

Report to Community and Protective Services Committee

To: Chair and Members, Community and Protective Services Committee Meeting
From: Kevin Dickins, Deputy City Manager, Social and Health Development
Subject: City of London Additional Short Term Supports for Unsheltered Individuals
Date: June 1, 2021

Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Deputy City Manager, Social and Health Development, that the following actions be taken with respect to the City of London additional short term supports for unsheltered individuals:

- (a) The staff report dated June 1st, 2021 entitled “City of London Additional Short Term Supports for Unsheltered Individuals” **BE RECEIVED**;
- (b) A one-time funding allocation through a single source procurement (#SS21-09) to Ark Aid street Mission on behalf of the WISH Coalition of up to \$1,150,000 (excluding HST) for the extension of services until Dec 31, 2021, to support individuals currently residing at the York Street pop up shelter through the operation of a low-barrier overnight response at an alternate location **BE APPROVED**;
- (c) Civic Administration **BE DIRECTED** to explore opportunities and report back to committee on June 22, 2021 with an implementation plan related to temporary expansion of the following support programs:
 - i. temporarily increasing capacity in existing housing support programs until March 31, 2022 to support individuals currently residing in emergency shelter for a period greater than 365 days;
 - ii. temporarily increasing the number of shelter or resting space beds up to a maximum of 20 additional beds until September 30, 2021 for individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness;
 - iii. implementation of 24/7 staff supports model for the 13 Head Lease units until December 31, 2021;
 - iv. work with community partners to operationalize a hygiene facility for individuals and families experiencing homelessness for July and August 2021;
- (d) Civic Administration **BE DIRECTED** to work with community providers to determine where Day Spaces can be reopened to meet the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness; **AND**
- (e) Civic Administration **BE DIRECTED** to undertake all administrative acts which are necessary in relation to this report.

Executive Summary

At the May 4th, 2021 meeting, Municipal Council passed a resolution that the Civic Administration **BE DIRECTED** to report back to the Community and Protective Services Committee, as soon as possible, on additional actions that could be taken after the end of June, building on what we have learned from the temporary winter response, to support people who are experiencing homelessness;

This report outlines a short-term multi-systems approach and potential next steps in supporting unsheltered homeless individuals that build on the progress made and lessons learned throughout the emergency winter response. This multi-systems approach aims

to build short term capacity across services, ensure unsheltered individuals have the supports they need to move towards housing stability and create solutions that will meet a range of individualized support needs.

These temporary supports include the following:

- WISH Low Barrier Overnight Response/Temporary Supportive Housing
- Increasing Housing Support Program capacity to support individuals accessing and being successful in their housing
- Increase in Shelter/Resting Space beds
- 24/7 direct staff supports for up to 13 head lease units
- The temporary operation of a community run Hygiene Facility

Each of these responses are discussed later in this report and reflect the opportunities available given current funding levels. Should additional sources of funding become confirmed throughout the summer months, Civic Administration will work with the community on best possible solutions to address urgent needs and will report back to Municipal Council for direction, including but not limited to modifications or extensions to the above.

Linkage to the Corporate Strategic Plan

2019-2023 Strategic Plan for the City of London

The City of London identifies ‘Strengthening Our Community’ and ‘Building a Sustainable City’ as strategic areas of focus.

Londoners have access to the supports they need to be successful.

Londoners have access to the services and supports that promote well-being, health, and safety in their neighbourhoods and across the city.

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.

Council and staff continue to recognize the importance of actions to support the Core Area, and in the development of its 2019-2023 - Strategic Plan for the City of London. Specifically, the efforts described in this report address the following Areas of Focus, including:

- Strengthening Our Community
- Building a Sustainable City
- Safe City for Women and Girls
- Leading in Public Service

Analysis

1.0 Background Information

1.1 Previous Reports Related to this Matter

- Update-City of London 2020-2021 Winter Response Program for Unsheltered Individuals (CPSC: April 20, 2021)
- City of London 2020-2021 Winter Response Program for Unsheltered Individuals (CPSC: December 1, 2021)

- 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 Action Plan (SPPC: October 28, 2019)
- Homeless Prevention and Housing Plan 2010 – 2024 (CHLC: November 18, 2013)
- Homeless Prevention System for London Three Year Implementation Plan (CPSC: April 22, 2013)

2.0 Discussion and Considerations

2.1 WISH Low Barrier Overnight Response/Temporary Supportive Housing

Background

Overnight resting spaces are low barrier spaces for individuals who were sleeping unsheltered to rest, access basic needs and build stability for a plan toward housing options. The two temporary locations are staffed by Winter Interim Solution to Homelessness (W.I.S.H.) and volunteers and provided a place for participants to stay during the winter. Security staff have provided 24/7 coverage for both sites. The two-day space and overnight resting spaces were located at 652 Elizabeth Street and 415 York Street.”

Program Recommendations

As this response is set to wind-down operations at the end of June, Civic Administration is recommending the continuation of this response with the use of hotels and motels or other appropriate space as determined by the program. Low barrier overnight spaces will extend the services provided to those residing at the temporary overnight site on York Street at an alternate location. The WISH group will continue to work with these between 20 and 25 individuals to build relationships, provide basic needs and support them to move towards housing stability.

This response will take place over the course of the next 6 months (July 2021-December 2021) and is expected to bridge the gap in finding a suitable long term transitional housing space for the 20 to 25 individuals and connecting them to a longer-term supportive housing option.

The key objectives of this program are:

- Provide spaces for high acuity individuals who typically sleep unsheltered
- Meaningful engagement with regards to health, housing, and relationship while working towards housing stability
- Continue to provide basic needs

WISH to Home program unsolicited proposal:

The City of London, through Purchasing and Supply Services, received an unsolicited proposal from the Wish to Home program on May 5, 2021. This proposal is seeking City land and permanent funding to operationalize phased in permanent housing, transitional housing and stabilization space services.

The Unsolicited Proposal will continue through the prescribed process, but noting the degree of detail required and limitations in the ability to operationalize the proposal, it is not identified as part of the immediate summer services plan. Civic Administration continues to map out a 2021 Request for Proposals (RFP) process for the provision of low-barrier and emergency shelter services.

2.2 Housing Support Programs Capacity Increase

Background

Housing support programs assist individuals and families to secure and maintain permanent housing. These programs are in place to support individuals with low, moderate, and high acuity needs.

Through a temporary increase in caseload capacity, housing support programs could assist individuals who have been residing in existing emergency shelters for longer than 365 days to move towards housing stability. This approach is intended to create movement and free up space in London's emergency shelter system for current unsheltered individuals and families who require short term accommodation and basic needs. Housing with supports remains a key priority under the Housing Stability for All Plan.

Program Recommendations

A temporary increase in capacity for Housing Support programs could assist to reduce capacity in emergency shelters by prioritizing individuals who have been staying in emergency shelter for longer than 365 days.

The key objectives of this program are:

- Increase access to Housing Stability Programs for more individuals.
- Decrease the number of individuals residing in emergency shelter for a period greater than 365 days.

This program could ensure that support is continued for individuals when service providers return to their regular caseload capacity by monitoring the number of new intakes to the program.

Subject to the approval of the recommendations in this report, Civic Administration will report back to the June 22nd Community and Protective Services Committee meeting with an implementation plan for this initiative. The implementation plan will be dependent on community organizations successfully securing resources to provide the additional level of service.

2.3 Shelter/Resting Space Temporary Bed Increase

Background

Emergency shelter/resting space beds provide short term accommodation and basic needs for individuals and families experiencing homelessness and operate at full capacity on a nightly basis. Emergency shelters support households to move towards housing stability by focusing on needs assessment completion and securing and verifying income. The 40 Resting space beds as approved by council through the Core Area Action Plan provide a low barrier space where individuals living unsheltered can obtain short term accommodations and basic needs support. To date, 34 of the 40 resting spaces have been operationalized with an additional 5 expected to be open by end of June 2021. These spaces have been operating at capacity on a daily basis.

Through a temporary increase of up to 20 beds, the emergency shelter/ resting space system could have the ability to provide short term accommodation and basic needs to more individuals living unsheltered.

A community engagement and procurement process is being undertaken in 2021 for emergency shelter services. This process is intended to shift how the current emergency shelter system meets the needs of individuals living unsheltered and those experiencing homelessness in a variety of ways.

Program Recommendations

A temporary increase in emergency shelter/resting space beds could provide additional spaces for individuals seeking accommodation.

The key objectives of this program are:

- Create capacity in the emergency shelter/ resting space system on a temporary basis.
- Support those living unsheltered to access the existing service system and secure housing.

Subject to the approval of the recommendations in this report, Civic Administration will report back to the June 22nd Community and Protective Services Committee meeting with an implementation plan for this initiative.

2.4 Head Lease Unit Support

Background

The pilot head lease program provides transitional supportive housing aimed at life skills development. The City enters into lease agreements with landlords and matches individuals and families to units through the coordinated access priority list.

The City has secured 13 units at a single location for the head lease program that are currently vacant. These spaces could support individuals through a 24-hour model. Staffing could be provided on site by a system service provider using one of the 13 units as an office space.

Program Recommendations

These spaces could be used to support individuals through a 24-hour support model. One unit will be used as an office space and bathroom for staff working on site. Units will be occupied by individuals experiencing homelessness who have been sleeping unsheltered or have been residing in emergency shelter for longer than 365 days.

The key objective of this program is to:

- Support individuals with moderate to high support needs through a 24/7 staffing model to stabilize and build tenancy skills.

Subject to the approval of the recommendations in this report, Civic Administration will report back to the June 22nd Community and Protective Services Committee meeting with an implementation plan for this initiative.

2.5 Hygiene Facility

Background

During the pandemic individuals experiencing homelessness and sleeping unsheltered have had limited access to basic needs, including bathrooms and showers. This is a result of the services that typically provide basic needs having to close or adjust their service models during the pandemic. In the summer of 2020, a temporary hygiene facility was operated by the City to provide access to bathrooms, showers, hygiene supplies and fresh clothing.

Although the number of locations that offer showers has increased since 2020, the need for a hygiene facility continues to exist for the summer of 2021.

Civic Administration recommends a short-term procurement to fund a community organization to operate a hygiene facility in July and August. This would provide much needed access to bathrooms, showers, hygiene supplies and other basic needs.

The operational details of the program are flexible and would be finalized as part of the procurement process, but estimated need would include access 5 to 7 days a week, 3 to 5 hours each day.

Program Recommendations

A hygiene facility would be beneficial during the warmer months of July and August of 2021 to support individuals requiring a place to meet their basic needs. The intent of this approach is to support this need until traditional Day Space programs reopen and individuals can access the regular services and supports for basic needs, including showers, bathrooms, and laundry.

The key objectives of this program are:

- Support unsheltered individuals with personal hygiene needs
- Enhanced supports for unsheltered individuals to engage and access current system resources.

Subject to the approval of the recommendations in this report, Civic Administration will report back to the June 22nd Community and Protective Services Committee meeting with an implementation plan for this initiative.

2.6 Day Spaces

Background

Day spaces provide a regular inside space for individuals to access basic needs and build a sense of community in a socially distanced environment. All existing day spaces have been closed to indoor service provision during the pandemic due to the stay-at-home orders and limited-service capacity resulting in reduced access to day rest and basic needs for individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Civic Administration will work with community providers who have traditionally provided this service to determine where day space services can be reopened to meet the needs of individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness, including shower facilities when the temporary hygiene facility closes.

Program Recommendations

Civic Administration will work with existing community programs to determine projected timelines for reopening community day spaces.

The key objectives of this program are:

- To determine timelines for when day spaces will reopen in the community.
- Ensure that there are locations where individuals can access basic needs support

2.7 Indigenous Homeless Considerations

As directed by Council earlier in 2021, civic administration continues to engage and support the indigenous led implementation of the Giwetashkad Indigenous Homeless strategic plan. As such, additional short-term services as noted in this report will be coordinated with Atlohsa Family Healing Services to ensure that the implementation of these additional supports take into consideration the unique cultural needs of the unsheltered indigenous homeless population in London.

3.0 Financial Impact/Considerations

3.1 Procurement

Procurement for the extension of the low barrier overnight spaces is recommended to be conducted in accordance with section 14.4 d) of the Procurement of Goods and Services Policy:

“There is a need for compatibility with goods and/or services previously acquired or the required goods and/or services will be additional to similar goods and/or services being supplied under and existing contract (i.e. contract extension or renewal);”

The urgent nature of the procurement is a result of the continued reduction of capacity in homeless system programs related to ongoing COVID-19 restrictions. The additional services recommended carry a need for service provider compatibility and are similar to existing services already being procured, noting that the existing service provider is able to ensure continuity of service. It is therefore recommended that these services be procured through Ark Aid Street Mission as the WISH Coalition lead organization.

3.2 Funding

Funding for the extension of the WISH program can be supported through allocation of up to \$1,150,000 from the Provincial one-time COVID-19 Social Services Relief Funding (SSRF) Phase 3 funding received by the City.

The estimated cost of the other programs outlined in this report (housing support program capacity increase, increase in shelter/resting space beds, 24/7 supports for head lease units) is estimated to be approximately \$900,000. Subject to Council direction to proceed with implementation plans for these initiatives, the temporary extension of these programs can be funded using Provincial one-time SSRF Phase 3 funding as well. Additionally the City of London as Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) will be bringing forward a detailed SSRF Phase 3 funding plan to the June 22nd CPSC meeting which will include funding for both Middlesex County and investments in addressing various COVID responses and system stabilization across the shelter provider network in excess of the aforementioned summer services.

Civic Administration will continue to work with both the Provincial and Federal governments on any potential for additional COVID relief or homeless prevention funding that will further support a community response to unsheltered homelessness.

Conclusion

The emergency winter response was approved with a projected end date of April 30th, 2021. Throughout December 2020 to April 2021 and as extended to end of June 2021, the initiative provided a warm and safe space for people living unsheltered to get in out of the cold. The initiative provided a life saving temporary intervention to individuals that have traditionally been the hardest to serve. The goals and outcomes of the emergency winter response have been met. However, the city continues to be impacted by the housing and homeless crisis, health crisis related to opioid poisoning and COVID-19 and this response looks to achieve a temporary solution to continue to support the individuals who were experiencing unsheltered homelessness and matched to the winter response program. It is therefore recommended that this low barrier overnight space program be extended to December 31, 2021 utilizing Provincial Social Services Relief Fund funding.

In addition, the following short-term services and supports could be implemented to better serve the City’s homeless and unsheltered population if a source of funding and agency capacity can be confirmed:

- Temporary increase in housing support programs until March 31, 2022 to better serve our homeless population to secure housing and alleviate pressure on the shelter system;

- Temporary increase in the number of shelter/resting space beds until September 30, 2021 to provide temporary shelter and basic needs;
- Increase the staffing compliment for the 13 head lease units to provide 24/7 staff supports until December 31, 2021; and
- Temporarily provide a hygiene facility for unsheltered individuals for July and August 2021.

Subject to the recommendations in this report, Civic Administration will report back to the June 21, 2021 Community and Protective Services Committee with an implementation plan for the above noted initiatives, it being noted that the above noted initiatives can be funded using Provincial Social Services Relief Fund funding.

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