

NO: P003

COMMITTEE DATE: **January 30, 2017**

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## **PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE**

TO: **Mayor & Council**

DATE: **January 27, 2017**

FROM: **Chief Superintendent,  
Officer in Charge, Surrey RCMP  
Fire Chief, Surrey Fire  
Director, Public Safety Strategies  
Manager, Bylaw Enforcement and  
Licensing Services**

FILE: **7450-30**

SUBJECT: **City Centre Response Plan – Status Report 1**

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

The Surrey RCMP, Surrey Fire Service and the City Manager's office recommend that the Public Safety Committee:

1. receive this report as information; and,
2. endorse the continued operation of the Parkway Shelter for four month intervals, and the potential continued operation until no longer required, or March 31, 2018, whichever comes first, to allow for transition from the current situation, and the development of a Housing Action Plan related to this project.

## **INTENT**

The purpose of this report is to update Public Safety Committee on the activities of the City Centre Response Plan since its inception in December 2016.

## **BACKGROUND**

Like all municipalities, Surrey is facing increased challenges related to homelessness, mental health, and Fentanyl use. When all of these issues are present for a group of individuals addressing these needs is a significant challenge. As a result they often become street entrenched. This presents significant related public health challenges. It also brings public safety challenges as these individuals are easily preyed upon by those willing to exploit their vulnerable situation and their dependency. In Surrey these issues play out daily on 135A Street between 106 and 108 Avenues (and in the surrounding neighbourhoods). This issue is especially complex and requires integrated solutions which build on existing initiatives in keeping with the priorities of our Public Safety Strategy.

To address these issues in a comprehensive and collaborative manner which addresses both public safety and public health, the City of Surrey, the Surrey RCMP, Fraser Health and several community partners developed the 3 phase City Centre Response Plan in order to address housing, addictions,

mental health and crime issues in the vicinity of 135A Street. The three phases of the plan are: Emergency Housing First, Enhanced Service Presence, and Consultation and Planning for Future Actions.

## **DISCUSSION**

As stated there are three phases to this project to ensure we comprehensively address all aspects of this complex issue. The first phase includes expanded shelter spaces and hours of availability. The first priority in the response plan is to ensure that the community and service providers are aware of newly expanded emergency shelter spaces including the Extreme Weather Shelter and the Guildford Shelter.

### ***Status of Permanent and Temporary Shelter Beds***

#### *Permanent Shelter Beds*

There are a total of 117 permanent shelter beds in Surrey; 40 of these beds are in the City Centre at the Gateway Shelter. Permanent shelter beds operate at near or full capacity every night.

#### *Temporary Shelter Beds*

Surrey has one 40-bed temporary shelter in the Boulevard Shelter. It operates at or near capacity every night. A lease extension is being negotiated with BC Housing to allow it to continue to operate as a temporary homeless shelter for the period from June 1, 2017 to May 31, 2018. It is anticipated that this will be forwarded to Council for approval on February 20th.

On October 24, 2016, Council approved the use of a City-owned building at 14716 – 104 Avenue as a 40 bed Guildford Shelter. Renovations to the building will be completed by the first week of February for a proposed shelter opening on February 10, 2017.

On January 27, 2017, BC Housing informed staff that they are willing to extend operation of the Parkway Shelter (104 - 10660 City Parkway) for four months at which time staff will report back to Council. BC Housing indicated a willingness to provide further extensions as required until March 31, 2018 to alleviate the current situation and while a Housing Action Plan is developed with BC Housing and other partners. This proposed extension would provide 40 additional temporary shelter spaces.

As with the Boulevard Shelter, a Guildford Shelter Community Advisory Committee (CAC) was established in November, 2016. The Guildford CAC includes representatives from Lookout, Hjorth Road Elementary School (Principal), local residents, Fraser Health Authority, BC Housing, RCMP and City staff. The Guildford CAC meets monthly. Two meetings have been held to date. As this shelter has yet to open there have yet to be any negative concerns related to its operation. The opening of this shelter will provide its residents better access to services and supports including Fraser Health staff working on-site at the shelter to connect residents with health services, including mental health and substance use services, and Housing outreach workers working to transition people into housing.

Lookout Emergency Aid Society will be operating the Guildford Shelter. Lookout has already started assembling a list of people to populate the shelter. Some will be coming from 135A Street (couples included) and some will be moved from Boulevard Shelter to Guildford which will free up space at Boulevard for those on 135A Street that are unwilling to travel to Guildford. The outreach

workers are indicating that there are some homeless in the Guildford area and they may approach the shelter after it is open.

### *Temporary Mats*

Since April 2016, in response to the increasing numbers of homeless people and tents on 135A Street, BC Housing has been funding an additional 45 mats at existing shelter/agency locations. These include Surrey Urban Mission (20 mats), Boulevard Shelter (5 mats), Positive Haven (10 mats), and Hyland House (10 mats). The temporary mats have been at or near capacity.

### *Extreme Weather Response (EWR) Mats*

There is capacity to provide a total of 212 EWR mats at 6 EWR shelters in Surrey. Three of the EWR shelters are located in the City Centre – Surrey Urban Mission (20 mats), Lookout (50 mats) and Nightshift (15 mats for women).

EWR alerts have been issued on 47 nights between October 13, 2016 and January 15, 2017. The average bed occupancy on nights when the shelter has opened during an EWR alert has been 98% at Surrey Urban Mission, 91% at Lookout, and 25% at Nightshift. The EWR Shelter dates of operation has been extended by BC Housing to April 30, 2017 in order to ensure we can avoid an post winter influx of individuals on to 135A Street.

## **Phase 2 – Enhanced Service Presence – Surrey Outreach Team and Expanded Substance Use Services: A Pilot Project**

The Surrey RCMP, City of Surrey, Fraser Health – in collaboration with other agencies – are collaborating on a pilot project which has committed significant public health and public safety resources to lessen the negative impacts of mental health, addictions and homelessness on the area of 135A Street. This is done through two complimentary approaches:

- *The Surrey Outreach Team*, comprised of RCMP members and Bylaws staff, is a two year outreach and engagement pilot initiative which is an on the ground manifestation of the four priorities of the Public Safety Strategy – Ensure Safe Places, Prevent and Reduce Crime, Build Community Capacity and Support Vulnerable Persons. As described below it will allow for the development of integrated responses to address crime and related public health and public safety challenges.
- *The Fraser Health Expanded Substance Use Treatment Services* provides expanded substance use treatment and supervised consumption services at two locations (Quibble Creek and 135A Street). Both locations would require Section 56 exemptions to allow them to operate as described below. The Quibble Creek location will be an embedded facility accessible by current Fraser Health patients and is outside the scope of the City Centre Response Plan. Services on 135A Street will be part of this pilot project and would **allow all partners to evaluate the success of this type of intensive intervention.**

Over the course of the pilot the services offered and the service delivery model may change to meet improving or shifting circumstances.

### **2.1 Surrey Outreach Team (SOT)**

On January 4, 2017 the Surrey Outreach Team (SOT) became operational 24/7. The Team is operating primarily in the area from 104th Avenue to 108th Avenue and City Parkway to King

George Boulevard. The Team is currently operating out of the Surrey Command Centre, and will continue to do so until the trailer facility is ready. While the Team conducts daily operational briefings, there is also a weekly management round table with representation from all project partners.

The Team has implemented a Daily Report log sheet to track significant operational information (e.g., this data collection tool is being used to capture key observations, activities and outcomes). Below is a summary of some of the data from the last two weeks of SOT Daily Reports:

Surrey Outreach Team Summary, January 10th to 23rd, 2017		
Measure	#	Method
Number of people in tents	53	Average per day
Total number of tents	49	Average per day
Fatal overdoses	0	Total
Non-fatal overdoses ( <i>police involved/confirmed</i> )	55	Total
People moved to locations outside of 135A St	12	Total
People moved to shelter beds	10	Total
Missing Persons: number located on 135A St	6	Total
Business contacts*	48	Total

\* May include businesses contacted more than once

The SOT members maintain a list of those individuals considered to be currently living on 135A Street between 106 Avenue and 108 Avenue. This list is updated on an ongoing basis based on input from SOT member and represents the street entrenched residents that comprise the primary outreach client group. The Daily Report log sheet also continues to be adapted to meet project needs. For example, the Team just recently began tracking known incidents of displacement. Since January 14, 2017, four residents from the 135A Street area were found to be living elsewhere.

The SOT Daily Reports have indicated positive feedback from 135A Street area residents, shelters, health providers, and businesses for the SOT program and the members comprising the team. There has been recognition from 135A Street area residents that the SOT team has a mandate to assist them; this relationship building has facilitated referrals to treatment, and generated cooperation from residents in clean-up efforts along 135A Street.

Issues the SOT has been dealing with through engagement, enforcement, and partnership with other agencies (e.g., Surrey Bylaws, Surrey Fire Department) include:

- Open flame heating sources in tents, such as candles and propane heaters, represent a fire hazard and risk to public safety
- Challenges relating to the inclement weather, e.g., snow and ice impeding efforts to clean-up the area, biohazards (used needles, fecal matter) and refuse frozen into ice at the sides of the streets/on the sidewalk, etc.
- A number of known drug dealers have been seen in the 135A Street area
- Predatory chronic offenders are being informed that they are not welcome within the “safe zone” of the 135A Street area
- Naloxone is being used by members, EHS, the Front Room, and 135A Street area residents. While Naloxone is being administered in response to overdoses across the

City, of the 48 incidents where Naloxone was administered between January 1-18, 44 instances (90%) occurred in Whalley (primarily in and around the City Centre).

The Surrey Outreach Team has received generally favourable media coverage since the launch of the City Centre Response Plan on December 6, 2016. Stories have appeared in local and regional news outlets detailing the City and Surrey RCMP's commitment to helping those most vulnerable on 135A Street get connected to services. A recent update on the official launch of the Surrey Outreach Team, during an especially cold stretch, resulted in additional positive media coverage. During this time, the Surrey RCMP's Media Relations Unit facilitated a walk-along with members of the Team and CBC Radio News. The story focused on the officers' positive engagement with those living in the area and the relationships being built with community partners. Similar stories are being planned with other media outlets as well as an update on the Surrey Outreach Team trailer once it inhabits a physical space on 135A Street.

#### *Next Steps*

- Trailer procurement and operationalization (ETA: March); Media plan is also being developed to support the roll-out of the Trailer
- Continue to refine and finalize business rules/protocols
- Consistent use of newly created SOT PRIME handle to assist with tracking and analysis of CFS/GO data

#### ***Fire Response to Risks of Open Flames***

Over the past several years, there has been an increase in the occurrence of 'tent cities' in local communities. Accompanying this there have been numerous incidents both in Surrey and in nearby communities where injury or death has occurred as a result of fire. This was most recently reported in Squamish on January 22<sup>nd</sup> where a man was found dead as a result of an apparent explosion in his tent.

#### *Risks and Response*

While tents sold in Canada are regulated to be flame-resistant, they are not by any means fireproof. They will burn readily if left in continuous contact with a flame source. Tarps are not regulated by Health Canada for flame-resistance at all and can burn freely when ignited, dripping burning residue. Propane is often used as a source of fuel for heat and light in camping equipment. Propane is highly flammable, under pressure, and heavier than air – causing potential for it to collect inside of tents. When propane tanks are heated beyond their capacity to vent excess pressure, devastating explosions can occur. Propane, when burned, also produces toxic carbon monoxide. Carbon monoxide causes disorientation and is most dangerous when people are sleeping and fail to wake up or realize they are at risk as this gas has no colour, odour or taste. Prolonged exposure to CO can lead to brain damage and death. Health Canada recommends that open flames, smoking materials, and fuel-powered lanterns or heaters never be used inside a tent.

Since December 2016, we have been educating tent occupants about the dangers of burning in tents. In situations where tent occupants continue to use open flames or fuel powered devices for heat and light, we would like to request that occupants surrender these hazardous items. In exchange, we will provide them with safe solar or crank-powered LED lights, good quality wool blankets and hot water bottles that can be filled at the Front Room. BC Housing has agreed to fund the purchase of such items and LookOut will distribute these items as part of their Outreach program.

### *Bylaw Enforcement Officers Operational Participation*

As part of the Surrey Outreach Team, there are 4 dedicated Bylaw Enforcement Officers partnered with the RCMP. Bylaw staff have been conducting well-being checks on all individuals and tents in the area with the RCMP. Daily clean-ups are being conducted and individuals are encouraged to keep the area clean. Bylaw officers are also working with Surrey's Fires Services to address fire safety concerns associated to open flame sources. Business engagement is ongoing and initial feedback is positive. Bylaw staff also conduct daily displacement patrols to minimize any displacements in the area. Since the start of this initiative, there has been a reduction of 20% in calls for service, in and around 135A Street as they relate to homelessness and loitering.

### **2.2 Expanded Substance Use Treatment Services**

#### *Operational Aspects of the Fraser Health Approach*

In addition to the SOT project, Fraser Health is expanding Substance Use Treatment Services through an integrated, treatment-focused approach. They are seeking to develop more options to access multiple services for opioid dependent populations through a continuum of care that can move from urgent intervention to engagement to substance use treatment to recovery. Fraser Health began implementing their aspects of the plan in December 2016. Detail of the expanded services Fraser Health has put in place around 135A Street:

- Additional OD prevention outreach workers 12 hours per day.
- Staffing of the winter shelter 12 hours per day.
- 2 outreach nurses per day as needed during OD volume peaks.
- ACT Team and housing outreach workers during OD volume peaks.
- St. John Ambulance volunteers responding to high volume of ODs.
- EHS presence responding during high volume OD periods.

Fraser Health has submitted a partial application for S. 56 Exemption for Supervised Consumption Services to Health Canada on December 30, 2016. Consultations with stakeholders have commenced and are ongoing with two large consultations planned on February 3rd and 4th for individuals and establishments who reside within 500m of the proposed sites. Current timelines indicate a likely Spring 2017 implementation; however, the start date is contingent on Health Canada approval.

Fraser Health has signed a formal Letter of Intent with Britco, allowing them to produce drawings of the trailer which will house Supervised Consumption Services. Target date for site installation is April 18, 2017; however, the start of services is still 'to be determined' as it is contingent on acceptance of the S.56 exemption from Health Canada described above.

Fraser Health indicates the following positive outcomes since the implementation of expanded services on 135A Street:

- There was a decrease in the number of visits to Surrey Memorial Hospital for overdoses in the month of December.
- Since expanding Opioid Agonist Treatment (formerly known as Opioid Substitution Treatment) at the SHOP Clinic on January 3rd, 9 individuals who reside on 135A Street have started treatment in the first week. It is important to recognize that Opioid Agonist Treatment is the first line of treatment for individuals who suffer from opioid addiction.
- Core Addictions Practice training provided by Fraser Health for RCMP has resulted in enhancing interactions with homeless individuals.

### **Phase 3 - Consultation and Planning for Future Actions**

#### ***Create a City Centre Public Safety Management Group***

The Public Safety Management Group began meeting weekly following launch of the Surrey Outreach Team. This group provides oversight to all aspects of the project. It involves senior internal staff (City Manager, Public Safety, RCMP, Surrey Fire, Engineering, Planning) and external partners (Fraser Health, BC Housing). The group will continue to review the current situation, consider multiple perspectives on the related challenges and recommend future actions to Mayor and Council in order to improve health, social wellbeing and public safety.

To begin operationalizing this committee we have established weekly management meetings involving all partners. Key issues dealt with to date include operationalizing the response plan, addressing the fire risk of open flames in tents, and beginning to develop a strategy for moving occupants of tents to more appropriate housing options. BC Housing has become very engaged in this process and we have begun to map out an action plan which will be forwarded to Council for subsequent updates.

#### **SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS**

This initiative assists in achieving objectives related to two themes in the Sustainability Charter 2.0 – Public Safety and Health and Wellness. More specifically, it supports the following Desired Outcomes:

- Public Safety DO1: Residents are safe and have a strong sense of security in all neighbourhoods and throughout the City.
- Public Safety DO3: There are minimal community safety issues in the city, and the public is fully engaged in preventing and reducing crime.
- Public Safety DO4: Local residents and businesses are connected and engaged within their neighbourhoods and with the broader community - including police, public safety partners and social service agencies - to enhance safety.
- Public Safety DO5: Surrey is recognized and perceived as a leader in establishing and maintaining collaborative partnerships for community safety and well-being.
- Health and Wellness DO4: Residents understand the services and programs available to them, and are empowered to act in their own health interests.
- Health and Wellness DO5: Services and programs are responsive to shifting health and social needs, and local and external factors.

#### **OTHER STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS**

The City Centre Response Plan complements efforts to enhance public safety in Surrey, and with a focus on collaborative partnerships, increased visibility and outreach, and enhanced support for vulnerable persons, directly supports the City's Public Safety Strategy and the Detachment's 2015-2017 Strategic Framework.

## CONCLUSION

The City Centre Response Plan addresses public safety and public health issues in the City Centre area, particularly as they relate to the public's perception of safety and vulnerable persons frequenting the 135A Street corridor. Comprehensive plans are being developed and will be reported to Mayor and Council through the Public Safety Committee at regular intervals.



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