



City of
Peterborough

To: Members of the General Committee

From: Sheldon Laidman, Commissioner of Community Services

Meeting Date: December 2, 2019

Subject: Report CSSS19-020
Highlights of the Operational Review of Peterborough's
Homelessness Response System

Purpose

A report to provide Council with information about the Operational Review of Peterborough's homelessness response system, completed in spring 2019 by OrgCode Consulting Inc.

Recommendation

That Council endorse Report CSSS19-020 dated December 2, 2019, of the Commissioner of Community Services as follows:

That the presentation by OrgCode Consulting Inc be received for information.

Budget and Financial Implications

There are no direct budget or financial implications as a result of the adoption of the recommendation. Org Code does note in the Review that Peterborough currently spends more per resident on its shelter system than other comparable cities.

Background

The City of Peterborough is the Service Manager for integrated local planning for housing and homelessness services for the City and County of Peterborough. Ending homelessness requires strong and aligned system-level leadership that ensures there

are efforts across systems and organizations to improve effectiveness and client outcomes.

In the fall of 2018, the City retained OrgCode Consulting, Inc. (OrgCode) to undertake an Operational Review of the local homelessness response system. OrgCode has specific expertise as a leading resource for communities working to end homelessness. The Review focused on an examination of the local homelessness response system to evaluate its effectiveness as a system of care dedicated to preventing and ending homelessness. Further attention was paid to the need to move from a focus on managing homelessness through emergency responses to a system focused on prevention of homelessness and providing permanent housing.

The project included:

- data and document review
- site visits to examine commitment to evidence-informed practices
- samples of policies and procedures
- reviews of case files
- key informant interviews
- a survey of service providers, and
- engagement with people with lived experience of homelessness.

The goal was to identify successes, challenges and opportunities for enhancement in the collective plan to end and prevent chronic homelessness. Highlights of the Operational Review are attached as Appendix A.

Connecting People to Permanent Solutions

The emergency shelter system in Peterborough absorbs the pressures of homelessness in the community. Recommendations to enhance local shelter services by connecting individuals using emergency shelters to permanent solutions were to:

1. Focus on diverting people from entering shelters; and
2. Dedicate resources into permanent housing options using Housing First philosophies and principles.

A key observation made was that the development of system-wide responses based on best practices for emergency shelter, outreach and drop-in-services (which impact the inflow of people into the system) are in the early stages of becoming housing-focused and aligning to the current thought and practice related to preventing and ending homelessness.

For example, in Housing First-led systems, shelter activity is focused on getting people housed, while other access points such as drop-in centres, meal programs, faith community, etc. are the mechanism to identify people to be housed next.

Noted Successes

Findings from the Operational Review included the following positive feedback:

As the identified Service Manager for Provincial investments, the City of Peterborough has done an admirable job in fostering an alignment to evidence informed practices while remaining responsive to the local realities and unique pressures impacting the homelessness system of care...The City of Peterborough and its funded agencies have demonstrated strong leadership and dedication to serving the individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

Also noted are the development and launch of a Coordinated Access System, improvements in data collection and analysis to better understand the inflow and outflow of individuals within the homelessness system.

Challenges

As a snapshot of housing and homelessness system management in Ontario, the report states that: "As is the scenario for all Service Managers, the challenge of preventing and ending chronic homelessness by 2025 will continue to demand transformation, performance management and operational oversight within its administration of services but also in the programs and community partners that it funds and supports throughout the region."

The focus on emergency shelters, outreach activities, meal programs, drop-in centres, and other emergency responses has demanded a huge portion of the available housing and homelessness funding. Best practices indicate the opportunities should be made to shift investments to shelter diversion and permanent housing.

Opportunities

OrgCode recommendations outline actionable opportunities to move forward toward the goal of ending homelessness by 2025 and becoming a "Functional Zero" community. "Functional Zero" is defined as a systematic response that ensures homelessness is prevented whenever possible, or is otherwise a rare, brief, and non-recurring experience.

Recommendations include:

- Implement a performance management framework that incorporates Standard Operating Procedures, management supports, quality control and quality assurance strategies internally and for funded programs. This enhances transparency, accountability and collaboration among system providers as well as housing stability for residents.

- Decrease the inflow of new people into homelessness. Approaches to improve efforts to prevent and rapidly exit from homelessness were identified. A plan for broader diversion of families and individuals should be developed.
- Build on the progress made in collecting data and monitoring activities and progress. The City's Homelessness System Data Administrator manages system-level data, and the By-Name Priority List to ensure there are measurable outcomes for individuals and system progress.
- Connect homelessness and the available social and community housing options. This is especially important because "the lack of affordable and appropriate housing options available in Peterborough currently provides the greatest challenge in the community's goal of achieving Functional Zero for chronic homelessness."
- Establish a more coordinated, and potentially centralized, housing placement service. This includes designated housing locator positions within the system whose sole purpose is landlord recruitment and retention.
- Establish youth homelessness specific goals and targets in the long-term housing and homelessness plan.
- Ensure system-wide professional development standards are learned and applied consistently throughout the system including trauma-informed and Indigenous cultural competency training and access to cultural programming.
- Establish the City in a strategic role of leading policy formation for the housing and homelessness service system. The Program Integrity Officer (PIO) helps turn the recommendations in actionable opportunities. The PIO position is integral to the growth, alignment and enhancement of the local homelessness and re-housing supports system.
- Explore the possibility of creating more Permanent Supportive Housing models to support households that require the intensity and frequency of the supports offered under this model.

Moving Forward

Several of the recommendations are underway or completed. Others are reflected in revised goals and objectives in the 5-year Review of the 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan. OrgCode states that "Although much work is still required to achieve the goals [...], with a focus on human centered system design and strategic planning, achieving functional zero for chronic homelessness is indeed possible over the next 5 years." The described opportunities for system-level improvements "will enhance transparency, accountability and collaboration while also improving stability and housing outcomes for residents."

Summary

The implementation of the recommendations from OrgCode will assist the City and County of Peterborough to create a functioning and effective Homelessness Response System.

Submitted by,

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Attachment:
Appendix A Highlights of the Operational Review