

Community Safety and Well-being Review

Smart on Community Safety and Well-being

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the July 6/8, 2020, City Council meeting, the following motion was passed:

4 (b) That the Mayor request The Edmonton Police Commission:

“To invite participation in the work outlined in part 1, including proposals prior to budget, for “smart on community safety and well-being” changes to policy, funding, programs and partnerships.”

Recommendation

That the November 16, 2020 Edmonton Police Commission report EXT00042 be received for information.

Executive Summary

This report is intended to summarize the July 6/8 City Council motion into one cohesive narrative. Being smart on community safety and well-being requires an analysis of the cracks in the social ecosystem, highlighted in CR_8348, and realignment of resources toward recovery and wellbeing.

CR_8437 details an analysis of police calls for service, which identifies the need for strategic partnerships and systemic action on social issues. Applying strong leaderships and new potential governance models, identified in EXT00042, with data sharing and end-user service delivery could achieve transformational change toward key challenges affecting Edmontonians.

In order to work smarter and safer while deliberately taking better care of Edmontonians, there are many actions that can be done:

- Mental health experts working in emergency call centers
- Open data sharing and sharing of client histories and shared care plans
- Coordinated hours of operation amongst shelters
- Rules and standards which reflect the reality of service users
- Safe shelters and temporary housing outside of the medical system
- Regulations around housing to ensure a connection to services
- Implement a Recovery-Oriented Systems of Care network
- Ensure outcomes and measures towards a continuum of service

In making these changes, a system alignment toward recovery of care outcomes would be possible. Currently, there appears to be no governing oversight within the social system nor is there human service alignment.

Building an eco-system for change requires: a recovery-oriented services approach; governance over outcomes and a continuum of service; coordinated partnerships; data driven-decisions; and local solutions focused on bridging gaps between collective resources and services offered.

Report

Virtually all progress to strengthen community safety and well-being relies on collective effort. Whether it is improving equity, addressing disparities, supporting individuals or creating safer conditions, various aspects of a community must be simultaneously addressed through multiple partners. Police play a role as connectors, which is seen through the work done with the health care system, education system, community organizations and other social service agencies. As the world has evolved, the demands on policing and expectations of safety have changed. In the absence of a cohesive strategy, community partners have been left to fill what are perceived as shortcomings within the system.

The Edmonton Police Service (EPS) acknowledges that policing is changing. Police have always played an integral role in communities outside of responding to crime. The current climate is an opportunity to transform how we appropriately direct people to systems that provide the right balance between support and enforcement in our efforts to increase community safety. To achieve the overall vision communities have involves developing new models of community safety and well-being, reimagining governance and accountability, information sharing, taking a user- of -service - driven perspective and finding efficiencies.

In early 2019, the EPS launched Vision 2020 to make the organizational changes necessary in achieving this balance and has implemented 70% of the recommended actions to date. As an organizational improvement initiative, it was designed to change policing through three core approaches: reduce demand for service with a “diversion” approach, use data and analytics to inform decision making, and seek out efficiencies on a continuing basis. As the project nears completion, progress and change in several areas is already being observed. However, to be truly successful in achieving measurable and sustainable improvements, EPS needs cooperation and assistance from many other agencies, governments, and citizens.

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Police are but one component in an ecosystem of providers that collectively meet the needs of citizens. Society has changed in the wake of COVID-19 and the death of George Floyd, and policing must also change if it is to remain effective. If police need to change, we can safely assume that our partners and other service providers might also benefit from similar changes, all to reflect the way our society has evolved. Consequently, this report is an invitation for all within the social services ecosystem to participate.

All of this is possible, but it requires organizational willingness, a structured approach, partnerships with collective outcomes and measures and a governing body willing to take on oversight and coordination roles. The EPS is already pursuing plans to try and realize the benefits of a coordinated approach. The EPS Strategic Plan 2020-2022 is people-focuses, and the organizational restructuring to deliver on this focus (Vision 2020) is well underway. EPS believes that pursuing and scaling certain initiatives can have a significant impact. Examples of such initiatives are the creation of a Community Safety and Well-being Bureau, the exploration of an integrated dispatch center, community debrief project supports such as CARE (a program in the Neighborhood Empowerment Teams) and joint intake partnerships such as Human Centered Liaison Program (HELP and Heavy Users of Service). The EPS requires partnerships that focus on a continuum of care for better outcomes.

There are countless possibilities if all organizations and agencies openly dedicate themselves and their resources toward the simple goal of moving people away from lives of crime, poverty, addiction and/or homelessness.

It is often considered a mark of effective policing when the demand for police service decreases. If we are successfully diverting individuals away from the justice system while simultaneously driving crime rates down, we are breaking the patterns that require significant police resources. In policing, it is often said that we try to work ourselves out of a job every day. This is an approach that could have considerable impact if extended throughout the entire social services ecosystem. This could consist of “safe shelters” outside of the formal medical system, where people in need could be housed for a few hours or days, for safety or health reasons. Or, social agencies, medical professionals and the police sharing care plans for individual clients, so all agencies understand the desired outcome for each person walking through their doors; an expectation that Edmontonians and taxpayers expect.

This aspect of the City Council motion speaks to four areas for change within policy, funding, programs, and partnerships. Relative to these topics;

Policy - starting with the *Criminal Code of Canada* and the provincial *Police Act*, policy clearly defines how EPS activities are to be undertaken. For example, EPS street check reports are carefully controlled through organizational policy, and work has begun in partnership with the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police and the Provincial Government on a coordinated approach to a Provincial Street Check policy. The policies are regularly reviewed by the agencies that create them and are publicly available. Most significantly, the organization is held accountable on how well it adheres to these policies by several agencies, most notably the EPC. A potential solution is an overarching governing body for all community safety and well-being within the City of Edmonton that would ensure alignment between agencies and organizations. The EPS strongly advocates for a system change in policy or legislation that mandates a continuum of care for better outcomes within the entire social service ecosystem.

Funding - Oversight of financial resources used by the EPS to deliver its services is carefully monitored by the Police Commission. Complex social issues such as addictions, homelessness, domestic violence, criminal justice, trauma and mental health are very much connected. Funding already exists for these services across our City and across the province. This funding should be allocated based on shared outcomes, evidence and consistent key performance metrics. It is imperative that we place resources into solutions that are measurable and have effective outcomes. The EPS would fully support a broad social financial framework for Provincial and Municipal funding in order to provide accountable, wrap-around services for our vulnerable population in Edmonton with outcome measures that look at how many people we can get out of the criminal justice system, unemployment and into education. A possible tool could be one similar to the Charity Intelligence Canada methodology which allows donors to be informed when they donate to charities, and to promote transparency, accountability, and results focus in the charitable sector.

Programs – Programs can be large and immediately recognizable to citizens (for example, responding to calls for service) while others are highly specialized and only benefit specific groups of citizens. The Heavy Users of Service (HuoS) is a partnership between the EPS, Government of Alberta, City of Edmonton, Alberta Health Services, Boyle Street Community Services, Homeward Trust, Bissell Centre, REACH Edmonton, Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society, Boyle McCauley Health Services, E4C, and the George Spady Society.

Offering a continuum of service, the Human-centered Engagement and Liaison Partnership (HELP) will launch in January 2021. HELP Constables and Navigators will work in collaboration with our partners to focus on vulnerable community members' day-to-day needs and challenges to connect and transition them to better-suited community support service.

Within CR_8348 it is noted that programs provide a direct connection for vulnerable community members to move out of the justice system and into the social, health, and community resources. First responders that work all hours of the day are often expected to find community safety solutions with our vulnerable population; however, once an initial crisis has been stabilized by a first responder, the majority of community programs are not available past normal business hours. In addition, first responders do not have the option of refusing service to someone in crisis and are often left with imperfect solutions due to the lack of availability within social programs. The EPS would fully support a mandated full spectrum approach to programming that ensures people receive the right support at the right time.

Partnerships – The EPS is committed to having strong connections to Edmontonians, and to ensure that the programs it delivers are closely aligned with community needs. The EPS has several partnership arrangements in place, with other civic departments, other policing agencies (Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police), academic institutions (MacEwan University research on crime trends), social agencies (Bent Arrow) and businesses (liquor store theft project through the Community Solutions Accelerator).

The School Resource Officer Program is one example of a community partnership the EPS believes in as we need to invest in our youth. While the Edmonton Public School Board is currently reviewing our program, the Youth Enhancement Deployment (YED) model seeks to support youth outside of school settings and within our community. There is a significant amount of research that examines how educational attainment relates to public safety and crime. Forming secure attachments with police officers who can act as system navigators and provide various forms of support can enable the successful completion of educational goals.

Other examples of police working as an integral partner with the City of Edmonton and/or community partners include; Encampment Response Team (ERT), Child at Risk Response Teams (CARRT), Domestic Abuse High Risk Teams (DAHRT), Neighborhood Empowerment Team (NET), Police and Crisis Team (PACT) and the Senior Protection Partnership (SPP).

A governing body that identifies and prioritizes effective partnerships and a coordinated community safety and well-being framework would reduce redundancies, demand in the system and allow for a fully integrated approach.

Conclusion

Current societal systems that manage safety and care for the disadvantaged within Edmonton need to change, and now is the time to make those changes. We need only look at the number of homeless encampments in our city to see this need. The EPS has already begun moving forward with significant operational changes that help realize this. However, seeing the full effects throughout the entire social services

ecosystem requires a recovery-oriented services approach, governance into outcomes and continuum of service, coordinated partnerships, data driven decisions and local solutions focusing on bridging the gap between financial and human services.

The EPS is committed to ongoing community engagement and invites other care-based agencies and the City of Edmonton to align outcomes for smarter operations towards reduced demand for services. Policing has always had a unique mandate and by bringing together the tools of enforcement and support holistic pathways are possible for people who want to get out of the criminal justice system. If ever there was a time to work together, now is that time.

Corporate Outcomes and Performance Management

Corporate Outcome(s): Edmonton is a Safe City			
Outcome(s)	Measure(s)	Result(s)	Target(s)
Citizens are satisfied and confident in community safety service provided by EPS	Public perceptions of police performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring safety of Citizens • Enforcing the laws • Treating people fairly • Being approachable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 83%, average or good job • 85%, average or good job • 70%, average or good job • 79%, average or good job 	Monitoring Ongoing
Edmonton is a leading partner in building safe communities	TBD	TBD	TBD

Attachments

None