

## 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:** September Progress Update – Health & Homelessness Whole of Community System Response  
**Date:** September 25, 2023

## Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Deputy City Manager, Social and Health Development, that the following Actions be taken;

- a) That, the September Progress Update – Health & Homelessness Whole of Community System Response Report **BE RECEIVED** for information;

## Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the progress made since the last report received at the August 16th, 2023 Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee and subsequently at the August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023 Council meeting related to the endorsed Health and Homelessness Whole of Community System Response. Since the end of August, progress has been made on a number of items related to this work, including work associated with the various implementation tables, reference tables, and community engagement.

With respect to moving forward with the implementation table work, there has been work happening around the creation of the first hubs. This work culminated in Civic Administration launching a Request for Proposals (RFP) process for the Hubs on August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023. This RFP process closed on September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023, and the results of that process are included in the Contract Award Recommendation for HUBS – Health & Homelessness Whole of Community System Response – REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL -2023-199 report.

In addition to the RFP process for the first hubs, there have been various updates related to advancing the work of the System Response. This includes the Business Reference Table working in collaboration with multiple BIA's and the Chamber of Commerce to identify tangible supports for the business sector as Hubs and Highly Supportive Housing begin to come online.

As well, as part of a Council-direction coming out of the July SPPC meeting, a series of five community engagement sessions were held throughout the end of August and the beginning of September. These sessions were also accompanied by the addition of two business-specific engagements and councillor ward meetings that were held during the same time period. In addition to these engagements, the GetInvolved portal was updated to create a space for the Council-directed continuous feedback opportunity for members of the community. As a means of continuing different and tailored engagement efforts, work was advanced related to the Encampment Implementation Table and their delivery of temporary Service Depots. This form of community involvement carried out the neighbourhood engagement effort regarding the Depots from surrounding neighbourhoods and from those accessing services from the Depots.

This report also outlines the many advocacy and government engagement efforts that have taken place since the last update to Council. It is also recognized that some of these updates will be built upon in September as the work continues at a very rapid pace.

## 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

- August Progress Update – Health & Homelessness Whole of Community System Response (SPPC, August 16, 2023)
- July Progress Update – Health & Homelessness Whole of Community System Response (SPPC; July 24, 2023)
- 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 Tables' Progress Updates:

As previously reported, hundreds of community participants compose the Whole of Community System Response component tables that have been meeting and working on their respective focus areas. This work includes the continuation of the Business Reference Group, Developers Reference Group, Workforce Development Table, Encampment Implementation Table, Highly Supportive Housing, Hubs Implementation Table and System Foundations Tables. 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 these various implementation tables.

The most recent table to be initiated is the Funders Reference Table. At the August 31<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Strategy and Accountability Table, Cheryl Smith, Deputy City Manager of Neighbourhood and Community-Wide Services was endorsed as one of the co-chairs of this table. A second co-chair will be selected at the September 28<sup>th</sup> meeting. The purpose

of this table is to bring together a number of funding bodies including Provincial and Federal funding partners to seek opportunities for priority alignment and funding related to the Hubs and Highly Supportive Housing. This table has sent out invites and plans are made for their first meeting on October 11, 2023.

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 August 16th, 2023 and the time of submission of this report.

### Strategy and Accountability Table:

The Strategy and Accountability table has the 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. At the Municipal Council meeting held on July 25, 2023, it was resolved that the Mayor and the Budget Chair **BE APPOINTED** to represent Municipal Council at the Strategy and Accountability table, for the Whole of Community System response, with the Deputy Mayor to serve as an alternate for either, if required. Councillor Peloza and Mayor Morgan attended the August meetings.

Following the Council endorsement of the Hubs Implementation Plan in July 2023, the August 31<sup>st</sup> Strategy and Accountability meeting continued the critical conversation on how we are continuing to support the stability of the sector while Hubs are being operationalized. This included discussions about staffing impacts, funding and service pressures with a commitment to identify practical solutions that can help address these concerns and pressures. These discussions will continue at the next meeting of the Strategy and Accountability Table along with a review of priorities that have been created and refined by the Business sector. Additionally, the table will receive an update and outline for review of the Cold Weather/Inclement Weather Response. The next Strategy and Accountability table is scheduled for September 28, 2023.

### Hubs Implementation Table:

Since the last update to Council and since the Hubs Implementation Plan had been endorsed, a procurement process was initiated through the creation and launch of a Request for Proposals (RFP) through the Bids and Tenders portal on August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023. The RFP process closed on September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023. The results of this process are included in the September 25<sup>th</sup> SPPC meeting.

Members from the Hubs Implementation Table supported the additional Council-directed community engagement sessions during the last week of August and first week of September across the city, alongside the business-focused sessions.

The work of the Hubs Implementation Table will shift as the group and reconvene in October to start the work on additional operational protocols such as the One Number to call model and linking into the work of the Workforce Development Table and Highly Supportive Housing, along with additional protocol design, including Service Level Agreements and establishing processes for coordinated outreach services.

### **Community Engagement Updates:**

Following the Council meeting on July 25, 2023, where direction was provided to create additional community engagement opportunities, Civic Administration with support from multiple service areas have developed a plan for a series of engagement sessions. These have been created to ensure that moving forward there is a continuous feedback loop between the Whole of Community System Response and community members.

The additional community engagements were scheduled for the end of August and early September at the following locations throughout the city:

- North  
Thursday, August 31 – Medway Community Centre
  
- South  
Wednesday, August 30 – South London Community Centre
  
- West  
Tuesday, September 5 – Byron Community Centre
  
- East  
Wednesday, September 6 – East Lions Community Centre
  
- Central  
Thursday, September 7 – Carling Heights Optimist Community Centre

These engagements followed a presentation and Q&A format, followed by one-on-one discussions. Working with business associations and the London Chamber of Commerce, two business-focused sessions were scheduled, as well as some councillor ward meetings.

Over 380+ residents and business owners attended the sessions and engaged with city staff, councillors and subject matter experts. In the formal question-and-answer period, over 100 questions were asked and answered. More information can be found in the Health and Homelessness Whole of Community System Response: Hubs Implementation Plan Engagement Results report in the Appendix five (5) of the *Contract Award Recommendation for Health and Homelessness Whole of Community System Response RFP 2023-199 Hubs Implementation Plan Results* report.

In addition to the in-person events that focused on providing education, awareness and community input opportunities related to the Whole of Community System Response and Hubs Implementation Plan, a new tab on the GetInvolved website exists to allow ongoing feedback to be submitted by residents at their convenience.

To date, the Health and Homelessness webpage has had 2,434 unique visitors and over 200+ submissions for feedback in the latest iteration of feedback gathering. The Hubs Implementation Plan itself has been downloaded 964 times. This information is also part of the Request for Proposals report.

## **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 last met on August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023 to further refine their elements of highly supportive housing, and the minimum practices of each of those elements. Defining these Standards of Care for highly supportive housing is similar to the process conducted in the Hubs Implementation Table.

Being able to clearly define what Highly Supportive Housing is, who is being supported in those models, the ways in which those services will operate is important work to be able to identify what types of spaces are needed, available and easily aligned to this work. The Housing Implementation Table is also continuing to identify projects in the housing pipeline to find opportunities to meet the 100 units by the end of 2023. Community organizations continue to advance this work outside of the Implementation table itself and provide updates to the group when they meet, and to the Strategy and Accountability Table as well. As new or emerging projects become known and should they fall between reporting cycles, updates will be provided to Council in advance to the extent possible for Civic Administration.

The next steps for this table are to finalize the Standards of Care in order for them to be presented to the Strategy and Accountability table in October, and to start to identify the tenant placement process around highly supportive housing projects.

The Housing Implementation Table has also created a draft working document that will be vetted through the Developers Reference Group to seek input and feedback for housing options including different purpose-built ideas, different size of potential housing projects, and feedback on conversion of commercial space to residential usage. This document remains in the draft stages and will continue to be refined.

## **Encampment Response:**

The Encampment Implementation Table continues to focus on the delivery of basic needs to vulnerable individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness. The group launched a neighbourhood engagement plan using a third-party resource under contract by one of the lead organizations. This intentional engagement of immediate neighbours surrounding the depots was supported by Civic Administration as a way to engage the community and bring awareness to the services provided, as well as provide a space for those experiencing homelessness to share their input.

The results of the neighbourhood engagement survey for those living within 400-500 metres of a depot and those accessing the depots is in draft form and will be shared directly with those in that catchment area as well as Committee and Council in October.

The Encampment Implementation Table is focusing on the development of a Cold and Inclement Weather Response, which is nearing the completion of the planning stage. These plans likely, where possible, will include a wind down of the depots as they exist currently. The table continues to formulate a needs assessment, a service delivery plan and resourcing requirements for any upcoming cold weather responses. These plans will be brought forward to the Strategy and Accountability Table for discussion at the end of September and expected to be presented to Council in October.

Since the launch of these temporary services, the following engagements and service levels have been recorded:

*Number of Unique Individuals Served: 933*

*Materials and Supplies Distributed:*

- *Fire Safety Gear: 44*
- *Harm Reduction Equipment: 159*

- *Hygiene Supplies: 511*
- *Meal Kits: 3114*
- *Personal Supplies: 1334*

Services Provided:

- *Addiction Support Services: 15*
- *Fire Prevention Education and Monitoring: 4*
- *Garbage and Site Clean Up: 139*
- *Harm Reduction Support: 47*
- *Housing Support: 31*
- *Hygiene and Sanitation Facility Access: 94*
- *System Navigation - Healthcare System: 51*
- *System Navigation - Social Service System: 101*
- *Transportation Assistance: 24*
- *Referrals: 65*

Additionally, beyond the services provided in the temporary service depot, ongoing engagement and interactions between service delivery organizations and members of the public took place at the depot locations. There have been many interactions with surrounding community members where agencies were able to answer questions and concerns.

As of data provided August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023, there were 182 neighbourhood resident interactions with the public across the depot locations. Those engagements have been categorized as follows:

- *Education and awareness provided: 49*
- *Reporting of an incident: 5*
- *Feedback regarding concerns: 6*
- *Positive feedback provided: 68*
- *Supporting participants: 54*

The encampment response group continues to focus on maintaining the existing services to support individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness and winding these services down as they work to stand up the Cold Weather Response alongside the initial Hubs.

**Workforce Development Implementation Table:**

The Workforce Development Table is meeting in September to support the broader conversation at Strategy and Accountability on sector stability by facilitating three conversations with frontline staff, frontline managers and system partners, and all sector leaders on a range of items including frontline and workplace safety and support. The work that is performed by caring and compassionate frontline staff is incredibly challenging, demanding on time and skill, and has expectedly taken a toll on those that live that type of work each day. The table is continuing to formulate feedback and updates that will go to the Strategy and Accountability Table to encourage dialogue on systemic shifts within the sector on how to best support all aspects of the work of frontline workers.

In addition to the above, the Workforce Development Table has undertaken a prioritization of different types of training that would be valuable for the sector and now will focus on conducting an environmental scan to identify where this training may already exist, ways to the trainings and any potential gaps between what is needed and what is available access. The purpose of this exercise is so that Hubs Lead Agencies will all be pursuing the same training from the same sources for consistency and accountability. Eventually, this information will also be available for the rest of the sector.

The Workforce Development Table is a valuable resource to support the many aspects of curating a sustainable and highly functioning workforce for the Hubs and the rest of the sector. 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.

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, and so on.

### **Business Reference Table:**

A business reference table meeting was held on August 3, 2023 with members of the London Chamber of Commerce, Downtown London BIA, and Old East Village BIA. The table had a comprehensive discussion on ways in which the business sector could be better supported as Hubs are stood up around the community. Members of Civic Administration, including those from Planning and Economic Development helped facilitate the conversations to support the direct sharing of ideas. These ideas, as generated by the Business Reference Table will continue to be refined and will be brought back to Council for consideration at the end of October. The intent of carrying out this work is to recognize the impacts of this crisis on the business community and amongst the above mentioned business groups in particular. Civic Administration recognizes that the recommendations brought forward on behalf of this group may tie into other corporate plans and initiatives.

As previously mentioned, two business-focused community engagement sessions were held at the end of August and early September with the help of the Old East Village BIA, London Chamber of Commerce and Downtown London BIA to ensure the business community continues to have opportunities to stay engaged in this work and provide valuable feedback as they have throughout this process.

### **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.

## **2.4 Government Relations and Strategic Advocacy Efforts**

August was an exceptionally active month for London's advocacy efforts in support of Health and Homelessness priorities. The City of London hosted the 2023 Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) Annual Conference. Throughout the conference, Team London engaged in eight scheduled delegation meetings with provincial ministers and other senior decision-makers with more than half of those delegations focusing fully or in large part to the urgent request for provincial investment into London's Whole of Community System Response. In addition to the scheduled delegations during the conference, Mayor Morgan met with Premier Doug Ford and Deputy Premier Sylvia Jones to discuss London's Hubs Implementation Plan and the community's priority of opening

five Hubs immediately. Feedback from the delegations and meetings was very positive and several high priority next steps were identified. Civic Administration will continue to engage with senior provincial officials in order to continue discussions around implementation and provincial investment.

On September 13, 2023, the Rt. Honourable Prime Minister of Canada announced London's allocation of \$74 million through the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF). The announcement was made surrounding the Liberal Party of Canada's national caucus which took place in London. London is the first city in Canada to have an allocation announced, and the City's leadership was recognized and celebrated, as demonstrated through the strength of our application to the Government of Canada. This fund will provide critical investments to support housing supply in London as well as direct supports for key elements of the Whole of Community System Response. The HAF will begin to roll out investments to support housing and homelessness efforts immediately.

Other direct engagements with federal officials also took place the week of September 13<sup>th</sup>, including participation in an industry roundtable with the Honourable Sean Fraser, Canada's new Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities. Municipal representatives highlighted additional need within the System Response such as capital funding for supportive housing construction. These engagements created opportunities for further dialogue in the weeks and months ahead.

### **3.0 Financial Impact/Considerations**

There are no funding asks at this time related to the monthly System Response Update.

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

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