

**To:** Warden and Members of County Council

**From:** Chief Administrative Officer

## Community Safety and Well-being Plan: Safe & Well Oxford – Next Steps

### RECOMMENDATIONS

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1. That Report No. CAO 2023-01 entitled “Community Safety and Well-being Plan: Safe & Well Oxford – Next Steps” be received;
2. And further, that Council approve the draft Terms of Reference for the Safe and Well Oxford Steering Committee attached to this report as Attachment 1;
3. And further, that Council support the establishment of the following positions to the Safe and Well Oxford Steering Committee for the current term of Council, commencing March 1, 2023 and ending on November 15, 2026:
  - One representative from the Mental Health and Addictions Action Coalition;
  - One representative from the Housing Action Coalition;
  - One representative from the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Coalition;
  - One representative from a youth community organization;
  - Manager of Strategic Initiatives and Continuous Improvement, Oxford County;
  - One of either a Clerk or CAO from the Area Municipalities; and,
  - Two members of County Council;
4. And further, that the following two Oxford County Councillors be appointed to the Safe and Well Oxford Steering Committee for this term of Council: Councillors - \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

### REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

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- This report is intended to seek Council’s support in proceeding with the next steps in the implementation of the Oxford Community Safety and Well-being Plan: [Safe and Well Oxford](#).
- Staff are seeking Council’s approval of the draft Terms of Reference for the Safe and Well Oxford Steering Committee and positions as outlined and attached to this report as Attachment 1.

### Implementation Points

Upon approval of the recommendations contained in this Report, the Steering Committee membership will be assembled in accordance with the Terms of Reference. This process will be facilitated by the County’s Manager of Strategic Initiatives and Continuous Improvement and will

involve establishing an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Coalition; seeking a representative from each of the respective Action Coalitions; a representative from a youth community organization; one staff appointment to represent the Area Municipalities; and, two appointments from County Council. It is expected that a full complement of Committee members will be in place to allow the Committee's first quarterly meeting to be scheduled by the end of March 2023.

## Financial Impact

There are no financial impacts associated with this report.







## Communications

A copy of this Report will be distributed to the Area Municipalities and the Action Coalitions representing:

- Mental Health and Addictions;
- Housing; and,
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

The Safe & Well Oxford Communities website [safewelloxford.ca](http://safewelloxford.ca) will be updated to include the Steering Committee Terms of Reference.

## Strategic Plan (2020-2022)

					
<b>WORKS WELL TOGETHER</b>	<b>WELL CONNECTED</b>	<b>SHAPES THE FUTURE</b>	<b>INFORMS &amp; ENGAGES</b>	<b>PERFORMS &amp; DELIVERS</b>	<b>POSITIVE IMPACT</b>
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## DISCUSSION

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### Background

In January 2020, Anne Becker, CEO, Climb Consulting Inc., in partnership with Lindsay Sage, Sagecomm, were retained by the Oxford Coordinating Committee (County and Area Municipality Clerks) to begin working on the development of the Community Safety and Well-being Plan in accordance with the requirements of the Police Services Act. The ultimate goal of the Community Safety and Well-being Plan (the Plan) is to achieve sustainable communities where everyone feels safe, has a sense of belonging, opportunities to participate, and where individuals and families are able to meet their needs for education, healthcare, food, housing, income, and social and cultural expression.

As outlined in the Plan, community engagement activities that were undertaken in partnership with the Advisory Committee, to identify community priority risks include the following:

- Climb Consulting Inc. completed an environmental scan; this included identifying where there is already work underway in the community to address specific risks and identifying existing capacity and resources, such as service providers, tables, committees and boards that are active in the community and will be critical to implementing the Plan moving forward;
- Anne Becker and Lynsey Aarrssen facilitated 12 focus groups, which involved more than 150 participants representing the following sectors and services:
  - Policing
  - Emergency Response
  - School boards
  - Hospitals
  - Community Health / Health Teams
  - Addictions / support agencies
  - Mental health agencies and supports
  - Children's Aid Society
  - Organizations serving children and families
  - United Way
  - Housing and homelessness groups
  - Justice Services
  - Social Planning
  - Business community
  - CAO's and Mayors from the municipalities and Oxford County
- In partnership with Lindsay Sage, of Sagacomm, an online community survey was launched which engaged 1,320 participants from across the County;
- A youth-focused online survey was distributed which received responses from 54 youth aged 13-21;
- A youth-focused virtual focus group was facilitated by Anne with ten local youth; and,
- One-on-one interviews were conducted by Anne with local subject matter experts in the community.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Climb Consulting Inc. prepared a detailed workplan for this project and planned many in-person focus groups and community consultation initiatives. Much of the consultation phase was moved online due to pandemic related public health restrictions and guidance. The draft Plan comments on feedback received from the community related to the impact of the pandemic locally. It was noted during the preparation of the Plan, that the COVID-19 pandemic is only one factor in the big picture of identifying priority risks to addressing residents' overall feeling of safety and well-being in the community. The Committee wanted to ensure that the COVID-19 pandemic did not detract from other ongoing important issues within Oxford.

Through the community engagement process and environmental scan, the Advisory Committee identified four priority risks to be the focus of the Plan:

1. Mental Health
2. Affordable Housing
3. Substance Misuse and Addictions
4. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

The Safe and Well Oxford Plan includes a summary of the current situation of each priority risk, based on the community and the engagement feedback received. Each priority risk area subsequently contains two recommended goals with further detailed objectives as outlined in the Plan, which are summarized as follows:

*Mental Health*

1. Under the guidance of a multi-disciplinary / sectoral Action Coalition, (i.e., Oxford Mental Health & Addictions Network) expand primary prevention programs and interventions to reduce exposure to risk factors and enhance protective factors before mental health problems occur.
2. Expand mental health and well-being awareness and literacy programs to promote dialogue, foster understanding, and change mindsets about mental health.

*Affordable Housing*

1. Raise awareness of the housing crisis as a whole, within which affordable housing along the whole continuum, including homelessness are critical elements.
2. Establish a system-wide Affordable Housing Action Coalition, comprised of critical stakeholders from the eight municipalities and County of Oxford administration and active participation from system-wide partners and stakeholders, to update and approve a shared Housing Strategy and Action Plan. The mandate would focus on increasing access to quality housing options within various levels of affordability and for a diverse range of needs and household sizes across the entire housing continuum in Oxford County.

*Substance Misuse and Addictions*

1. Spearheaded by the Drug and Alcohol Strategy Committee (now Oxford Mental Health and Addictions Network), utilize a health promotion and prevention approach (leveraging social media) to enhance youth protective factors. Key protective factors that hold promise for making a difference include community participation (e.g., in art, music, sports, and school activities), building a sense of connectedness, enabling access to peer, parent, and social support, as well as expanding the availability of community events and outdoor spaces.
2. Expand system-wide communication and conversations about substance misuse, focused on the public, community stakeholders and partners in the fight against addictions.

*Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)*

1. Establish an EDI Action Coalition to develop an evidence-informed, thoughtful and sensitive Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, including an Inclusion Charter, for all communities across Oxford County. An Action Coalition/Committee is intended to bring together area municipalities, the County, police services, health care organizations and providers, school boards, businesses, social service providers, and agencies with a shared commitment to ensuring our communities are welcoming and inclusive for all.

Most importantly the Action Coalition will engage community members representing the many differences across the County to ensure no one is left behind.

2. Develop, support, and promote community awareness and education campaigns to improve public understanding of racial and social justice and the individual and community impacts of stigma and discrimination.

Overall, the Plan focuses on social development and prevention and is a catalyst for change in addressing the root causes of complex social issues and criminal activity in our communities.

As outlined in detail within the Plan, priority risks emerging from the consultation phase address county-wide challenges, some of which rely on services provided by the County of Oxford. County staff have indicated that they see themselves as a contributing partner to help the eight municipalities implement the goals and objectives of the Plan.

At the County Council meeting held on July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Oxford County Council passed the following resolution:

“Whereas legislative amendments to the Police Services Act, 1990 came into effect on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019, which require every municipality to prepare and adopt a Community Safety and Well-being Plan and that municipalities work in partnership with the police services and other sectors including health/mental health, education, community/social services and children/youth services throughout their planning process;

And Whereas the requirement to prepare and adopt a Community Safety and Well-being Plan applies to lower-tier municipalities in the County of Oxford and in counties, and regional municipalities throughout the Province (other than the County of Oxford);

And Whereas in October, 2019, local Councils within Oxford County supported a collaborative approach to the development of a Joint Community Safety and Well-being Plan within Oxford County;

And Whereas local municipalities established a Coordinating Committee made up of the Clerks from each of the lower-tier municipalities, and an Advisory Committee made up of representatives from across Oxford municipalities, including police and emergency services, health care, social services, school boards and community service providers. The Advisory Committee’s role has been to inform and guide the information gathering process, community consultation and develop recommendations for the Plan to address community safety and well-being within Oxford;

And Whereas each participating municipality within the County allocated \$10,000 towards the development of the joint Community Safety and Well-being Plan and hired a consultant to work with the Advisory Committee and Coordinating Committee to consult with members of the public, local agencies and organizations to contribute to the development of the plan;

And Whereas the key priority risk themes within the County have been identified as follows:

- Mental Health;
- Affordable Housing;
- Substance Misuse;

- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion;

And Whereas the purpose of Safe and Well Oxford Communities is to improve the safety and well-being of community members, by defining and addressing priority risks through proactive, integrated system-wide strategies, the responsibility of which falls within the jurisdiction of the County within Oxford;

And Whereas all Councils across Oxford County, including the Townships of Blandford-Blenheim, East Zorra-Tavistock, Norwich, Zorra and Southwest Oxford, together with the Town of Ingersoll, the Town of Tillsonburg, and the City of Woodstock have approved [Safe & Well Oxford Communities: Community Safety and Well-being Plan](#);

Now therefore be it resolved that the Council of the County of Oxford support and endorse Safe and Well Oxford Communities: Community Safety and Well-being Plan (the Plan);

And Further That the County of Oxford establish a Safe and Well Oxford Steering Committee as recommended in the Plan to oversee the implementation of the goals and objectives established and approved to address the following priority risk themes identified within the Plan:

- Mental Health;
- Affordable Housing;
- Substance Misuse;
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.”

## Comments

The Oxford Community Safety & Well-Being Plan: Safe & Well Oxford recommends that a Safe & Well Oxford Steering Committee be established to lead the implementation of the Plan. The Steering Committee is tasked with:

- Determining the composition and representation of the Action Coalitions. The Action Coalitions are recommended to be made up of existing and/or new committees/tables and inter/multi-disciplinary and accountable stakeholders, including youth and a diverse range of residents with lived experiences. Each Action Coalition will unite and utilize the expertise, knowledge, best practices and innovation that are already at work in our communities, bringing them together to transition our priority risk themes into action. Through the development of the plan and in an effort to avoid duplication of efforts, it has been determined that existing committees may be the most appropriate Action Coalition for the associated risk area (i.e. Oxford Mental Health and Addictions Action Coalition and Oxford County Housing Strategy Planning Committee). A new County-wide Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Coalition/Committee is proposed within the Plan to address this priority risk;
- Providing assistance and support to the ongoing work of the Action Coalitions. In some situations, the Action Coalitions may be primarily facilitating communication and dialogue between community agencies and the Committee with respect to work that is being done to address the specific priority risk;

- Developing a tracking process/performance scorecard to measure the progress and collective impact of the work being done in support of the goals and objectives as outlined within the Plan; and,
- Providing a report/update to each municipal Council on an annual basis.

Although much of the work to support the goals and objectives of the Plan is already being done by various community partnerships and agencies in Oxford, there is a need to connect this work with the County and lower tier municipalities to help raise awareness of some of the challenges that our community partners are facing. This in turn will provide an opportunity for organizations within Oxford, already working towards addressing the priority risks of the Plan, to seek local government support, awareness and increased advocacy for resources.

The Plan originally recommended that the Steering Committee be comprised of members from the original advisory committee, two – three representatives from other community agencies which are focused on the four priority areas, representation from the area municipalities (i.e., senior leaders, members of Council), the County, a representative from the Future Oxford Partnership and two residents to represent the community (one youth and one senior).

After further discussion and consideration with regards to the composition and focus of this committee, it is recommended that the Steering Committee have two co-leads (one County and one Area Municipality) with co-ordination and oversight of the work of the committee. Membership is recommended to include one representative from the Mental Health and Addictions Action Coalition, one representative from the Housing Action Coalition, one representative from the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Coalition, one representative from a youth community organization, the Manager of Strategic Initiatives and Continuous Improvement (Oxford County), one Clerk or CAO from the Area Municipalities, and two (2) members of County Council

As the Community Safety & Well-being Plan and associated action plans are implemented, it will be critical to have the necessary resources and support from all levels of government and funding bodies, such as foundations. Oxford is already facing serious financial shortfalls in all of these areas, therefore, to truly transform safety and well-being outcomes, advocacy, education and awareness will be required to increase funding and support for both front-end services and back-end processes and support.

Further, as the plan is implemented over the next five years, ongoing engagement with the community will be vital to understanding the changing needs or evolving risks, to include residents in problem-solving conversations, and communicating the Plan's progress and results.

The implementation of this Plan does not rest solely on the shoulders of police and community service providers but needs to be a shared responsibility of all members of the community, bringing lower and upper tier municipalities together with residents, community agencies and multi-sectoral partners to develop effective solutions to address our priority risks and improve the overall well-being of Oxford County.

Implementation of Safe & Well Oxford requires strong leadership from County Council. It will be most beneficial and efficient to the work of the Steering Committee to report to one governing body, being the County of Oxford, on behalf of all Oxford municipalities.

## **Conclusions**

This report recommends County Council's support and approval of the establishment of the Safe & Well Oxford Steering Committee in accordance with the attached Terms of Reference and the appointment of the initial membership of the Committee for the current term of Council.

## **SIGNATURES**

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### **Report Author:**

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Sarah Hamulecki  
Manager of Strategic Initiatives and Continuous Improvement

### **Approved for submission:**

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Benjamin R. Addley  
Interim Chief Administrative Officer

## **ATTACHMENT**

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Attachment 1 – Safe & Well Oxford Steering Committee Terms of Reference, March 1, 2023