Strategy - Community Safety Officers**

RECOMMENDATION

The Surrey RCMP Detachment recommends that Council receive this report as information.

INTENT

The intention of this report is to inform Council of the progress that has been made in introducing Community Safety Officers in Surrey in accordance with the recommendations of the Crime Reduction Strategy.

BACKGROUND

The Surrey Crime Reduction Strategy (CRS) was publicly launched in 2007. The CRS contains 106 recommendations that are focussed on reducing crime and improving perceptions about crime in Surrey and thereby improving quality of life for those who choose to live in, work in or visit this City.

One of the recommendations under the “Prevent and Deter Crime” strand of the CRS reads as follows:

- *Use ‘Community Safety Officers’ : That the City in conjunction with the RCMP and academic researchers create a model for the role of “community safety officers” in respect to policing prevention functions in the City and that appropriate actions be taken to implement the results.*

DISCUSSION

The RCMP has developed a job profile for a “Community Safety Officer” position over the last year. Since this position represents a new approach to delivering police services, the RCMP advised that they would implement the new positions in a few communities on a pilot basis to

gain knowledge about how the positions could best be utilized in the context of delivering effective police services. The City of Surrey indicated its willingness to be one of the municipalities that was involved in the pilot project by including in its 2008 police services operating budget funding for 10 such positions. Based on this action by the City, a Community Safety Officer (CSO) pilot project began in Surrey in the spring of this year.

The job profile for CSO's includes that they are to be unarmed, distinctively uniformed peace officers working under the general supervision of a regular RCMP member for low-risk activities and under the direct supervision of a regular RCMP member for all other activities. Although the CSO's are not issued a sidearm, they do carry basic self-defence equipment, such as a baton and Oleoresin Capsicum (OC or pepper) spray.

Ten (10) individuals were recruited locally for the positions. These individuals were sent for initial training at the RCMP Pacific Regional Training Centre in Chilliwack and, subsequently, were assigned to the Surrey RCMP Detachment for a further one-month orientation and on-the-ground training period with Neighbourhood Liaison regular members. During August 2008, the training period of the CSO's was completed and they are now assigned regular shifts as part of Surrey's police services function.

The CSO's primary purpose is to provide the community with additional police resources by engaging in crime prevention activities and reassurance policing. This frees up regular RCMP members to focus on other types of police activities that require the more extensive training that full members receive at Depot. In accordance with the Surrey Crime Reduction Strategy, the CSO's are providing a visible and accessible uniformed presence in Surrey's communities with a focus on improving quality of life in the community and offering public reassurance.

Because they were recruited locally, are serving locally and are not subject to the transfer policy of regular RCMP members, it is expected that they will be better able to establish lasting relationships with the community.

Based on the experience to date, the introduction of this new policing concept appears to be very successful and well targeted. The reception of the CSO's by community members and business owners and operators has been overwhelmingly positive and accepting. The current group of CSO's is actively involved in crime prevention measures, foot patrols, problem-solving and target-hardening, as well as regular dialogue with community members and business owners to assist in developing a sense of security and well-being in the community. An example gleaned from a report from a CSO reads as follows:

"I have been approached by countless members of the community who have been coming up to me and saying how happy they are to see us walking around. For example, in Clayton Heights I have given Shoppers Drug Mart my cell number as they are having issues with some individuals in question and they left the area....when we walk in the downtown core of Cloverdale, shop owners come out and always talk with us and say on a daily basis how happy they are to see us around."

And, from the report of another CSO:

"We have received positive feedback from both business and community people. Every business owner that we have approached has expressed interest in our Business Watch

initiative and enthusiasm for our presence. We have been stopped by numerous seniors and other people who have asked about the CSO program and have expressed gratitude for our presence. Attended a Board Meeting of community leaders of the Semiahmoo Volunteer Community Society; they expressed enthusiasm for the program....”

The CSO pilot project in Surrey was introduced with the intention of the positions being somewhat flexible so that as experience was gained the scope of the positions could be adjusted to reflect their full potential to meet the varying needs of the community. The CSO pilot project in Surrey is to be 18 months in length. Currently, the CSO's in Surrey are deployed in the Cloverdale and South Surrey Districts with the intention of further refining how these positions will be used in delivering police services. Over the course of the pilot program, the positions will be deployed in the other policing Districts of the City. Each District offers different opportunities in relation to fully recognizing the value of this new role.

Further reports on the CSO pilot program will be provided to Council as additional experience is gained with this innovative approach to the delivery of police services.

CONCLUSION

The Surrey RCMP is committed to supporting the Surrey Crime Reduction Strategy. The introduction of CSO's in Surrey is consistent with this commitment. The Surrey RCMP continues to explore additional means and methods by which to support and respond to the specific public safety needs of Surrey's citizens.

W. Fraser MacRae, Chief Superintendent
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