

Report to Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee

To: Chair and Members, Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee
From: Kevin Dickins, Deputy City Manager, Social and Health Development
Subject: July Progress Update – Health & Homelessness Whole of Community System Response
Date: July 24, 2023

Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Deputy City Manager, Social and Health Development, that;

- a) the July Progress Update – Health & Homelessness Whole of Community System Response Report **Be Received** for information;
- b) the Request for Proposal (RFP-2023-174) submitted by 2190876 Ontario Inc. - Sagecomm www.sagecomm.com 117 York St, London ON N6A 1A8, at the cost of \$125,000, plus H.S.T. **BE ACCEPTED**;
- c) that Civic Administration **BE AUTHORIZED** to undertake all administrative acts which are necessary in relation to this project, and;
- d) that approvals hereby given **BE CONDITIONAL** upon the Corporation entering into a formal contract or having a purchase order relating to the subject matter of this approval.

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the progress made since the last report received at the June 20th, 2023, Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee (SPPC) and subsequently the June 27th, 2023, Council meeting related to the endorsed Health and Homelessness Whole of Community System Response. Since the last update, a number of key initiatives have advanced, including the development of the proposed Hubs Implementation Plan by the Hubs Implementation Table, and the Housing Implementation Table has developed a definition of highly supportive housing as well as housing service delivery and physical space elements. Additionally, this report updates the ongoing efforts of the Workforce Development Table and the ongoing efforts of the Encampment Response Table that has operationalized short term temporary measures to provide support to individuals sleeping unsheltered. This monthly update is focused less on the work of the Hubs Implementation Table and the proposed Hubs Implementation Plan as those measures are captured in detail in its own corresponding report.

Since the last report to Council there have been multiple working sessions of the Strategy and Accountability Table, Hubs Implementation Table, Housing Implementation Table, Workforce Development Table, Encampment Response Table, Business Reference Table and Development Reference Table. From the time of submission of the June report through to time of submission of the July progress report there have been twenty-four (24) different implementation table meetings held related to the work of the Whole of Community System Response. As well, there have been five (5) community engagement sessions and two (2) business-focused engagement sessions held in-person, in addition to an online [Get Involved](#) survey which has concluded with more than 1,500 responses.

This work has been supported by the Whole of Community System Response Backbone Team to ensure each table meeting was assisted in the preparation, facilitation, and post meeting support to ensure all participants and co-chairs had access to the resources and materials they needed for next steps and to deliver on tasks stemming from each meeting.

In addition to the various updates related to advancing the work of the System Response, this report also seeks Council direction in awarding the results of a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process to launch a comprehensive communications strategy that will focus on education, awareness and engagement strategies to support the entire community's work in this area by helping Londoners understand the process, channel businesses', organizations', and residents' desire to help, and elevating the community's understanding of the health and homelessness crisis and the Whole of Community System Response.

Finally, this report provides a brief update on the ongoing advocacy efforts with other levels of government in an effort to access financial supports to implement the Health and Homelessness Whole of Community System Response.

Linkage to the Corporate Strategic Plan

This report aligns with the strategic areas of focus in the 2023-2027 [City of London Strategic Plan](#). The City of London Strategic Plan (2023-2027) identifies housing and homelessness as a key area of focus, and housing and homelessness work is identified throughout the Strategic Plan, impacting all areas of life for Londoners.

Housing and Homelessness

- Increased access to a range of quality, affordable, and supportive housing options that meet the unique needs of Londoners.
- Decreased number of Londoners at risk of or experiencing homelessness
- Improved safety in London's shelters system

Wellbeing and Safety

- Londoners have safe access to public spaces, services, and supports that increase wellbeing and quality of life
- Housing in London is affordable and attainable

Links to Community Recovery

The City of London is committed to working in partnership with the community to identify solutions that will drive a strong, deep, and inclusive community recovery for London as we move out of and beyond the global COVID-19 pandemic. This report, and the items within, are linked to supporting Londoners experiencing homelessness to attain and retain permanent housing. This work supports recovery efforts through a coordinated response that will support the transition of individuals and families experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness who have a variety of support needs into permanent housing.

Analysis

● **1.0 Previous Reports Related to this Matter:**

- June Progress Update – Health & Homelessness Whole of Community System Response (SPPC; June 20, 2023)
- May Progress Update – Health & Homelessness Whole of Community System Response (SPPC; May 09, 2023)
- Update – Whole of Community System Response Implementation (SPPC: April 18, 2023)
- Health and Homelessness Summits – Proposed Whole of Community System Response (SPPC: February 28, 2023)

2.0 Background Information

2.1 Implementation Progress Updates:

As the various implementation tables have moved forward with their work, several details have emerged in terms of how collectively, service delivery aspects of the Whole of Community System Response will be defined. Items related to Hubs and the proposed implementation plan have also been directly informed by public engagement with

businesses and community members, including individuals and family members of those with lived experience of homelessness.

To date, the Business Reference Group, Developers Reference Group, Workforce Development, Encampment Response, Highly Supportive Housing, and Hubs Implementation Tables have all been meeting. The work of these tables has been guided by the Strategy and Accountability Table that continues to provide support and direction to the work of the various implementation tables. The Systems Foundation Table is currently being established and pending approval of the proposed Hubs Implementation Plan, the Funders Table will also be set up.

Below in **Figure 1** is an overview of where the system development efforts currently are, in relation to where it started with the Health and Homelessness Summits.



Figure 1 System Development Overview

The following details provide a monthly update on activities and recommendations that have moved forward between the Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee (SPPC) meeting held on June 20, 2023, and the time of submission of this report. Details related to the proposed Hubs Implementation Plan and the results of the community engagement strategy are provided in the additional July 24th SPPC report.

Strategy and Accountability Table:

The Strategy and Accountability table has responsibility for guiding the overall implementation of the Whole of Community System Response and is populated by leaders from all organizations who are collaborating on system implementation. This table provided direction and recommendations at their June 15th meeting regarding supports for frontline staff participation in this work and engagement parameters for those with lived and living experience of homelessness. A draft of the proposed Hubs Implementation Plan was shared with this group for their review and discussion ahead of their July 12th meeting. At that meeting, the Strategy and Accountability Table reviewed and provided feedback on the proposed Hubs Implementation Plan for its submission to Council.

At the July 12th Strategy and Accountability meeting, the group also received updates from all implementation tables. One of the key updates was regarding the work of the Encampment Response table after the initial launch of the temporary mobile service depot plans. The group provided direction on the maintaining of the initial phase of the

response and endorsed plans for neighbourhood and participant engagement and program evaluation.

The Strategy and Accountability Table also continued work on the detailed definitions of principles and values, approved co-chairs for all five implementation tables, approved a workforce feedback-focused survey, and adopted a definition of highly supportive housing as first created by the Housing Implementation Table.

Hubs Implementation Table:

Since the last update to Council, the Hubs Implementation Table has held meetings on June 19, 2023, June 29, 2023, and July 6, 2023, to develop the proposed Hubs Implementation Plan. As noted above, the work of the Hubs table has been informed by the direct engagement with the community and businesses through in-person engagement sessions and an online survey tool.

The work of this group and the proposed Hubs Implementation Plan itself has and will continue to be informed by perspectives from those with Lived and Living Experience, these comments are reflected in the subsequent staff report included with the Hubs Implementation Plan. Additional feedback from those that participate in the Business Reference Table and the Development Reference Table have also influenced the direction, location criteria and service standards outlined in the proposed Hubs Implementation Plan.

The full details of the proposed Hubs Implementation Plan are found in the corresponding SPPC report and the accompanying Community Engagement Summary Report. The proposed Hubs Implementation Plan describes the collaborative model for the hubs and criteria for lead agencies, hub functions, services and standards, physical space specifications, priority populations, location criteria and preliminary costing and budget.

Highly Supportive Housing:

The Housing Implementation Table has been meeting to focus on the goal of creating 100 highly supportive housing units in 2023. This table continued meeting on June 28th and again on July 10th, with the next meeting planned for the 31st. The co-chairs have also set a date in August and the group will meet into September as they focus on identifying units to occupy, the populations targeted for housing, the physical elements needed based on experience of housing high acuity populations, and the ways in which multi-disciplinary teams will work together in these locations. Being able to clearly define what Highly Supportive Housing is, who is being supported in those models and the ways in which those services will operate is foundational to identifying what types of spaces are needed, available, and easily aligned to this work.

The Housing Implementation Table is drafting a working document that they are consulting with the Developers Reference Group on regarding potential housing options including different purpose-built options, different size of potential housing projects, and conversion of commercial space to residential usage. This document will also consider exterior/communal space elements, service/amenity recommendations, safety supports, interior elements such as storage, individual unit layouts and furnishings. This document will be finalized as part of the July 31st meeting and brought forward at that time to the Strategy and Accountability Table.

The Housing Implementation Table has benefitted from input and participation from nearly 40 individuals representing multiple industries including the development community, healthcare, housing service providers, architects, frontline staff, mental health and addictions, youth services, developmental services, and Civic Administration.

Encampment Response:

The Encampment Response table launched temporary measures on July 4th, 2023, to support individuals currently sleeping unsheltered in encampments in four (4) locations adjacent to where encampments already exist. A report approved at the June 26th Council meeting outlined temporary service depots that would provide basic needs to Londoners such as meals, access to clean drinking water, garbage collection, and sanitation stations.

In the first week of delivering these temporary services, the following engagements and service levels were recorded:

Number of Unique Individuals Engaged With: 156

Materials and Supplies Distributed:

- *Fire Safety Gear: 3*
- *Harm Reduction Equipment: 16*
- *Hygiene Supplies: 16*
- *Meal Kits: 232*
- *Personal Supplies: 66*
- *Water Bottles: 820*

Services Provided:

- *Fire Prevention Education and Monitoring: 1*
- *Garbage and Site Clean Up: 40*
- *Harm Reduction Support: 7*
- *Housing Support: 2*
- *Hygiene and Sanitation Facility Access: 13*
- *Harm Reduction Equipment Disposal and Collection: 2*
- *System Navigation - Healthcare System: 6*
- *System Navigation - Social Service System: 5*
- *Transportation Assistance: 4*
- *Referrals: 7*

Additionally, there have been many interactions with surrounding community members where agencies were able to answer questions and address offers of assistance and support from those community members.

The interactions with the public did yield a total of 28 occurrences which have been categorized as follows:

- *Education and awareness provided: 8*
- *Reporting of an incident: 1*
- *Feedback regarding concerns: 2*
- *Positive feedback provided: 9*
- *Supporting participants: 8*

The Encampment Response table is working on proposed plans for neighbourhood and participant engagement. These plans along with any additional resourcing needs for service continuation will be brought to the Strategy and Accountability Table and then on to Council as required. This table is also beginning to plan for cold weather needs in the community as hubs work towards operationalizing and individuals sleeping rough will still require individualized supports.

Workforce Development Implementation Table:

The Workforce Development Table has met twice, with efforts focused on identifying what key topics are affecting frontline staff and management. Their priority in the short-term is working alongside the Hubs Implementation Table to address how to support lead agencies' staff at Hubs through identifying core competencies, training opportunities that

address those competencies, policies, processes and procedures that support consistent and values' driven operations at the Hubs. Further, this table will be releasing a "Stay Survey" to participants to gather valuable information on what retains staff members that will feed back into the work around Hubs' workforce and broad workforce conversations.

The Workforce Development table is a valuable resource to support the many aspects of curating a sustainable and highly functioning workforce at the Hubs and the rest of the system.

These processes will help inform discussions within the broader workforce on where there can be improvements to staff and leadership supports like critical incident debriefing, mental health supports, training opportunities, etc. Throughout the summit process frontline workers across sectors shared their lived experience of losing those they had been trying to support to this healthcare and housing crisis. The moral distress, burnout, and inequity in pay are focal points that the table continues to hold as matters to address.

Business and Developers Reference Tables:

A Business Reference table meeting was held June 22nd with members of the London Chamber of Commerce, Downtown London BIA, and co-chaired by the General Manager of the Old East Village BIA and the CEO of the Chamber of Commerce. The group was able to provide feedback that has helped shape the content of the proposed Hubs Implementation Plan.

After conducting the Business Reference table meeting, additional in-person open houses were scheduled with both the Downtown London BIA and the Old East Village BIA on June 27th and June 29th respectively.

The Whole of Community System Response Backbone team, following the direction from the Strategy and Accountability Table will next engage with the Business Reference table to identify ways in which businesses in areas of the city most impacted by the effects of the health and homelessness crisis can be intentionally supported to address the impacts of this crisis and aid in the economic recovery of those areas. Recommendations generated through these discussions will be brought forward to Council for consideration.

The Developers Reference table met to provide feedback on location criteria, building types, and technical advice on physical and procedural matters that will assist in expediting the opening of Hubs.

Remaining Implementation Tables:

The Systems Foundation Table is currently being established. This table will immediately begin to create and assist in delivering a workplan that centres on key elements of a collaborative service delivery model as outlined in the proposed Hubs Implementation Plan. This includes focusing on the creation of an evaluation framework that can provide quantitative and qualitative measurements. This table will also lead the inventorying of existing data and information gathering platforms that are used in the broader system and identify pathways for establishing best practices for a more efficient way of sharing information. The Systems Foundations Table will be co-lead by London Health Sciences Centre and will draw on the expertise from numerous sectors to help build out the necessary tools related to data, information, measurement, and evaluation.

Pending approval of the proposed Hubs Implementation Plan, the Funders Reference table will also be set up with a deliberate focus on accessing current and new funding streams to support implementation.

Indigenous Led Response

To ensure a culturally safe response that is appropriate for Indigenous community members, we will follow the lead of Indigenous colleagues and support an Indigenous-led system response, which is not designed in a colonial way and respects the deep knowledge and consultation already inherent in the Giwetashkad Strategy, and the intention to honour all relations in defining next steps.

There is a commitment to Indigenous representation in overall system governance and implementation co-design, and a commitment to recognizing that the definition of Indigenous homelessness is separate and distinct from the common colonialist definition of homelessness.

2.2 Strategic Communications Plan - Request for Proposal (RFP)

The Whole of Community System Response is a complex process that has an impact on all Londoners regardless of their circumstance. With implementation of the Whole of Community System Response now underway and given the significant nature of the health and homelessness crisis in the community, it is critical that the community understand the issue, as well as the steps being taken to address it, how they can be engaged, and how they can be involved in supporting ongoing efforts.

While information about the work to date has been publicly available through monthly Council agendas, reports, community activity, and more recently through community open houses, there is a need to actively engage, provide further information, and bring clarity and awareness to the broader community.

A strategic communications plan is necessary to support this work and that is a significant undertaking requiring deep knowledge of the health and homelessness sector, as well as the capacity to develop critical linkages with the agencies engaged in the system response.

Given this, the City of London issued a Request for Proposal (RFP-2023-174) on June 6, 2023, to obtain experienced and qualified proponents for education, engagement, and communication services. The selected partner will be responsible for developing and delivering community education, awareness and engagement strategies related to the system response. The duration of the contract with the successful proponent will extend from July 2023 to approximately March 2024, covering the next phase of the implementation work associated with the Whole of Community System Response – largely focussed on the implementation of the first hubs.

The selected partner is expected to work alongside City and community staff to design, develop and implement an integrated education and awareness strategies to help inform Londoners about the health and homelessness crisis, and what is being done to address it through the Whole of Community System Response, including awareness of the community Fund for Change. The work will also include community engagement with diverse audiences, including businesses, residents, and community groups and organizations.

One addendum was posted to the RFP in response to questions asked by one proponent. At the close of the RFP, there were three submissions received and all three were compliant.

Evaluation committee representatives from Strategic Communications and Procurement Services evaluated all three submissions based on the criteria outlined in the RFP document. At the end of this process, the proponent 2190876 Ontario Inc. (sagecomm) met all the requirements outlined in RFP-2023-174, scored the highest and demonstrated their ability to fully support the Corporation in moving forward with this critical stage of implementation of the health and homelessness project. The amount of the RFP came to \$125,000 plus HST.

2190876 Ontario Inc. (sagecomm) is a local communications and strategy firm established in 2008 with clients across North America and with significant experience in complex social, health and community issues.

Sagecomm has experience managing and delivering projects of similar complexity and scope across a number of social and health organizations, and their work has resulted in a number of award-winning campaigns.

In addition, sagecomm has supported London's Whole of Community System Response to the health and homelessness crisis since October 2022 and has been closely engaged with all agencies currently involved in the Whole of Community System Response.

In the RFP response, sagecomm clearly outlined their understanding of the project, the process, and the issues, opportunities and challenges associated with the engagement and education strategies. Their project methodology provided the evaluation committee members with confidence that they would be able to develop and deliver education and awareness strategies that would meet the needs of the Corporation, the community, and the project. Sagecomm's proposal also includes strategies for issue management, internal communications, and resource management to successfully support the project over its lifetime.

A robust communications, education and engagement strategy will support the entire community's work to address the health and homelessness crisis by helping Londoners understand the implementation process, channel businesses', organizations', and residents' desire to help, and elevating the community's understanding of the health and homelessness crisis and the Whole of Community System Response.

The RFP project is led by Strategic Communications, who will be working closely alongside sagecomm in the development and delivery of the plan.

It is therefore recommended that the City of London enter into Purchase of Services Agreement with 2190876 Ontario Inc. – sagecomm – in the amount of \$125,000 plus HST for a term of approximately eight (8) months, estimated completion date of March 1st, 2024.

2.4 Government Relations and Strategic Advocacy Efforts

Civic Administration has continued its focused efforts to raise the awareness of, and buy in for, the overarching vision of the Whole of Community System Response with key federal and provincial decision makers. Since the June update to Municipal Council, Civic Administration has prioritized educating key federal and provincial officials on the System Response by providing the broader context for this work and the speed at which the community has mobilized to develop solutions. Civic Administration has also taken stock of potential funding opportunities through strategic conversations with federal and provincial officials. For example, Civic Administration has reinforced the positive impact the federal Housing Accelerator Fund can and must have in responding to the health and homelessness crisis in our community.

Furthermore, London will be hosting the 2023 Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) Annual Conference from August 20-23, 2023 – a premier annual event where communities across the province gather for focused discussions with provincial officials. Civic Administration has been working to ensure that the work underway through the System Response is showcased prominently throughout the conference. As host community, London is well positioned to shine a spotlight on issues of primary provincial-municipal concern.

Finally, Civic Administration has begun the process to prepare for the upcoming budget consultations with the Government of Canada and Province of Ontario. The formal processes are expected to launch this Fall with the submissions to be informed by the direction provided by Municipal Council on July 25 and/or any future direction provided subsequently.

3.0 Financial Impact/Considerations

With respect to the strategic communications plan, the selection process was undertaken in accordance with the Procurement of Goods and Services Policy. The total cost to provide the strategic communications plan is in the amount of \$125,000 plus HST and will be funded through existing City of London budget.

There are no other funding considerations at this time related to this monthly update.

Recommended by: Kevin Dickins, Deputy City Manager Social Health Development

Cc:
Lynne Livingstone, City Manager
Scott Mathers, Deputy City Manager, Planning & Economic Development
Kelly Scherr, Deputy City Manager, Environment, and Infrastructure
Anna Lisa Barbon, Deputy City Manager, Finance Supports
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