

To: Warden and Members of County Council

From: Director of Human Services

Emergency Shelter Update

RECOMMENDATION

1. **That County Council receive this update to Council Report No. HS 2022-01, entitled “Emergency Shelter Proposal”, as information.**

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The purpose of this report is to provide County Council with an update regarding the Emergency Shelter in Woodstock located at 723 Dundas Street working toward a 24-hour, 7 day a week emergency shelter.
- Through integration of community social services, more clients are now benefitting from access to emergency services built on strong partnerships.
- The INN is operating at close to full capacity (24 beds) for overnight stays as of the latter part of April.
- The INN is open from 7:30pm to 8:00am with discussions underway to expand hours of operation towards 24/7. Operation Sharing offers programming during the daytime 8:00am to 4:00pm at the College Avenue Church on Monday through Friday.

Implementation Points

County staff continue to collaborate with key community partners in an endeavor to create a 24/7 emergency shelter; including Old St. Paul’s Anglican Church (“the Church”) who is the owner of the facility known as The INN, and Operation Sharing who manages the operations of the emergency shelter. Strong communications and agreements among all partners are required to make this initiative successful in attaining a 24/7 emergency shelter, anticipating full implementation by the end of this quarter.

Financial Impact

There is no financial impact beyond what has been approved in Human Services [Report HS 2022-01](#). None of the funding that was committed in Report HS 2022-01 has been flowed to Operation Sharing as the funding was contingent on increasing the hours of operation of the emergency shelter which has not been implemented yet. The County did provide the Church with \$100,000 from the Social Services Relief Funding (SSRF) for renovations to the physical space in 2021.







Communications

County staff continue to engage with individuals experiencing homelessness, community partners as well as housing and service providers, in the collective work of addressing housing and homelessness related concerns.

As momentum builds and improvements to services and supports continue to be actualized, details will be shared.

Effective April 1, 2022 the Province revised program guidelines that support homelessness into one rolled up program called the Homeless Prevention Program (HPP) that is focused on key performance indicators to prevent, address and reduce homelessness. Oxford County is required to report to the Province on key performance indicators to achieve targeted outcomes with the funding provided.

Strategic Plan (2020-2022)

					
WORKS WELL TOGETHER	WELL CONNECTED	SHAPES THE FUTURE	INFORMS & ENGAGES	PERFORMS & DELIVERS	POSITIVE IMPACT
1.i. 1.ii.		3.i. 3.iii.	4.i.		

DISCUSSION

Background

As noted in Council Report HS 2022-01, there is a continuing need to build supports to assist those experiencing homelessness in our community. These supports will be helpful to those experiencing homelessness as well as the greater community.

Old St. Paul's Anglican Church has been instrumental in facilitating the success of renovations required to The INN earlier in 2022 in order to increase capacity of the emergency shelter from

12 beds to 24 beds. The renovations were made possible by provincial funding under Oxford County's Social Services Relief Fund (SSRF) allocation.

Operation Sharing, who currently oversees the day to day operations of The INN, is committed to increasing the hours of service of the shelter and is working with the Church towards operating on a 24/7 basis. Operation Sharing has advised that due to the continued effects of the pandemic, the shift to implement operation of the shelter 24/7 has been more gradual than originally anticipated. Pandemic restrictions around social distancing, isolation requirements and not being able to meet in person are some of the challenges delaying progress towards increasing the hours of operation of the emergency shelter. These factors all had an impact on Operations Sharing's ability to recruit and train staff and in their ability to meet with the Church to come to an agreement for increased hours.

Operation Sharing is the lead agency endeavouring to increase service hours to ultimately have 24/7 emergency shelter supports to assist those requiring emergent services. This would not be possible without the collaborative partnership with the Church and Oxford County. Human Services is supporting Operation Sharing by providing financial resources through Provincial funding allocation to support staffing and operations to ensure the initiative's success. Building on existing partnerships with clear roles and responsibilities to support a successful system is critical.

In an effort to support individuals in our communities Operation Sharing has established additional partnerships to increase the visibility and hands on support services at The INN on a regular basis. Those support services include access to the Mobile Health Bus, Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) staff as well as Oxford County Community Health Centre (OCCHC) staff who come onsite to The INN three evenings a week. In addition, they have been able to create day space at the College Ave. location of the Operation Sharing services of Bullwinkle's and the Food for Friends programs. Operation Sharing has been invited to attend a County Council meeting in the near future to provide an overview on the services and supports provided through their organization.

The Canadian Mental Health Association has been gradually building up the outreach activities in Downtown Woodstock and at The INN to provide planned services and referrals to meet their key performance indicators. They are working to establish the Downtown route they will be taking on a regular basis so retailers and downtown businesses will have an idea what to anticipate. The full staffing complement should be in place by the end of the month.

Comments

The operation of The INN 24/7 remains paramount for Human Services, Operation Sharing, Old St. Paul's Anglican Church and the agencies involved in supporting individuals accessing the shelter. The supports needed by those who utilize services continue to be the priority. The ability to adapt and change to better serve the clientele and community are continuously taken into account to ensure that any model is built with room to manoeuvre in accordance with those needs.

The overnight shelter continues to have more patrons with the improvements made to the physical space. The staff continue to be upskilled to manage the increase in the number of patrons each night.

Through partnerships in Oxford County individuals have programs and services they can access from multiple locations. Currently The INN operates overnight from 7:30pm through to 8:00am 7 days a week and the College Ave. location provides day programming from 8:00am through 4:00pm on Monday through Friday including Bullwinkles and the Food for Friends. It is anticipated that the Church will allow for increased hours of The INN to permit Operation Sharing to open the doors starting at 4:00pm by the end of June, 2022.

Ideally, the patrons are advised they can attend the College Ave. programs during the day and then return to the evening program at The INN. Ultimately, there will be a hybrid model of services being available on a 24/7 basis between the two locations which are within one city block from one another. This model is anticipated to be built by the end of this quarter with regular KPI's being presented to Council.

Conclusions

In light of the continued challenges associated with COVID-19, recruitment and upskilling staff, coordinating programming with community partners and access to the original 24/7 planned location, the 24/7 model is on an upward trajectory. It takes many hours, conversations and planning to ensure that an accessible, safe and desired model of service is provided for those most in need in our community.

It is important to be mindful to build capacity in a steady way piloting different ideas to be sure it is consistent with client usage. The model needs to be built with the primary goals and interests of clients and service providers as the common goal is to have individuals utilize the model built for them.

There has been significant progress made in the last six months in supporting the homeless in our communities, building on partnerships and increasing awareness of services available. It is through strong relationships and a desire to support the communities most vulnerable that we will be able to continue to move forward and accomplish the delivery of 24/7 emergency shelter supports.

SIGNATURES

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