

STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

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DATE: January 29, 2021

TO: MAYOR AND COUNCIL

NAME AND TITLE: Ian Wells, Acting Deputy City Manager

SUBJECT: Car 60 Expansion Update

ATTACHMENT(S): None

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That Council RECEIVES FOR INFORMATION the staff report dated January 29, 2021, from the Acting Deputy City Manager, titled “Car 60 Expansion Update”.

PURPOSE:

At its July 27, 2020 regular meeting, Council directed Administration to explore expansion of the Car 60 Program by engaging with the program’s partners, the RCMP and Northern Health. In addition, Administration was directed to bring back a report to Council outlining the recommendations and/or budget implication associated with the expansion of the program. The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update.

BACKGROUND:

Car 60, operating seven days per week from 12 noon – 9 pm, is a mobile crisis response unit that pairs a uniformed RCMP officer with a clinical nurse, specializing in mental health. The team responds to calls for service and works together to offer on-site emotional and mental health assessments, crisis intervention, and referrals to appropriate services. Car 60 is one of many programs in place to ensure the provision of responsive mental health and substance use services.

In August of 2020, Administration facilitated a meeting with Northern Health and the RCMP to discuss the potential for program expansion. The parties agreed that a program review, including an analysis of utilization statistics, would inform potential service enhancements. However, there was not agreement as to the necessity to expand the Car 60 hours of operation. Resource allocation was of particular concern given the specialized nature of the team positions, and competing priorities.

Since that time, two key opportunities have presented that will allow existing Car 60 resources to be leveraged in a way that will enhance the overall reach and effectiveness of mental health services, particularly in the downtown area. The first is the opening of the Community Safety Hub in March of this year. The Community Safety Hub, designed to support multi-jurisdictional service coordination and integration, will serve as a “touchdown” site for Car 60. This will provide Car 60 staff with the opportunity to interact with allied service providers to identify and focus collaboratively on priority situations and individuals.

The second involves expansion of Northern Health's partnership with the RCMP. The partners are contemplating a pilot project that would run for three months, with a likely start date of April 2021. The initiative will involve assignment of an RCMP member to work with NH's community based mental health and substance use teams. Services provided by the team will be tailored to suit complex clients in the greatest need.

Both of these developments will be supported by the presence of a new full-time Northern Health Coordinator who will be based at the Community Safety Hub. The Coordinator will be responsible for optimizing health resources to support Car 60 by working with Car 60 personnel and other Northern Health programs and services. In addition, the RCMP led Situation Table, designed to help front line staff from the public safety, health and social service sectors to identify vulnerable people and collaboratively and rapidly connect them to services before they experience a negative or traumatic event, will convene at the Community Safety Hub.

Both Northern Health and the RCMP have indicated their willingness to provide further detail regarding partnerships initiatives that contribute to safety and inclusiveness if that is the wish of Council.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Council identified enhancing safety and security throughout Prince George with a focus on the downtown, as one of its Social and Health and Well-being focus areas. In addition, the Corporate Work Plan included provision of Select Committee recommendations to Council concerning a safe, clean, and inclusive community as a priority project. Four associated recommendations were approved by Council, including the establishment of a Community Safety Hub in the downtown. The effectiveness and reach of Car 60 services will be enhanced through the presence of allied service providers at the Hub.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:

Car 60, operating seven days per week from 12 noon – 9 pm, is a mobile crisis response unit that pairs a uniformed RCMP officer with a clinical nurse, specializing in mental health. The team responds to calls for service and works together to offer on-site emotional and mental health assessments, crisis intervention, and referrals to appropriate services. While its hours of operation will remain 12 noon – 9 pm, seven days per week, two important opportunities to leverage the resources of the Car 60 Program have been identified and acted on. Car 60 will be using the Community Safety Hub scheduled to open in March of 2021 as a "touchdown" site and as such, will benefit from allied services and initiatives, including a new NH Coordinator, based at that location. In addition, NH and the RCMP will be piloting an additional partnership initiative that embeds an RCMP member with NH's community based mental health and substance use teams. NH and the RCMP are able to provide additional detail regarding partnerships efforts to provide responsive mental health and substance use services if that is the wish of Council.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Ian Wells, Acting Deputy City Manager

PREPARED BY: Chris Bone, Senior Manager – Strategic Initiatives & Partnerships

APPROVED:

Walter Babicz, Acting City Manager

Meeting Date: 2021/02/08