

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: The Basic Needs Response Plan
Date: June 18, 2024

Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Deputy City Manager, Social and Health Development, the following actions **BE TAKEN** with respect to the June 18, 2024, The Basic Needs Response Plan report, that;

- a. To **APPROVE** a one-time funding allocation of up to \$70,500 (excluding HST) for payment of depot meal program and comfort stations for services delivered in May and June 2024;
- b. To **APPROVE** the funding reallocation request from Canadian Mental Health Association Thames Valley (CMHA) related to their identified Cold Weather Response surplus of up to \$250,000 (excluding HST) to maintain services at The Coffee House located at 371 Hamilton Road up to an additional 6 months;
- c. Civic Administration **BE DIRECTED** on 1 of the preferred options listed in section 2.6 of this reports;
- d. Civic Administration **BE DIRECTED** to find a source of funding including any unspent previously approved sources of funding, including previously allocated Operating Budget Contingency Reserve funds;
- e. Civic Administration **BE AUTHORIZED** to undertake all administrative acts which are necessary in relation to this project; and
- f. The approval given herein **BE CONDITIONAL** upon the Corporation of the City of London entering into new and/or amending existing Purchase of Service Agreements with agencies identified through the City's procurement policy to deliver the approved services.

Executive Summary

Like many other communities across Canada, London is continuing to see an increase in individuals sleeping rough and experiencing unsheltered homelessness. The volume of individuals sleeping rough and in encampments has been on the rise and so too is their level of despair, hopelessness, and declining physical health. These impacts of experiencing homelessness have stretched resources in the community beyond current capacity.

The Basic Needs Response Plan will work in tandem with the Community Encampment Response from the Encampment Implementation Table. It outlines the immediate provision of short-term transactional supports to address the continuing challenges facing individuals living unsheltered. The intention of both is to avoid preventable deaths while encouraging those living unsheltered on a path to housing with supports where necessary.

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 is a sustainable city within a thriving region, committed to culture, innovation and providing a safe, affordable, welcoming, and healthy future for today and for the next generation.

Housing and Homelessness

- The City of London demonstrates leadership and builds partnerships to increase

quality, affordable, and supportive housing options.

- London has a robust community system of health, homelessness, housing stability services, policies, procedures, and by-laws in place to support individuals and families at risk of or experiencing homelessness or in precarious housing consistent with Council's recognition of the health and homelessness emergency.

Wellbeing and Safety

- London has safe, vibrant, and healthy neighbourhoods and communities.
- London is an affordable and supportive community for individuals and families.
- Londoners have safe access to public spaces, services, and supports that increase wellbeing and quality of life.
- Housing in London is affordable and attainable.
- Londoners have access to quality, affordable, and timely services.
- Londoners have equitable access to key services, community supports, and recreational opportunities that enhance wellbeing and resilience.
- Increased access to a range of quality, affordable, and supportive housing options that meet the unique needs of Londoners.
- London continues its efforts to promote animal welfare including companion pets and wild animals.
- Decreased number of Londoners at risk of or experiencing homelessness
- Improved safety in London's shelters system

Housing Stability for All: The Housing Stability Action Plan for the City of London (2019-2024)

London's Homeless Prevention and Housing Plan, Housing Stability for All: The Housing Stability Action Plan for the City of London (Housing Stability for All Plan), is the approved guiding document for homeless prevention and housing in the City of London and was developed in consultation with Londoners.

Analysis

1.0 Background Information

1.1 Previous Reports Related to this Matter

The following reports are directly related to the Encampment Response and City of London's Coordinated Informed Response

- Whole of Community System Response – Quarterly Report (SPPC, April 16, 2024)
- 2022-2023 Winter Response Outcome Report (CPSC May 24, 2023)
- Update 2 – Whole of Community System Response Implementation (SPPC, May 9, 2023)
- Update – Whole of Community System Response Implementation (CPSC: April 18, 2023)
- 2022-2023 Winter Response and Community Accountability Working Group Funding Reallocation Request (CPSC April 12, 2023)
- Health and Homelessness Summits – Proposed Whole of Community System Response (SPPC: February 28, 2023)
- Municipal Council Approval of The Housing Stability Plan 2019 to 2024 as Required Under the Housing Services Act, 2011 (CPSC: December 3, 2019)
- Core Area Informed Response – Pilot Update Report (SPPC: March 4, 2019)
- Core Area Informed Response (SPPC: September 17, 2018)
- Health and Homelessness Summits – Proposed Whole of Community System Response (SPPC: Feb 28, 2023)

1.2 Coordinated Informed Response in Community

The Coordinated Informed Response (CIR) program will be supporting the provision of basic needs in encampments through engagement with service agencies and their outreach teams. (CIR) is a municipally funded initiative that involves multiple City service areas and organizations working together to respond to and support encampments,

individuals sleeping rough, and the possible impacts on the individuals and surrounding community. The CIR team strives to find balance between public and private interests while allowing for temporary shelter through a compassionate approach, discretion, and necessary enforcement of Municipal Bylaws. As part of an enterprise-wide approach the Coordinated Informed Response partners include City departments; Emergency Management and Security Services, Housing Stability Services, Municipal Compliance, Parks and Forestry, London Fire Department, Transportation and Mobility, Service London along with external agencies from London Cares, Atlohsa Family Healing Services, and London Police Services. Coordinated Informed Response began as a full-time initiative as approved and funded by City Council in the 2020-2023 Multi-Year budget. The CIR program is continuously monitored and adjusted to ensure it is meeting the needs and concerns of the London community.

The knowledge gained and relationships fostered through CIR continue to be applied to new service delivery approaches as community works collectively to adapt to a response that meets the current needs of individuals living unsheltered and the communities around them.

The collaborative response supports the City of London's Strategic Plan, the Core Area Action Plan, the Housing Stability Action Plan, among other community plans and strategies.

2.0 Discussion and Considerations

2.1 Basic Needs

The Basic Needs Response Plan will support individuals who are living unsheltered with basic human needs while implementing a community-informed, long-term strategy. These basic needs are consistent with a human rights-based approach outlined in principle 6 of the "National Protocol for Homeless Encampments in Canada" document. The provision of basic needs in encampments is an important support service where transfer to emergency shelter services is not possible due to lack of or no appropriate beds available for the individual(s). The basic needs that may be provided to individuals living unsheltered or in encampments, and subject to budgetary approvals are as follows:

1. Access to safe and clean drinking water;
2. Access to hygiene and sanitation facilities;
3. Resources and support to ensure fire safety;
4. Waste management systems;
5. Social supports and services;
6. Resources to support personal safety of residents;
7. Facilities and resources that support food safety;
8. Resources to support harm reduction; and
9. Rodent and Pest prevention

Drinking water that is currently being provided in plastic water bottles will be phased out in accordance with previous Council direction and will be provided in a bulk manner of potable water as soon as a provision method can be sourced. This provision will be in addition to hygiene facilities.

2.2 Depots

Engagement with frontline staff from community organizations, along with CIR involvement, has demonstrated a continued requirement for accessibility to basic needs such as, washrooms, showers, food, water, waste management and personal connections. As such there is a continued need to coordinate efforts to help support the number of individuals living unsheltered in London by assisting them to meet their basic needs. When surveyed, individuals residing in depot locations have expressed positive impacts and felt their basic needs are being met through access to:

- Meals / food;
- Clean water;
- Personal supplies;
- Hygiene supplies;

- Fire safety gear;
- Social and health service supports;
- Harm reduction; and
- Washroom facilities and showers

Currently the city has 120 individuals and 15 pets residing in 61 deferred encampments. Fifty-seven of those people, and 13 of those pets, reside in 24 deferred encampments within depot locations. There are another 65 individuals and two pets living within 37 deferred encampments outside of depot locations. A deferred encampment is a known encampment that is following the community encampment safety protocol tool ensuring all safety guidelines are being met including location.

The Encampment Response team has assessed the encampment data to help improve the way basic needs are currently delivered. Lessons learned from the first two phases of implementation are being incorporated to create the model for phase three. A few lessons learned include ensuring there is emergency vehicle access, sufficient lighting for the area, limit the size and have a mitigation plan for any environmental impacts.

2.3 Depot Service Delivery Model

The Basic Needs Response Plan to continue depots will use the supports of existing service areas wherever possible. Through coordination of community efforts, one designated and several mobile support depots will be maintained across the community to provide access to basic needs and support the 7 identified standards. The main depot will remain, subject to council endorsement, in its current location at Watson Street Park. This will allow community agencies to continue to serve the largest cluster of encampments. Community mobile efforts will be strategically focused to serve larger areas of the city including, but not limited to, the Thames River, in municipal parklands and in the core. The efforts and responses to the immediate needs related to encampments will adjust and expand as service levels require and as resources permit. Three mobile depot locations will be offered throughout the community where there are identified needs related to established deferred encampments.

Services at these locations are accessible and mobile to meet individuals in encampments along the river, within isolated parkland areas and near the core of the city. The services at these locations will be scheduled and the agency will provide direct service delivery and provision of necessities. Following the direct connection with those in the nearby encampments, the service depot will close and all material and supplies will be packed up and relocated. The only remaining service feature will be a comfort station to provide washroom facilities.

The encampment response table, once finalized, will provide feedback to the CIR program to allow for any adjustments to the depot service delivery model. This will include community transactional outreach and social service transformational outreach as defined in the “Pathways out of Encampments” document. These services will collaboratively offer supports and continue to ensure the encampments are serviced daily by professionals who have established relationships with the unsheltered community while support the basic and system navigational needs of this population. The combination of the stationary and mobile depot approach will continue to meet people where they are at and allow access to basic needs and supports in specific locations reducing the need for people to travel to a variety of services within the core area.

The depot model also requires coordination, delivery of and enhanced cleanup of basic needs items including food, water, harm reduction supplies, hygiene items, etc. and will be monitored and adjustments recommended by the encampment operations group to the encampment response table.

The CIR Outreach team will continue to operate 7 days a week, with supports available 24 hours via phone and 21 hours in person per day. The CIR-Municipal Law Enforcement Officer (MLEO) team will continue to operate with an enhanced service delivery model of service 10 hours per day 6 days per week. The CIR Transportation and Mobility team will continue to operate regular hours with an expanded team to support assisting with community cleanliness, abandoned encampment clean ups, the encampment garbage program, and to provide, as needed, assistance to the CIR core team etc.

2.4 Canadian Mental Health Association Thames Valley Coffee House Extension Request

As part of the cold weather response reporting, Civic administration have received a submission from CMHA requesting that their forecasted surplus of approximately \$250,000 be reallocated to support the ongoing services at London Coffee House for up to an additional 6 months. The proposal is to maintain morning program services which operate from 9:30am to 12:30pm and include food and beverages, laundry, washroom use, access to mental health and addiction supports and navigation, crisis support, and connection to services, etc. at the CMHA coffee house location.

This request will augment existing funding CMHA receives that covers three staff, five mornings per week and coffee. CMHA is proposing the addition of one extra staff mornings Monday to Friday, all staff on weekends, some food and security to support participant safety. The increase in usage of the coffee house as part of the cold weather response supports the additional request and will help with the transition of services to a more robust depot model as proposed in this report.

2.5 May to June 2024 Basic needs provision

In November 2023, Council approved a one-time allocation up to \$251,000 to fund Ark Aid's meal Invoice program that supported the depot meals from July to March 31, 2024. As this program has continued, it was determined through consultation with purchasing that the April invoice was able to be covered by a one-time single source approval, however, an additional request for approval from council is required to cover the meals for May and June. This is to support the program while additional planning and necessary approvals were requested for a longer-term response as part of this report.

Additionally, comfort stations for the depot locations have been continued because supports are still required. It was determined through discussions with purchasing that the current approval does not cover the provision of comfort stations for May and June 2024 and requires additional approval from council.

2.6 Encampment Response Options

To help support a longer-term basic needs response, two options for service are being provided below. The anticipated cost of option 1 is \$692,000. The anticipated cost of option 2 is \$1,211,000.

Option 1:

Depot services will consist of the services noted below and will operate until July 1, 2025.

- Availability of three meals per day to assist people in accessing nutritious food towards meeting daily caloric needs. These meals will be delivered to encampments utilizing the current schedule of support and services at the depot locations;
- Snack options will also be made available through donations;
- Potable drinking water to support hydration, includes a transition from individual bottles of water to bulk water provision;
- Fire prevention education and supportive monitoring;
- Access to washrooms and/or comfort stations.
- Provision of showers through the Salvation Army Centre of Hope Shower Program and other available showering options that currently exist in community;
- Provision of harm reduction and Naloxone supplies;
- Removal of garbage and site clean-up support;
- Scheduled visits from supports and services to meet a range of needs including health and housing support;
- Provisions for individuals to keep warm and dry which assists with maintaining fire safety;
- Increased personal hygiene provisions will be distributed through depots;
- One stationary urban depot will remain in Watson Street Park with supports and services continuing to be offered on location daily;
- Three mobile urban depot locations will be identified with supports and services offered based on where in community the largest need exists

based on Service London Encampment Data;

- Transactional Outreach staffing to provide all basic needs through depots and community delivery; and
- Transformational Outreach staffing to provide social service supports through housing focused strategies and system navigation.

Option 2:

Year-round depot services will consist of the services noted below and will operate until March 31, 2026 to better align with other current services which were approved as part of the stability of the sector report in February 2024.

- Availability of three meals per day to assist people in accessing nutritious food towards meeting daily caloric needs. These meals will be delivered to encampments utilizing the current schedule of support and services at the depot locations;
- Snack options will also be made available through donations;
- Potable drinking water to support hydration, includes a transition from individual bottles of water to bulk water provision;
- Fire prevention education and supportive monitoring;
- Access to washrooms and/or comfort stations.
- Provision of showers through the Salvation Army Centre of Hope Shower Program and other available showering options that currently exist in community;
- Provision of harm reduction and Naloxone supplies;
- Removal of garbage and site clean-up support;
- Scheduled visits from supports and services to meet a range of needs including health and housing support;
- Provisions for individuals to keep warm and dry which assists with maintaining fire safety;
- Increased personal hygiene provisions will be distributed through depots;
- One stationary urban depot will remain in Watson Street Park with supports and services continuing to be offered on location daily;
- Three mobile urban depot locations will be identified with supports and services offered based on where in community the largest need exists based on Service London Encampment Data;
- Transactional Outreach staffing to provide all basic needs through depots and community delivery; and
- Transformational Outreach staffing to provide social service supports through housing focused strategies and system navigation.

2.7 Financial Considerations

The cost of the options above do not have an identified permanent source of funding. As such, civic administration is recommending the reinvestment of any and all housing stability services program surplus from 2023 with the exact amount being confirmed through review and analysis of program year end reporting which is expected to be completed by early July 2024. To bridge any remaining funding gap, civic administration is recommending reallocation of forecasted underspending of the Operating Budget Contingency Reserve funding approved as part of the Stability of the Sector report. The current forecasted underspending is approximately \$1,950,000 for 2024 and \$1,800,000 for 2025.

Expected costs for the services noted above as part of the options are outlined below. It is being noted that a number of the services outlined (waste management, fire safety training, harm reduction supplies, etc.) are able to be accommodated within existing CIR program partnerships and budget:

- 3 meals/7 days a week for 120 individuals at \$12/individual = approximately \$18,000 per month and the service delivery agency will be procured in accordance with councils procurement policy.
- Transactional outreach 7 days a week to provide all depot basic need services including meal delivery = \$20,850 per month and the service delivery agency will be procured in accordance with council's procurement policy.

- Additional community transformational outreach 5 days a week to continue to provide additional community support, meals and additional supports when needed = approximately \$12,000 per month and the service delivery agency will be procured in accordance with council's procurement policy.
- 5 comfort stations to support depots = approximately \$2500 per month and the service delivery agency will be procured in accordance with council's procurement policy.
- Water distribution is expected to cost approximately \$1,800 per month and the service delivery agency will be procured in accordance with council's procurement policy.
- Additional basic need supplies are anticipated to cost approximately \$2500 per month and the service delivery agency will be procured in accordance with council's procurement policy.
- Funding for May and June 2024 for meals provided by Ark Aid Mission Kitchen for service depots is anticipated to cost \$59,000. \$30,000 will be utilized from unspent funding from the meal program allocation approved by council in November of 2023
- Funding for May and June 2024 for comfort stations maintained at depot locations is approximately \$11,500.

2.8 Next Steps

Civic Administration will provide ongoing updates and align future work on this Encampment Response to the Whole of Community System Response Strategy and Accountability table and therefore bring future updates related to the Encampment Response through the Strategic Priorities and Policy committee monthly updates, including any necessary program changes and requests.

Conclusion

This report seeks Council approval for funding to address this acute community need to ensure unsheltered Londoners continue to be supported.

Prepared by: **Debbie Kramers, Manager, Coordinated Informed Response**
Sandra Crawford, Project Lead, Social and Health Development

Submitted by: **Craig Cooper, Director, Housing Stability Services**

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

cc: Sandra Datars Bere, City Manager
 Anna Lisa Barbon, Deputy City Manager,
 Finance Supports