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Item No. 15.1.8
Halifax Regional Council
March 7, 2023

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed

Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: March 1, 2023

SUBJECT: **Halifax Public Safety Strategy 2023-24 to 2025-26**

ORIGIN

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, S.N.S. 2008, c.39

Purpose of Act

Section 2 *The purpose of this Act is to...*

- c. Recognize that the functions of the Municipality are to
 - (i) provide good government,
 - (ii) provide services, facilities and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality, and
 - (iii) develop and maintain safe and viable communities.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council:

1. Approve the attached document, Public Safety Strategy for use as a strategy framework for municipal decision-making regarding public safety.
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to provide an annual progress report to Regional Council.
3. Allocate \$361,100 for Fiscal Year 2023-24 to begin work to establish a Centre of Responsibility for Public Safety as outlined in the Public Safety Strategy.

BACKGROUND

In October 2017, Halifax Regional Council approved the first Public Safety Strategy (2018-22 Strategy) for use as the strategic framework for municipal decision-making regarding public safety in the Halifax Regional

Municipality (HRM). Implementation of the Strategy successfully allowed the municipality to move towards a shared vision of public safety by reframing the problem from reducing crime to *creating safety*. This ignited a shift in the municipality to move beyond an absence of crime approach to public safety, toward creating the conditions for safety and wellbeing.

The inaugural Public Safety Strategy provides a wide-ranging framework for the municipality to act on four strategic priorities – **Build Resident Resilience, Ensure Safe Spaces, Strengthen Communities, and Prevent and Reduce Crime**. Through that strategy, the municipality has established a strong foundation for seeing our people, processes, and places as integral to building safer communities. The municipality's Public Safety Strategy demonstrated the most important roles the municipality plays in creating the conditions for safety—is its sustained investment in upstream programs, services and strategic initiatives.¹ For instance, more than half of the 76 actions in the Public Safety Strategy were advanced through Parks and Recreation and Libraries. These actions included creating inclusive spaces where municipal programs and services occur, and an equity-focused approach to developing the resources, relationships, and networks that build social cohesion and connect residents to resources at both the local and extra local levels.

Since the establishment of the Strategy, the municipality has also advanced key strategic initiatives that contribute to creating safety and wellbeing. These include the establishment of the Road to Economic Prosperity Action Plan, the Youth Services Plan, the MultiService Youth Centre, the Social Policy Framework, HalifACT, and the JustFood Action Plan. The Public Safety Office has also led the implementation of key strategic actions, providing strategic advice to the municipality and community partners on harm reduction services, police transformation, anti racism research and policy development, data literacy and advanced analytical tool development. It continues to oversee the implementation and development of three program areas: Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces, Community Mobilization Teams, and the Building Safer Communities Fund. Summary action briefs for each of these program areas can be found in Attachment A.

In 2021, shortly before the 2018-22 Strategy reached its end date, Council directed the CAO to create a new strategic plan that reimagined current approaches to public safety. The motion arose from the growing calls for change to existing response models to emergency and non-emergency situations across HRM. This direction highlighted the need to continue to invest in 'upstream' and community-based approaches; focus on broadening the spectrum of response to social issues, harms, and non-core police functions; and ensuring that the most appropriate person is responding to emergency and non-emergency situations.

Municipal mandate to maintain safe and viable communities

A strategic approach to public safety requires thinking about what we want to accomplish and whether we are well positioned to accomplish those goals. To do that, we must think about accountability (legislative mandate) and capacity to act (resources, knowledge, skills).

Section 2 c of the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, 'Purposes of the Municipality', states that HRM has a legislative responsibility to develop and maintain safe and viable communities. As noted above, the municipality fulfills this mandate through direct services, programs and policies that enhance **protective factors** that build resilient individuals and communities. Examples include youth programming and literacy development; neighbourhood planning for social cohesion, and supporting community-led safety and wellbeing initiatives. The municipality also fulfills this mandate through programs and services that **reduce risks** (i.e., factors that make individual or community harms more likely). Risk reduction implicates a wide range of programs and services offered by the municipality including, for example, sidewalk and road maintenance, fire and public safety education, community wellness programs, fire prevention inspections and code enforcement, emergency preparedness, the Emergency Service Achievement Program for at-risk youth and crime prevention programs such as the Youth Advocate Program. Finally, the municipality fulfills its mandate by **responding to harms** where they occur traditionally through policing, fire, and other emergency response services.

¹ See Public Safety Strategy Annual Reports <https://www.halifax.ca/about-halifax/regional-community-planning/public-safety>

In Halifax, like elsewhere in Canada, the municipality's mandate to maintain safe and viable communities requires it to **respond** to increasingly complex safety and wellbeing concerns that are non-criminal in nature. The root causes of these can be traced to systemic barriers in accessing services that typically fall outside the municipal mandate such as supportive housing, income supplements, addiction and mental health services. These barriers are often exacerbated by experiences of racism, poverty, and other forms of socio-economic marginalization. While the municipality does not have a mandate to deliver housing, income supplements, addiction and mental health services, it does have a mandate to address safety and wellbeing concerns that can arise from systemic barriers in accessing these services.

Over the past several years, the municipality has made strides toward creating the conditions for safety by reducing service barriers through programs such as Affordable Access, among others.² It hasn't yet, however, developed a spectrum of downstream options that would enable it to respond to the complexity of safety concerns it is mandated to address. Thus, when risks to safety arise that are non-criminal in nature, police remain the *de facto* response. Although these non-criminal risks could often be better addressed through more appropriate responses, the municipality does not have such alternative response models readily available to deploy. Deploying criminal justice tools to address non-criminal issues runs the risk of criminalizing individuals already marginalized.

Today, it is widely recognized—even by police—that police are not always the best service to address these complex, non-criminal safety concerns.³ Accordingly, many municipalities across Canada, including Halifax, are working toward building their capacity to broaden the spectrum of available response options to fulfill their mandate of maintaining safe and viable communities.⁴

DISCUSSION

In early 2022, a project team led by the Public Safety Office (PSO), began the process of renewing the Public Safety Strategy (Attachment B) drawing primarily on previous relevant consultations, with additional input and structure from business units, external consultants, local service providers and the public. This approach was important to demonstrate that the municipality was listening to existing (unacted) recommendations and aware of 'consultation fatigue' experienced by communities disproportionately impacted by violence and other safety concerns. The attached Strategy includes a list of all consultative documents used to inform its development.

The development of the Public Safety Strategy included three key phases: a current state assessment; internal consultations; and public and stakeholder consultations. The Strategy was developed to provide a vision and mandate for the municipality to advance its capacity to create the conditions for safety, broaden the spectrum of responses to social risks and harms, and provide a backbone structure to advance a community-centred, collective impact approach. The fourteen (14) actions presented focus on ways in which the municipality can improve protective factors, reduce risks, and ensure appropriate responses to harms. It adheres to the municipality's mandate to sustain safe and viable communities and is built upon an understanding that partnerships with the province and other stakeholders are vital to moving this work forward in a meaningful and sustained way.

The Strategy is built upon three action areas. The first area, **Community-led Public Safety**, builds capacity

² Other programs and services that help reduce barriers to access provincial (and other) services include: Street Outreach Navigator programs, Parks and Rec homelessness Outreach and Coordination, YouthWorx, Youth Advocate Program, Girls United, Multi-service youth centres, CMTs, and several programs run by the Halifax Public Libraries. See Annual Public Safety Strategy reports for additional details on upstream municipal safety initiatives.

³ See National Police Federation submission to the Board of Police Commissioners 'Defunding the Police' report *Chapter 3b) <https://www.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/boards-committees-commissions/220117bopc1021.pdf>; Canadian Chiefs of Police Research Foundation. 2015. The dollars and sense of policing, public safety and well-being in your community https://www.cacp.ca/index.html?asst_id=960

⁴ For instance, the cities of Toronto, Mississauga, Brampton, Calgary, Victoria all recently established non-police community mental health crisis response teams. See Just Mental Health <https://justmentalhealth.ca/programs/>

for the PSO to advance successes in promote public safety as a shared responsibility across business units, including expanding existing programs, developing training capacity, and bolstering support for community-led safety with populations disproportionately impacted by violence.

| ACTION | STRATEGIC PRIORITIES | TIMING | POTENTIAL MILESTONES |
|---|---|---------|--|
| Action area 1 – Community-led public safety leadership | | | |
| 1.1 Enhance Community Mobilization Teams | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide expert advice to promote public safety across municipal programs and services • Promote healing from trauma | 2023-24 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing peer-led counselling supports • Expansion to Spryfield |
| 1.2 Enhance Safe Cities and Safe Public Space program | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide expert advice to promote public safety across municipal programs and services • Create safer and more inclusive spaces • Promote healing from trauma • Create a centre for a collective impact approach to Public Safety | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding use of tools (e.g., Women's Safety Assessments) |
| 1.3 Advance Indigenous-led community safety | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide expert advice to promote public safety across municipal programs and services • Create safer and more inclusive spaces • Promote healing from trauma | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing mechanism to respond to MMIWG Calls to Action |
| 1.4 Establish public safety training capacity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create safer and more inclusive spaces • Promote healing from trauma • Broaden the spectrum of emergency and crisis response | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of front-line staff training in Non-Violent Crisis Intervention Training • Mental Health First Aid, Critical Incident Response Management, and Suicide Intervention (ASIST) training offered |
| 1.5 Enhance research and advisory capacity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide expert advice to promote public safety across municipal programs and services • Create a centre for a collective impact approach to Public Safety | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New research resource established • Evaluation mechanisms for the Public Safety Strategy established |
| 1.6 Promote investment in municipal infrastructure that supports community safety | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide expert advice to promote public safety across municipal programs and services • Create safer and more inclusive spaces | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social infrastructure considerations added to capital planning process |

The second action area, a **Broader Spectrum of Responses to Social Issues and Harms** primary focus is to address gaps in the municipality's mandate to create safe and viable communities. Council directed the municipality to consider potential civilian delivery of certain non-core police functions and a broader spectrum of responses. To guide the development of these new approaches, the Strategy proposes to establish sufficient administrative and program delivery capacity to realise a future state with a broader, fully integrated spectrum of response (see Attachment C for a high level illustration of a potential future state). Included in the action area is the development and implementation of an action plan to address the impacts of violence on youth, with focus on trauma-informed peer-support approaches, and supporting better service integration and coordination amongst youth service providers.

| ACTION | STRATEGIC PRIORITIES | TIMING | POTENTIAL MILESTONES |
|---|--|---|---|
| Action area 2 – A broader spectrum of responses to social issues and harms | | | |
| 2.1 Develop a Community Crisis Response Service Model for the municipality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance supports for people experiencing homelessness Broaden the spectrum of emergency and crisis response | Planning: 2023-24 Pilot: 2025-26 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate model identified Funding and partnership agreements established Pilot started and evaluation plan created |
| 2.2 Establish a drug and alcohol policy working group | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide expert advice to promote public safety across municipal programs and services Create safer and more inclusive spaces Enhance supports for people experiencing homelessness Reduce harms associated with alcohol and drugs | 2023-24 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working group established to co-develop a drug and alcohol strategy for Halifax |
| 2.3 Establish a sobering centre in the Halifax Regional Municipality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create safer and more inclusive spaces Enhance supports for people experiencing homelessness Broaden the spectrum of emergency and crisis response Reduce harms associated with alcohol and drugs | 2023-24 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Third-party provider identified Appropriate space identified and procured Pilot service started Initial evaluation completed |
| 2.4 Establish a mobile outreach team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create safer and more inclusive spaces Enhance supports for people experiencing homelessness Broaden the spectrum of emergency and crisis response Reduce harms associated with alcohol and drugs | Planning: 2023-24 Pilot: 2024-25 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate model identified Funding and partnership agreements established Pilot started and evaluation plan created |
| 2.5 Address trauma as a root cause of youth violence and gang involvement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create safer and more inclusive spaces Promote healing from trauma | 2023-24 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New youth resources established in Multi-Service Youth Centres Youth Services Review completed |

Halifax finds itself in the midst of a cultural shift in the provision of public safety. Beginning with the inaugural Public Safety Strategy, the municipality recognized that impacts come through sustained, collective effort across municipal business units, and through partnerships and coordination with communities, stakeholders, and other orders of government. The third action area, **A Centre of Responsibility (CoR) for Collective Impact**, thus grounds the Strategy in the development of a CoR—a 'backbone' office, responsible for moving forward initiatives identified in the Strategy and advancing the mandate of the PSO. As it currently stands, the PSO is not sufficiently resourced to further the actions identified in the strategy, nor to fully assess the potential for shifting or creating programs for civilian delivery of non-core police functions as directed by Council.

The proposed CoR is build upon evidence of effective CoRs elsewhere⁵, which have shown that a collective impact model should include senior management, and administrative support; capacity for training and program development; research, assessment, and evaluation capabilities; mechanisms for community engagement to co-develop community-led solutions; championship of a public safety perspective across the municipality; and capacity to establish and maintain multi-sector partnerships.

⁵ Canadian Municipal Crime Prevention Network 2018. Comprehensive Community Safety Strategies for Delivering Effective Crime Prevention. <https://safercities.ca/evidence-on-crime-prevention>; Waller, I. 2006. Less Law, More Order: the truth about reducing crime; See also City of Toronto's Social Development, Finance and Administration Division https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/8db6-social-dev_finance-admin.pdf; Albuquerque Community Safety Model (<https://www.cabq.gov/acs>) and REACH Edmonton's Council for Safe Communities (<https://reachedmonton.ca>)

| ACTION | STRATEGIC PRIORITIES | TIMING | POTENTIAL MILESTONES |
|--|--|---------|--|
| Action Area 3 – A Centre of Responsibility for collective impact | | | |
| 3.1 Develop a Centre of Responsibility for community-led public safety | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide expert advice to promote public safety across municipal programs and services • Create a centre for a collective impact approach to public safety | 2023-24 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New division created • Director hired • New reporting and staffing structure established |
| 3.2 Establish new community voice and advisory structures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide expert advice to promote public safety across municipal programs and services • Create a centre for a collective impact approach to public safety | 2023-24 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New community advisory structures established |
| 3.3 Assess existing municipal programs and services for migration to the new CoR | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide expert advice to promote public safety across municipal programs and services • Create a centre for a collective impact approach to public safety | 2024-25 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing municipal programs and services moved to the new CoR |

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Staff have reduced the original budget request for 2023-2024 from \$482,800 to \$361,100 by drawing on a vacancy in the CAO business unit to fund one FTE temporarily. The 2024-25 budget request presented to Regional Council on January 27 was also reduced by 35%, from \$1,815,900 to \$1,186,600. This was done through a reduction in the overall FTE requests in year two (from 6 to 1). Of the ten positions identified for fiscal years 2023-24 and 2024/25, and four are funded externally until March 31, 2026, through a grant received from Public Safety Canada’s Building Safer Communities Fund (BSCF). Upon the expiry of the Public Safety Canada’s BSCF at the end of fiscal year 2025-26, the four temporary externally funded positions would be required to become permanent positions should key milestones be reached, funded internally in 2026-27 and forward to continue to advance key actions of the Strategy.

In addition to the staffing salary costs noted, additional operating budgets are required to support the non-compensation costs associated with staffing, including the costs associated with enhancing the training capacity of the PSO, and establishing the Mobile Outreach Transportation Service. These costs include training materials and train-the-trainer certification for the new PSO trainers; costs associated with facilitating the drug policy working group such as honorariums for working group members, accommodations support, and travel expenses; and costs associated with establishing and operating the Mobile Transportation and Outreach Service through an external community service provider. Staff will return to Council with a resource request in fiscal year 2024-25 for a Community Mental Health Crisis Service once full costs and partnerships models are established.

Costs in the below table include anticipated staffing costs based on assumptions developed through review of appropriate compensation band levels for the positions that were allocated. The 2023-24 compensation costs are prorated based on estimated start dates and all costs outlined below consider the Public Safety Canada funding that is available until 2025-26.

| Additional Public Safety Budget Required | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | 2025/26 |
|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Compensation and Benefits ¹ <i>(5 positions in 2023/24 and 1 position added in 2024/25 for a total of 6 positions)</i> | 305,500 | 678,800 | 690,700 |
| Grant Funded - Compensation and Benefits <i>(4 temporary positions have been hired in 2022/23)</i> | 415,500 | 430,800 | 438,400 |
| Grant Funded - Non-compensation related expenses <i>(Consulting, recruitment/training, honoraria, other program related expenses and staff related costs)</i> | 609,100 | 585,500 | 79,600 |
| Mobile Outreach and Transportation Service | - | 450,000 | 450,000 |
| Training Program ² <i>Train the trainer and other training materials for the program</i> | 30,000 | 30,000 | 45,000 |
| Drug Policy Working Group ² <i>Honoraria, travel, food, accessibility</i> | - | - | 15,000 |
| Staff related costs <i>(Travel, conferences, training, office supplies, cell phones, memberships)</i> | 25,600 | 27,800 | 27,000 |
| Total Expenditures | 1,385,700 | 2,202,900 | 1,745,700 |
| Grant from Public Safety Canada for the Building Safer Communities Fund | (1,024,600) | (1,016,300) | (518,000) |
| Net Budget Required | 361,100 | 1,186,600 | 1,227,700 |

¹ One of the 5 positions will be funded in 2023/24 by a temporarily vacant position.

² These items are partially and fully funded by the grant in 2023-24 and 2024-25.

RISK CONSIDERATION

There are two main risks associated with the approach outlined above. First, as noted in the financial considerations section, there is ongoing development work required prior to implementation of the actions outlined in the Strategy, specifically the Mobile Transportation and Outreach Service and the Community Crisis Response Service Model. As such, engagement with service providers and identification of the appropriate model of service for both programs is a vital piece of work that is required prior to the establishment of either service. This includes an assessment of operating risks for new services, such as legal, privacy, and insurance. As such, the costs for delivering both services could vary based on the model of service, associated risks, the capacity of service providers in the community, and the introduction of other government funding.

Second, should the budgets for years one or two not be approved, the ability for the PSO to move forward on the actions identified in the Strategy will be significantly hindered. Resources have been identified to execute and support the actions in the Strategy. Therefore, the risk in meaningfully and effectively implementing the actions is directly tied to the approval of the associated budget.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Throughout the development of the Strategy, consultations occurred both internally with business units Council, and externally with community stakeholders and service providers. Details and themes of the engagement process can be found in the Strategy (Attachment 1 of the staff report). Observations following the consultations were carefully incorporated into the Strategy and helped inform the staffing needs.

Additional external engagement with service providers, community organizations, and community will be ongoing as the actions within the Strategy are advanced, including in relation to Action 3.2 which highlights the establishment of a community voice and advisory structure to support the development of the actions.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

No environmental implications were identified.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternatives to the proposed Public Safety Strategy are as follows:

1. **Approve the Strategy and costing for the original budget presented to Council on January 27th, requesting 15 positions over two years.** This would allow for estimated appropriate amount of resources to implement the Strategy according to its original three year timeline with the current allocation of Public Safety office resources. The funding required over and above the grant would be \$361,100 in 2023-24, \$1,815,900 in 2024-25 and \$1,888,700 in 2025-26.
2. **Do not approve the Strategy and associated resource requests.** This would maintain the current status quo in terms of the PSOs ability to respond to the needs of public safety and the community. This would result in the PSO continuing to execute their existing functions and an inability to advance the work highlighted in the Strategy. As well as a limited and inappropriate spectrum of response for social issues identified in the Strategy and a continued reliance on police and emergency personnel to respond to emergency and non-emergency situations.

ATTACHMENTS

- A Summary of 2022/23 Activities Public Safety Office Programs and Initiatives
 - B Public Safety Strategic Plan 2023-2026
 - C Future State Broader Spectrum of Response Model
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A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by: Amy Siciliano, Public Safety Advisor 902.210.0102

Safe City & Safe Public Spaces Program

Public Safety Strategy Implementation

Focus - Priority Areas: Build Resident Resilience; Strengthen Community, Ensure Safe Spaces

Research and Advising

- Staff liaison for Women's Advisory Committee of Halifax (WACH):
 - Co-led draft letter to federal government regarding Mayoral support for access to abortion services in Halifax
 - Co-led WACH Women and Gender Equity Strategy (WGES) consultation
 - Led staff report on "Race and Gender Based Data and the Safety of Asian Women and Non-Binary People". Actioning priorities identified in this report.
- Responded to requests from Business Units regarding intersectional, gender-based considerations in municipal initiatives and public safety issues:
 - Planned and co-hosted two sessions with seven community partners to advise on Transit's anti-sexual harassment campaign
 - Stakeholder engagement in Downtown Dartmouth regarding public safety concerns
 - Advising on Park Lighting Strategy to integrate safety considerations
 - Advising Transit team on transit safety report

Community Engagement

- Participant in WGES Working Group and contributed funding to community engagement with African Nova Scotian women and gender diverse residents.
- Engaged the Youth Advisory Committee on Safe City program, Community Mobilization Teams and the Public Safety Strategy on program priorities
- Planned and hosted five community engagement sessions to inform report to Council regarding safer public spaces for Muslim women. Close to 100 Muslim women engaged through these sessions. Target date for report is Spring 2023.

Relationship Building and Knowledge Exchange

- UN Women Safe Cities global working session regarding gendered impacts of climate change with member of HalifACT team
- Roundtable with Canadian Race Relations Foundation on efforts to combat anti-Asian racism in Halifax
- Gender Based Violence Staff Champion Network and Trafficking Elimination Services System Working Group

Women's Safety Assessment Tool

- Led Women's Safety Assessment in Morash Park, Dartmouth, Quinpool Road Business District, with additional WSAs planned for this fiscal for: Chebucto Park and Alderney Ferry Terminal Park.
- Worked with ICT to develop an app for completing Women's Safety Assessments

Building Safer Communities Fund

Public Safety Strategy Implementation

Focus - Priority Areas Build Resident Resilience; Prevent and Reduce Crime

Since Regional Council approved funding from Public Safety Canada's *Building Safer Communities Fund* in September of 2022, the Public Safety Office has been collaborating with Parks & Recreation to lay the foundation for the next three years of the project and align its initiatives to the current and renewed Strategy. To date, the following has been accomplished:

HRM is recruiting and onboarding staff to support the implementation of the new Public Safety Strategy. Four of these staff will reside with Public Safety, and two with the Youth Division. New staff include a Social Policy Strategist (BSCF focus) to lead the planning, implementation, collective impact and public education initiatives of the grant and another Social Policy Strategist to **build partnerships with Indigenous community-based organizations that will enable HRM to respond to the Calls to Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and promote Indigenous-led community safety**. A third position will develop and implement **training on violence prevention and crisis intervention**. Furthermore, three positions will focus on enhancing municipal services available to young people at greatest risk of experiencing harm from gun and gang violence by meeting them in their communities and providing support **through trauma-informed debriefings** following critical incidents offered by the Community Outreach Coordinator and mobile outreach with the Youth Outreach Worker and mental health services provided by the Youth Counsellor at the Multi-Service Centre in Sackville.

In addition, staff have been building collaboration across business units and engaging in job-specific training and knowledge exchanges with other cities using **evidence-based and promising practices** like the REACH Edmonton and the City of Toronto.

The Social Policy Strategist has developed budgets and workplans for years 2 through 4 that reflect evidence and insights from stakeholders, partners, and the Community Mobilization Teams around the urgent need for more culturally proficient prevention and intervention activities to **address intergenerational trauma as a root cause of gun and gang violence and develop skills and strategies to promote healing**.

The Public Safety Office has contracted the Nova Scotia Criminal Justice Association to engage with community about drug use and policy in the Halifax region. The aim is to **understand how drug use impacts diverse communities and what policies can support violence prevention and improved safety and well-being in the HRM**. A strong emphasis has been placed on creating an inclusive engagement process where people with lived experience can participate. NSCJA will produce a report summarizing what was learned and recommendations that may inform the development of the Municipality's forthcoming *Drug and Alcohol Strategy* and the establishment of a drug and alcohol policy working group. On January 19, 2023, NSCJA facilitated an accessible [education event](#) in January 2023 at the Woodlawn library with a diverse panel of speakers. The event was attended by 70 people in-person and 159 online. Five smaller community conversations will take place at libraries across HRM during the month of February 2023.

The Public Safety Office is engaging external consultants to use a strengths-based approach to **review prevention and intervention services available for youth who are risk of being impacted by gun and gang violence** in the Halifax region. Based on the findings of this review, the consultant will recommend approaches that the Municipality can use to reduce barriers facing youth and their families when accessing these programs and services. The intent is to leverage results of the review to build capacity using a collective impact approach that improves coordination and collaboration across the community safety and violence prevention ecosystem.

CMT Action & Initiatives 2022-2023

Public Safety Strategy Implementation

Focus - Priority Areas Build Resident Resilience; Strengthen Community, Prevent and Reduce Crime

Crisis Preparation - Training and Workshops to help build capacity and resilience within community

- Provided a 2-day training: Trauma Informed Community Intervention and Support training (led by Robert Wright) CMT members are now better equip to understand the importance of debriefing after a critical incident, and more comfortable to assist with their community needs (26 participants)
- CMT Health & Wellness session to promote selfcare and mindfulness (26 participants)
- Strategic Resiliency Training with HRP (18 participants)
- Building intercultural Competence training ISANS (10 participants)
- Crime Prevention Conference sponsored by Canadian Municipal Network for Crime Prevention (5 participants)
- Atlantic Canada Rural Crime Prevention Training by CMNCP (8 participants)

Crisis Prevention – Community events Support CMTs in developing, planning, and implementing community events, engagements and celebrations (25-30 in attendance)

- Supported one community event in each community: MGP days (August) Preston Township Community BBQ (August)
- Collaborating with HRP/RCMP with community events (Community vs HRP Basketball game and Community vs RCMP Hockey game and HRP with Fire community event in MGP). Only hockey happened on Feb 13 Cole Harbour Place)
- CMT collaborated with NEPRC Beautification Day in June (to help beautify Central North area)

Crisis Prevention – Build Relationships and Networks Develop partnerships and relationships with individuals, community leaders and groups to enhance services, share information and strengthen networks to build social cohesion

- Currently collaborating with a community led group which consists of community members, leaders and health care professionals to deliver trauma workshops to the Preston Township. This group is community led and supported by Public Safety Office, Nova Scotia Health, IWK, Health Association of African Canadians, and Association of Black Social Workers.

Crisis Prevention - Placemaking and food security - Support the community garden at the George Dixon to encourage both short term/long term success and build relationships through gardening (currently 26 beds plus 3 community plots)

- Made several upgrades to the garden to accommodate accessibility needs i.e. raising beds, converted water storage to be more user friendly and accessible, established a plan to fill water bins. Completed code of conduct, signing out of the keys, garden application, hired landscapers, purchased new soil & compost bin, also secured a lawn mower, whipper snipper and leaf blower through donation from Rona in Halifax. Hired 3 new garden leads and provided honorariums at the end of the garden season
- Currently working with the community developer to start the transition the community garden program under Park & Rec
- Met with local non-profits who specialize in community gardening initiatives with a focus on those who offer supports and programs to encourage cross cultural relationship building through gardening and urban farming
- Provided education, training and tools needed to lay the foundation for the garden's future i.e., ISANS, Veith House, Hope Blooms

ATTACHMENT A: Public Safety Office Initiatives 2022

- Currently working with Everyone/Everyday to work on a collaborative piece for the garden
- Continue to promote fairness and consistency, it is important that beds are designated, and an equitable number of beds are dedicated to the newcomer community
- Installing 2 new greenhouses (1 each in MGP & Uniacke) and 10 garden beds in Uniacke,

Crisis Prevention – Focus on Youth

- Led a Lacewood terminal youth engagement – assisted Transit along with Youth Community Developer – 2 pop up engagements held on site at terminal - connected with 4 schools and interacted with 105 youth to address problematic behaviour at the terminal

Youth Empowerment Conference (Feb 17/18) – collaborating with North Preston Community Centre and other stakeholders to host a youth empowerment conference (44 students participating plus support staff) (see flyer)

- Focus on self-value, bring in guest speakers, youth to feel valued, financial stability, economic
- Step up to leadership
- Hosted a kickoff session to involve youth in the planning
- Encourage youth to become role models for peers and youth in their neighborhoods

Crisis Response - Mobilizing resources to better support community during critical incidents

- Collaborated with HRFE/EM and mobilized during Hurricane Fiona and provided support (assisted approximately 370 community members with hot meals at North Preston Rec Centre and delivered 250 meals, 28 non-perishable boxes, and approximately 100 hot meals to two nursing homes in East Preston over two days 2 days in a row who had no power.
- Contacted families and connected them to resources during gun-related homicides on June 11, 2022, August 14, 2022, January 6, 2023. Supported RCMP with two Community Townhall meetings in relation to these shootings. (50+ in attendance at first townhall and 60+ at the second)



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Partners in Sponsorship:

- Nova Scotia Department of Justice
- North Preston Community Centre
- The Halifax Regional Municipality's Public Safety Office

The coordinators and sponsors of the Nothing for Us without Us Youth Empowerment Conference would like to acknowledge and thank following organizations for their assistance in making the youth conference a success. Thank you for your part in planning, recruitment, sponsorship and direct volunteerism. Our success has been your success as we continue youth community development within the Preston Area.

- The Halifax Regional Municipality's Youth Section – Preston area Youth Advocate
- The Halifax Regional Municipality's Youth Section – Community Developer
- The Halifax Regional Municipality's Recreation services – Community Developer for the Preston Area
- Preston Area Housing – Community Navigator
- 902 Man Up
- East Preston Family Resource Centre
- The Halifax Regional Municipality's African Nova Scotian Integration Affairs Office staff
- Halifax Public Library
- Cherry Brook Lake Loon Community Reps
- HRCE African Nova Scotia Student Support Workers
- Association of Black Social Workers

Thank you to our conference speakers, presenters, and participants of the Employment and Career Expo. Sharing your knowledge and information from your organization increases the ability of our youth to make important life decisions. Your time is an investment in their future.

Thank you to our Step Up to Leadership graduate youth for committing to their training and for having the courage to step up during the conference. Job well done.

Thank you to our youth volunteers for assisting us in preparing for this conference. Your insight during the Kickoff event (held in December 2022 at the North Preston Community Centre) helped identify important issues facing youth and informed our planning for this conference.



Youth Empowerment Conference

Nothing for us without us

Brought to you by the North Preston Community Centre, the Halifax Regional Municipality's Public Safety Office, and the Nova Scotia Department of Justice.





Public Safety Strategy

2023-2026

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Public Safety Strategy 2023-2026

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Message from the Mayor



On behalf of Regional Council, I am pleased to present the Halifax Regional Municipality's new Public Safety Strategy, 2023-2026.

Cities are uniquely positioned to address some of the most important issues we face today. While cities are driving change in the world, our own city is growing and evolving at a rapid pace. As it evolves, so do its needs, including a re-examination of how we address public safety.

Since 2006, we have been working to understand how we can best foster a city that allows all residents to feel safe. With the adoption of the *Public Safety Strategy 2018-2022* we recognized that true positive impacts to public safety requires a collective effort across the municipality, and tirelessly working in partnership with communities and other levels of government.

It was clear that real transformation required a true shift in the way we think about safety in our communities, particularly in terms of having community inform what safety means to them, and how we can best meet that expectation.

We have successfully moved towards a shared vision of safe communities across the Halifax region. This includes the recognition that the municipality has a vital responsibility to advance public safety. In 2021, Regional Council unanimously supported the need for a reimagined public safety strategy. The Public Safety Strategy, 2023-2026 builds on successes to-date as it works to support the needs of a healthy, equitable and growing community.

To do this meaningfully, the municipality relies on the expertise of a public safety division capable of driving change, making strong connections, and helping to transform public safety.

I am confident that with this strategy and its guiding principles – actionable, equitable, intersectional, and sustainable – we will together build a city where everyone can feel safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

Mike Savage, Mayor

Introduction

The *Public Safety Strategy 2023-2026* (the Strategy) provides a vision and mandate for the Halifax Regional Municipality and its business units to advance holistic, upstream approaches to public safety and ensure public safety is a responsibility shared across the municipality for the greatest collective impact.

Halifax's inaugural *Public Safety Strategy 2018-2022* resulted in several important successes for the creation of a shared vision of public safety across the municipality. Over the past five years, the Public Safety Office (PSO) has created new programs and services such as Community Mobilization Teams (CMTs) and *Safe City and Safe Public Spaces* program, while expanding its capability to deliver advice on public safety issues across municipal business units and in partnership with community organizations. The new Strategy for 2023-2026 will build on these successes and identify new initiatives that enhance the municipality's ability to improve safety and wellbeing and prevent harms to residents and visitors in the Halifax Region.

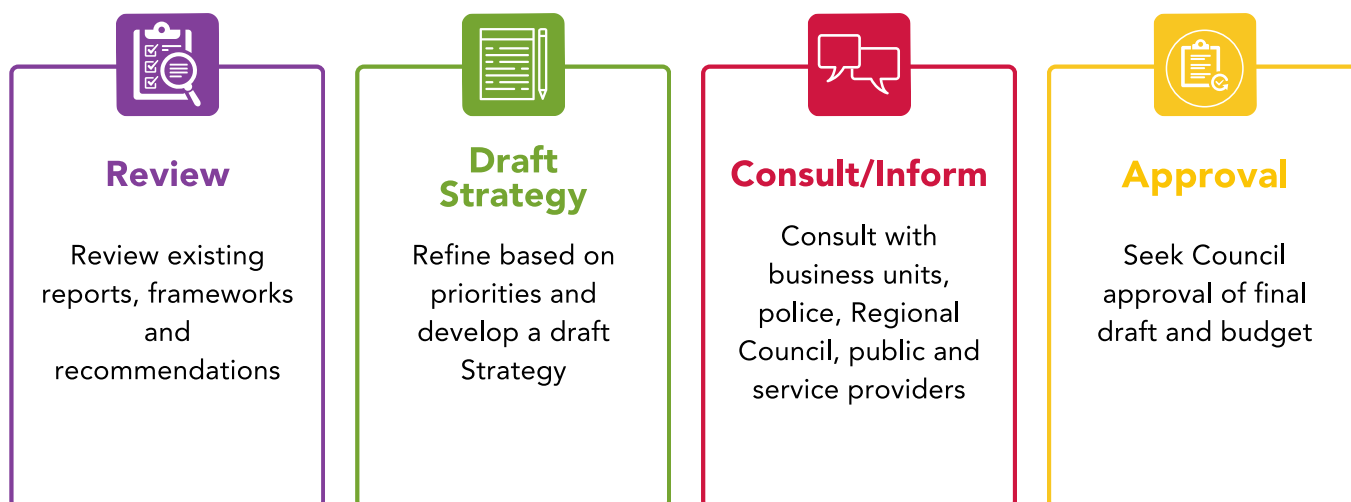
In 2021, Regional Council unanimously approved direction for the PSO to reimagine public safety in the municipality and to find ways to address social issues and harms through broadening the spectrum of available responses ¹. Recognizing that innovation and new response models will be required to meet current and future public safety challenges, the municipality will need to take a leading role in building new services, creating partnerships, and developing community capacity to address complex problems.

Developing the Strategy

A project team led within the municipality's Government Relations & External Affairs division developed this Strategy with input from other business units and external consultants. The development involved three key components: a current state assessment; internal consultations with municipal partners; and public consultation.

¹ See municipal staff report (2021) *Reimagining Public Safety* <https://cdn.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/regional-council/210420rc1114.pdf>

Stages of Strategy development



Current state assessment

The Public Safety Strategy team began by reviewing the extensive number of municipal reports, research, and consultations related to public safety completed in recent years. Over two dozen relevant documents were reviewed², with a focus on public safety related materials that were developed through local consultations, reports developed by or for the PSO, various policy frameworks developed by the Halifax Regional Municipality, and other relevant municipal research and surveys.

Examples of documents reviewed:

- *Defunding the Police* report (2021)
- *Street Checks* report (2019)
- *Drug and Alcohol Strategy consultation* (2020)
- *Safe Cities Safe Public Spaces Scoping Study* (2021)
- *Race and Gender Data and the Safety of Asian Women and Non-Binary People* (2022)
- *HRM and the Youth Project: 2SLGBTQ+ Engagement* (2022)
- *Conversations of Gender Equality with Indigenous Women & Two-Spirit Individuals* (2022)
- *HRM Anti-Black Racism 'What we Heard'* report (2022)
- *Rural Crime Prevention Training Workshop and Knowledge Exchange* (2022)
- A full list of documents reviewed for the creation of this strategy can be found in Appendix A

² List of all documents reviewed can be found in Appendix A



Key themes from the reports reviewed include the following:

- **The need for a broader spectrum of responses to social issues and harms:** The *Defunding the Police report* (2021), the *Drug and Alcohol Strategy consultation* (2020), and the recent public participation sessions at the Board of Police Commissioners budget debates (2023), all identify the need for the municipality to develop new services that provide better responses to social issues and harms, particularly around mental health crisis, addictions, and homelessness³. Additionally, in 2021, Council directed the municipality to identify opportunities for civilian delivery of certain police functions, and the Halifax Resident Survey conducted by the municipality in 2021 indicated that a majority (52 per cent) of people in Halifax felt that other roles could take over certain policing tasks, reinforcing public support for a new approach. The municipality's Social Policy framework, developed in 2021, also clearly indicates the municipality's intention to "forg[e] new territory", suggesting the time is right for the municipality to begin developing new service areas to address its most acute public safety challenges.

³ Specifically, the [Defunding the Police](#) report recommendations 15 (regarding a civilian mental health crisis response) and 27 (regarding the establishment of a drug policy working group) are relevant here, as is the finding in that report that the [National Police Federation](#) also agree that a broader spectrum of responses is desirable.

- **The importance of an equitable and intersectional approach to service development and delivery:** The municipality’s Diversity and Inclusion and Anti-Black Racism Framework, recent consultations on anti-Asian, anti-Black and anti-Muslim racism, and Women and Gender Equity Strategy (WGES) engagements all make clear that services should be culturally responsive, centre around community needs and lived experiences and be developed and delivered in ways that recognize and respond to the systemic and intersecting forms of inequity that many Halifax residents face. Developing a broader spectrum of responses is, in and of itself, an important step towards more equitable service delivery, as highlighted in recent WGES consultations that called for, “accessible, anti-ableist, and culturally relevant community and mobile mental health support (without police involvement).”
- **The need to move intentions into action:** The *Drug and Alcohol Strategy* consultation, the [Street Checks report](#), and the Anti-Black Racism consultation, have indicated that communities in the Halifax region may be experiencing ‘consultation fatigue’ and that they are interested in seeing concrete actions on consistently identified issues. Annual reports from the PSO, the *2014 Clairmont* report, and research provided by the Canadian Municipal Network on Crime Prevention (CMNCP) all indicate the importance of developing a Centre of Responsibility (CoR) to effectively collaborate with and support community-based public safety and deliver public safety programs and services. A robust CoR generally consists of a “backbone” administrative structure, stable and sufficient funding, research and analysis capabilities, community engagement and capacity to build and sustain partnerships through a collective impact approach.
- **The opportunity for evidence-based innovation:** A growing body of research supports demands from community for more appropriate community-based response models to mental health crisis, outreach and addictions services. The research suggests that these services can prevent deaths, reduce harms from mental health and addictions, reduce pressure on emergency services, prevent certain types of crime and improve overall health and wellbeing. The municipality is within its mandate, and well positioned to draw on best practices identified in this research to develop a spectrum of response models that will best deliver benefits to communities in the Halifax region.

Based on the reports reviewed as part of the current state assessment, the Public Safety Strategy project team developed a draft strategic framework with several proposed priority actions, building and validating this framework through subsequent internal and external consultations with the public and key partners. Additionally, the project team facilitated the development of a current state systems map that identified public safety-related programs and services offered across the municipality. The map identified whether the programs were offered by community or government, and who has access to the programs. This systems map helped provide an understanding of various levels of public safety programming and potential gap areas, and allowed the project team to further refine the stakeholder list for internal and external consultations.

Internal consultation with municipal partners: what we heard

The project team sought feedback on the draft strategic framework from the Executive Directors of municipal business units, the RCMP, Halifax Regional Police (HRP), Regional Council members, and other internal stakeholders. Internal consultations were held from May through September 2022.

Key findings from internal consultations included the following:

- **Internal partners support** program and policy directions proposed in the Strategy. Key partners, including HRP, Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency (HRFE) and the RCMP, support a broader spectrum of responses for emergency and non-emergency services. Other business units that deliver programs or services essential to upstream public safety, such as Libraries, Parks & Recreation, Planning & Development, and Halifax Transit were also satisfied that enhanced support from the PSO, along with new services proposed would broaden and better sustain the public safety ecosystem in the municipality.
- **It is important to ensure appropriate partnerships** are in place to coordinate these new service areas effectively, with partners especially noting areas of overlap between the municipality and the province in service areas such as addictions and mental health. While the municipality does not have a mandate to deliver treatment for mental illness or substance use disorders, it does have a mandate to respond appropriately to safety concerns that these conditions may create. It is also important to leverage existing municipal programs, as well as build and create partnerships with community groups that are already delivering community-driven public safety. Roles for municipal, provincial, and community partners will need to be clearly articulated to deliver (where the municipality is responsible and empowered to deliver), support and connect (where services are delivered by provincial or community partners).
- **New capacity should be built deliberately.** While there was general agreement on a desirable end-state with a broad spectrum of response options and increased municipal attention to acute issues around mental health, addictions and homelessness, internal partners also consistently indicated the importance of deliberate planning to ensure the municipality is able to deliver new services effectively, efficiently and economically. Several proposed actions – such as the development of a civilian mental health crisis response capacity – will need to be guided by long-term plans and agreements rooted in sustainability and service coordination.



Participants in the Women's Safety Assessment Training for the Safe City, Safe Public Spaces Program

External consultation: what we heard

While the Public Safety Strategy project team recognized the reality of consultation fatigue among key communities, it was necessary to provide an opportunity for individuals and community organizations to indicate whether the Strategy adequately reflected the messages that the municipality received in prior consultations. In total, eight community partner and public consultation sessions were held throughout September to November 2022, with feedback gathered via written responses and an online survey. Consultations resulted in approximately 20 partner organization groups and 107 individuals engaged.⁴

⁴ This number includes individuals who attended the partner organization sessions, those who attended the in-person sessions, and individuals from the public who completed the survey through the Shape Your City website. As the survey responses were anonymous, exact numbers are unknown.



Importance of alternative responses: Across all sessions and in survey responses, participants identified the lack of alternative responses to address non criminal safety and wellbeing issues arising from mental illness, addiction and homelessness. Participants underscored the Strategy's goal to prioritize broadening the continuum of response options through creating civilian and community-led supports integrated within existing systems. Gaps in the current approach are an opportunity to better meet the needs of communities, particularly those who have been marginalized and experienced (and continue to experience) racism and oppression.



Initiatives are developed by, for, and with community: Participants emphasized that community be at the centre of the development, implementation, and maintenance of these initiatives. Community organizations noted their desire to be meaningfully involved in the development and decision making as initiatives of the Strategy move forward. This should include established mechanisms and processes to ensure that community can guide, evaluate, and support implementation of this work, as well as adequate funding for the development and maintenance of any initiatives.



Representation is central to the development of the initiatives: Representation that reflects the diversity of the Halifax region and those most impacted by safety concerns is critical to ensuring that the strategy is implemented in a meaningful and successful manner. Participants noted that it was not only essential to see themselves and how their communities would be impacted by the strategic actions, but also that having the diverse needs of various communities at the table to guide and evaluate the ongoing work was pivotal to its success.



Toward community-led public safety

Public safety is about creating the conditions in which people feel safe from harms, and when harms do happen, that people trust that there are services available to provide necessary supports. In the municipal context, this includes programs and services to enhance **protective factors** that build resilient individuals and communities. Protective factors can be promoted through the equitable provision of services such as youth programming and literacy development; neighbourhood planning for social cohesion and supporting community-led safety and wellbeing initiatives.

Public safety can also be understood to include programs and services that **reduce risks** (i.e., factors that make individual or community harms more likely). Risk reduction implicates a wide range of programs and services offered by the municipality, including, for example, sidewalk and road maintenance, emergency preparedness, and crime prevention programs. Public safety also includes **responding to harms** where they occur, which, in the municipal context, has traditionally involved policing, fire, and other emergency response services. Public safety can therefore be conceived of as **enhancing protective factors and reducing risks for individuals and communities and creating appropriate responses to harms where they occur.**

While certain municipal services are more closely associated with public safety than others, public safety is the responsibility of all municipal business units and effective public safety promotion requires partnership and collaboration with diverse communities from across the Halifax region, as well as other levels of government.

The *Public Safety Strategy 2018-2022* provided a wide-ranging framework for the municipality to act on four strategic priorities – **Build Resident Resilience, Ensure Safe Spaces, Strengthen Communities,** and **Prevent and Reduce Crime.** Through that Strategy, the municipality established a strong foundation for seeing all of our people, processes and places as integral to building safer communities. The municipality's inaugural Public Safety Strategy demonstrated the most important roles the municipality plays in creating the conditions for safety—its investment in **social infrastructure**⁵.

⁵According to [Latham and Layton](#) (2019), “what counts as social infrastructure has other primary functions other than to promote sociality; however facilitating sociality is an essential component of how they manage to provide their primary function.” In other words, while the primary function of a space may not be commonly understood as social (for example, a library is a place to borrow books or access information; or a recreation centre is a space to engage in recreational programs), the space works best when its services are delivered in a socially conscious way, and by delivering those services socially, broad social sustainability and resilience benefits are experienced. (See also Eric Klienburg (2018) *Palaces for the People: How social infrastructure can help fight inequality, polarization, and the decline of civic life.* New York, Penguin Random House.)

Social infrastructure is not only the physical spaces in a community where municipal programs and services occur, but the resources, relationships, and networks these places cultivate both at the local and extra-local scale. Parks, recreational spaces and programs, and libraries provide communities with safe, inclusive and accessible spaces to gather, build strong and resilient networks, engage in positive social activities, and seek safety from harm.

Since the establishment of the 2018 - 2022 Strategy, the municipality has advanced key strategic initiatives that contribute to **social infrastructure** development and **upstream prevention**. These include the establishment of the *Road to Economic Prosperity Action Plan*, the *Youth Services Plan*, the *Social Policy Framework*, and the *JustFood Action Plan*.

Following the consistent messages identified in reports and consultations, this Strategy is focused on promoting **Community-Led Public Safety**. Specifically, this means ensuring that initiatives, programs, and services are responsive to community needs, built in collaboration with affected communities, and focused on building community capacity over time. The Strategy therefore focuses on programs and services that **go beyond the core municipal programs and services** that are already in place, and in particular focuses on **ways in which the municipality can re-imagine** approaches to improve protective factors, reduce risks, and ensure an appropriate response to harms. The Strategy seeks to identify areas where the **municipality is in a position to take action**, and where these **actions are aligned with community needs** identified through recent research and consultations.



Community Mobilization Teams participate in Mental Health First Aid training

Guiding Principles

The Public Safety Strategy is founded on four guiding principles. These principles will be applied to actions and will guide implementation of new initiatives through 2023-2026 and beyond. The principles are:



ACTIONABLE

While public safety is a shared enterprise across multiple sectors and levels of government, public safety planning needs to be led and driven by a core agency or unit, to ensure that planned things get done. The actions of the Strategy will be focused on areas where the Halifax Regional Municipality and particularly the PSO, can take action and lead implementation.



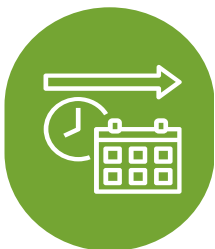
EQUITABLE

The new Strategy will build on recent efforts by the municipality and the PSO to address systemic inequities across service areas. Implementation of the new Strategy will impact and benefit diverse geographic and cultural communities in the Halifax Region through ongoing and meaningful engagement with those communities, and actions have been selected that address some of the most acute service challenges faced by those communities.



INTERSECTIONAL

The new Strategy will align closely with the municipality's Diversity and Inclusion Framework, Anti-Black Racism Strategy, other anti-racism work, GBA+ analysis and collaborative efforts with the municipality's Indigenous Advisor and Indigenous community partners. The new Strategy recognizes and seeks to address the multiple and compounding forms of marginalization faced by people in the Halifax region, and to address historic mistrust between the municipality and key communities including the African Nova Scotians, Indigenous, and 2SLGBTQ+.

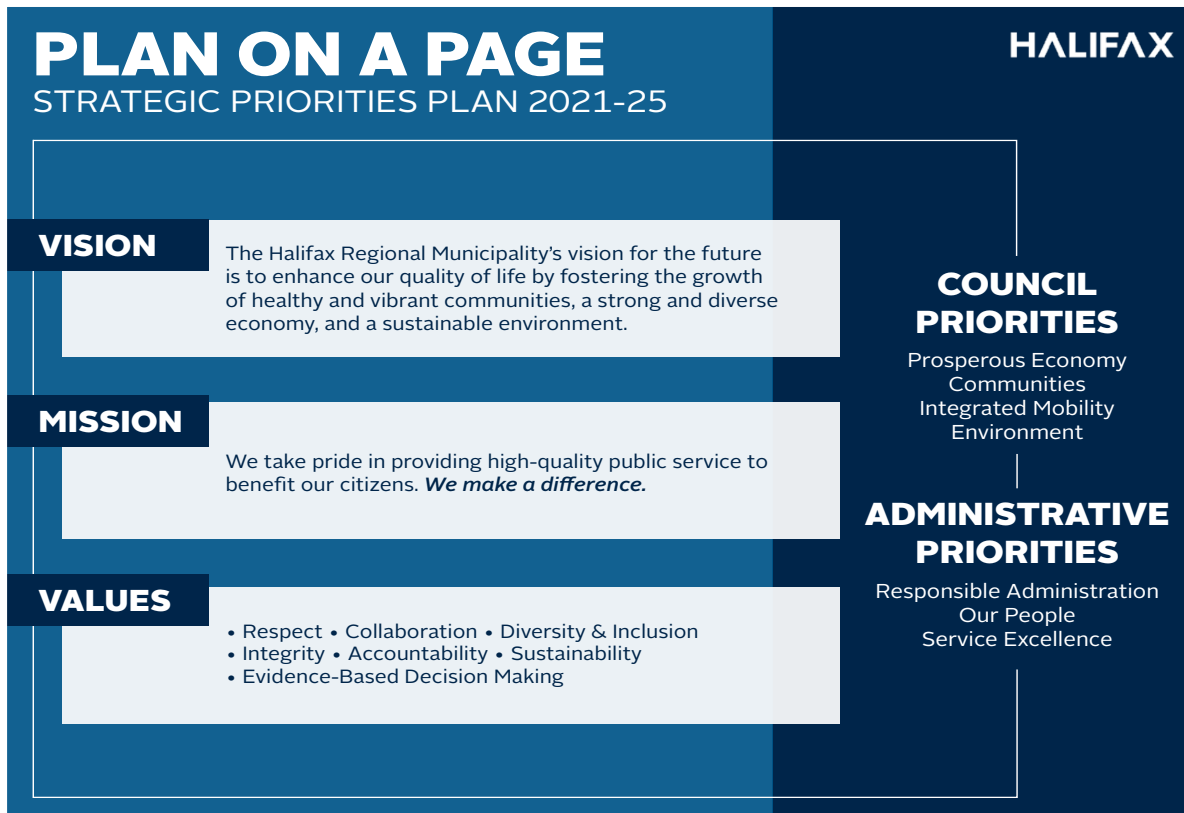


SUSTAINABLE

The actions proposed in the Strategy will be connected to a long-term vision of public safety in the municipality, and in recognition that establishing successful and effective services takes time. New services established under the auspices of the Strategy will be developed to ensure the municipality has a clear pathway to continue service delivery and enhance the public safety ecosystem beyond the life of the Strategy.

Strategic priorities

The municipality's Plan on a Page is a living document that is revised annually, and establishes the vision, mission, values, and priority areas for the municipality. The current plan is outlined in the figure below.



This Strategy is aligned with, and will be implemented in consideration of, the values established in the plan. While the Strategy most directly contributes to the priority area of Communities and all aspects of the plan are reflected in the Strategy.

The Strategy reflects seven strategic priorities for 2023-2026. These include:

- 1. Provide expert advice to promote public safety across municipal programs and services:** Since the establishment of the PSO, the municipality has worked to promote the perspective that public safety is a shared responsibility that involves a spectrum of responses to social issues and harms. Business units must consider how they can promote public safety through their programs and services and draw on available advice and expertise on how to recognize and address public safety issues and opportunities.

- 2. Create safer and more inclusive spaces:** A core component of public safety is ensuring that residents of and visitors to Halifax feel safe and included when they are in public spaces; accessing municipal buildings, programs, and services; and interacting with municipal staff. Ensuring that these spaces are physically safe and secure, welcoming to the diversity of people in Halifax, and staffed by people who have the resources necessary to provide inclusive supports and responses to members of the public, are core priorities in this Strategy.
- 3. Promote healing from trauma:** Trauma experienced at an individual or community level both increases risk factors for future harm and reduces protective factors and resilience. Ensuring that resources are in place to support healing for individuals and communities who have experienced trauma such as violence, gender-based violence, racism, hate, and disasters such as fire and extreme weather events is an important part of reducing the negative impacts of trauma.
- 4. Enhance supports for people experiencing homelessness:** Halifax is facing acute challenges related to housing supply. The municipality can play an important role in connecting people experiencing homelessness to available supports and services as well as in expanding the kinds of supports that are available. New services, approaches to addressing these issues, and partnerships across communities and governments are needed urgently to address these challenges and make Halifax a city that is capable of caring for all of its residents.
- 5. Broaden the spectrum of emergency and crisis response:** There are a wide range of situations where risks of harm, or actual harm, are present, but which do not require a police officer, fire, or ambulance response. Emergency services in Halifax have consistently indicated that they are at or beyond their capacity to respond, and that there are certain types of calls for which another responder – such as a mental health professional or community-based resource – may be better-positioned to provide support to an individual in distress. Establishing a wider spectrum of response options in the Halifax region – in partnership with the community and provincial government where appropriate – is essential to take pressure off emergency services and reduce risks associated with inappropriate responses to social issues and harms. Ensuring the most appropriate responder is also more cost-effective in the long run.


- 6. Reduce harms associated with alcohol and drugs:** Several data sources suggest that Halifax has among the highest per-capita use of both legal and illegal drugs and alcohol among major cities in the country. Since the first Mayor’s Roundtable on Violence, alcohol-related violence as well as violence related to drug markets have been consistently identified as priorities. Additionally, as elsewhere in Canada, people who use drugs in Halifax are at risk from a toxic illicit drug supply that is best addressed using a harm-reduction approach. Establishing new cost-effective, evidence-based services, while collaboratively leveraging the expertise of community service providers, will be necessary to enhance preventative and responsive harm-reduction capacity in the municipality.
- 7. Create a centre for a collective impact approach to public safety:** Public safety requires a collective effort across municipal business units and through partnerships with communities and other levels of government. Municipalities that have been most effective at developing creative responses to public safety issues have empowered a municipal Centre of Responsibility (CoR) including a ‘backbone’ office; capacity for training and program development; research, assessment, and evaluation capabilities; mechanisms for public engagement; championship of public safety across the municipality; and established multi-sector partnerships. While the current PSO has made progress in all of these areas, it must expand and evolve to respond to continuously increasing demands on the office.



Participants at a Community Mobilization Team Strategic Planning Session

Strategic action areas

Linked directly to the municipality's [Strategic Priorities](#), the following action areas have been identified as important areas of focus for the municipality in the near term. These are:

| | | |
|---|--|---|
|  <p>COMMUNITY-LED PUBLIC SAFETY LEADERSHIP</p> <p>Continue to work closely with community groups and municipal business units to support and champion public safety initiatives</p> |  <p>BROADER SPECTRUM OF RESPONSES TO SOCIAL ISSUES AND HARMS</p> <p>Establish a continuum of responders and responses to social harms, to ensure the most appropriate responder and reduce pressures on emergency services</p> |  <p>A CENTRE OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR COLLECTIVE IMPACT</p> <p>Establish an appropriate structure to advance public safety initiatives, which has the capacity and authority to lead initiatives and convene partner organizations and experts</p> |
|---|--|---|

The strategic action areas do not enumerate *all* public safety activity in the municipality. Rather they intend to build on the foundational work of the inaugural Public Safety Strategy (2018-2022). There are a wide range of municipal, provincial, and community-led programs, services and initiatives that remain integral to the ways in which public safety is established and promoted across the municipality and its diverse communities.

As an example, the Strategic Action Areas do not mention the continuation of core policing and fire services provided by HRP, RCMP Halifax District, and HRFE. Similarly, the Strategic Action Areas do not include direct discussion of important ways in which the municipality has established key forms of social infrastructure through development and maintenance of community spaces in parks, recreation centres and libraries.

It is important that the actions in this Strategy are seen as building upon the strong foundations already in place. **Through the implementation of this Strategy the ongoing work of promoting public safety across the municipality will be broadened, amplified, and elevated.**

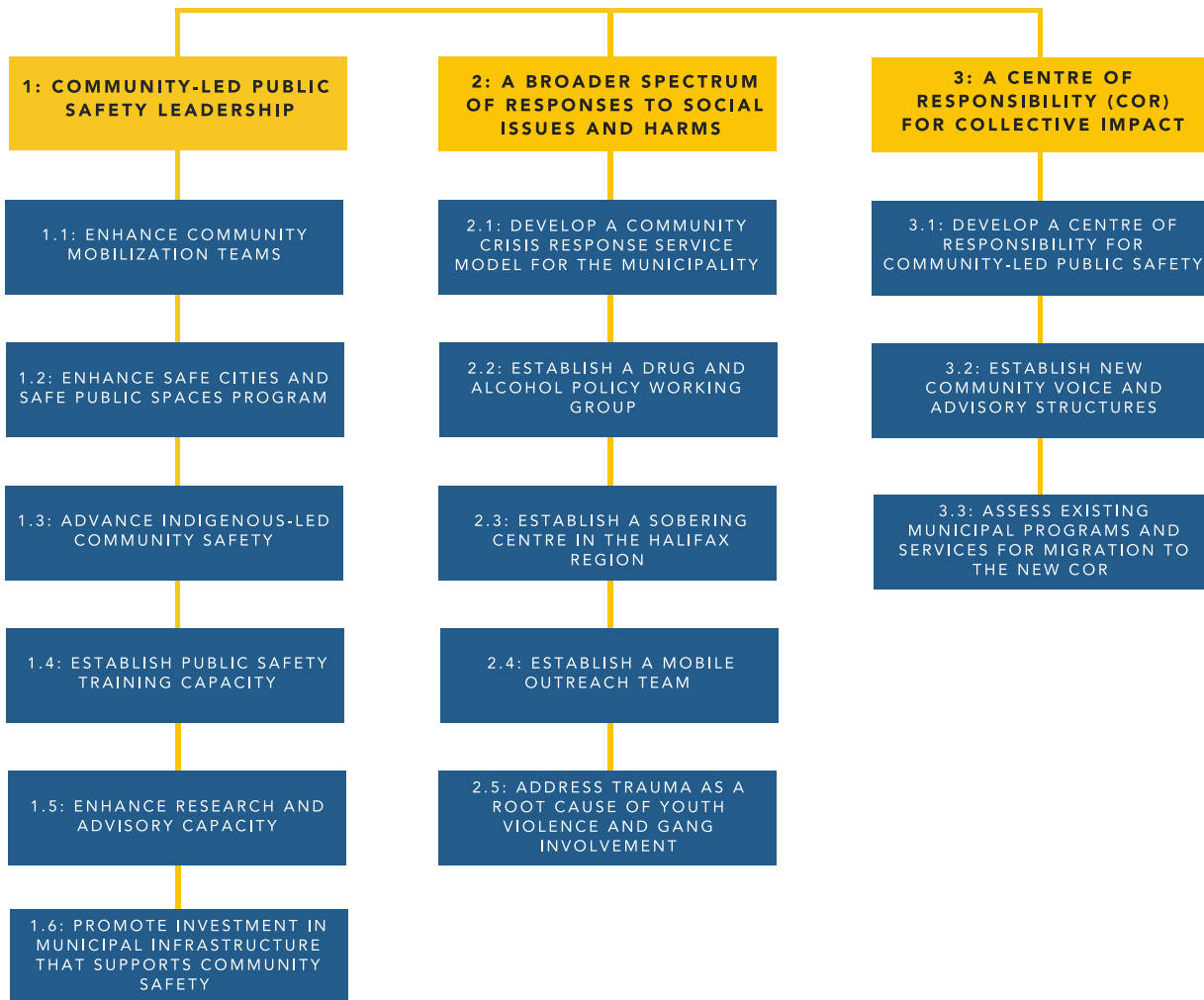
The Strategic Action Areas focus primarily on:



By taking this focused approach to strategy development, the Strategy provides a concise set of expectations and intentions to guide municipal decision-making in the coming three years. Fourteen specific actions linked to relevant action areas are identified below, which form the core actions to advance the strategic priorities.



Strategic action areas



Action area I: Community-led public safety leadership

Following the 2018-2022 Public Safety Strategy, the municipality has worked extensively with community partners to co-develop initiatives that promote public safety and improve community wellbeing. At the same time, the municipality has built its internal capacity – primarily through expansion of the PSO – to promote public safety across its business units and consider public safety in how it develops its people, places, and processes.

It remains vitally important that the municipality continue to promote public safety as a shared responsibility across its business units, and to provide leadership among partners to address complex public safety challenges. This will be done by expanding existing public safety programs as well as enhancing internal capacity to promote public safety through advice, research, and training.

Key actions areas for community-led public safety leadership

Action 1.1: Enhance Community Mobilization Teams

| ACTION | ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES | TIMING |
|---|--|---------|
| 1.1 Enhance Community Mobilization Teams | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide expert advice to promote public safety across municipal programs and services • Promote healing from trauma | 2023-24 |

Community Mobilization Teams (CMTs) were established in 2017, in partnership with the municipality’s African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office (ANSAIO), to better support communities disproportionately impacted by gun-related violence. The goal of CMTs is to work toward preventing violence by reducing distress, restoring unity, and building resilience. Research has consistently shown that addressing trauma in the aftermath of violence is among the most effective ways to prevent future violence and other forms of crime and harm.⁶

CMTs are resident-led initiatives, coordinated by municipal staff who support the teams in accessing and navigating community resources to prevent, prepare and respond to violent incidents. CMTs will continue to be developed a culturally responsive way, in partnership with community.

Beginning in 2023-24, the municipality will work to expand CMT services and better integrate CMTs with the municipal Joint Emergency Management (JEM) teams to support implementation of specific actions outlined in [HalifACT](#), the municipality’s response to the climate crisis. The municipality will also expand the kinds of services offered within CMTs, with a particular focus on enhancing supports – such as counselling – to youth and other community members who have experienced trauma.

⁶Zettler, H. R. (2021). Much to do about trauma: A systematic review of existing trauma-informed treatments on youth violence and recidivism. *Youth violence and juvenile justice*, 19(1), 113-134.

Action 1.2: Enhance Safe City and Safe Public Spaces program

| ACTION | ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES | TIMING |
|--|---|----------------|
| <p>1.2 Enhance Safe City and Safe Public Spaces program</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide expert advice to promote public safety across municipal programs and services • Create safer and more inclusive spaces • Promote healing from trauma • Create a centre for a collective impact approach to public safety | <p>2023-24</p> |

Halifax’s Safe City and Safe Public Spaces program, established in 2019, plays a key role in supporting the equitable, intersectional and community-based approach to public safety, and in promoting public safety to municipal programs, services, and spaces. Halifax’s Women’s Advisory Committee serves as a community advisory committee for the program’s development and implementation.

The program focuses on making municipal public spaces safer for women, girls and gender-diverse residents through supporting shifts in municipal policies, programs, practices and built spaces in collaboration with various business units and community partners.⁷



Halifax’s Safe City and Safe Public Spaces program plays a key role in supporting the municipality’s equitable, intersectional, and community-based approach to public safety.

⁷Heidinger, L. April 26, 2022. *Violent victimization and perceptions of safety: Experiences of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit women in Canada*. Centre for Canadian Justice and Community Safety Statistics, Statistics Canada <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2022001/article/00004-eng.htm>

With a solid foundation for the program, it is now well positioned to:

- Enhance the program’s Women’s Safety Assessment tool that provides guidance on the safety of municipal infrastructure for fostering safer and more inclusive public spaces and communities.
- Improve the municipality’s ability to understand and respond to experiences of safety in public spaces, including supporting and developing intersectional and community-based data collection initiatives and avenues for third-party sexual assault reporting.
- Expand opportunities to meaningfully influence municipal decision making regarding safer mobility.
- Support the Planning & Development, Public Works and Halifax Transit business units to ensure safe and inclusive modes of transportation.
- Respond to critical issues central to safety in public spaces, such as responding to the Calls to Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and relevant actions identified in recent and upcoming municipal reports on gender-based violence, racism, and safety.

Action 1.3: Advance Indigenous-led community safety

| ACTION | ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES | TIMING |
|---|--|----------------|
| <p>1.3 Advance Indigenous-led community safety</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide expert advice to promote public safety across municipal programs and services • Create safer and more inclusive spaces • Promote healing from trauma | <p>2023-24</p> |



In Atlantic Canada, Indigenous people create the foundations for the rich culture, history, and traditions of the land. Despite this richness, they disproportionately experience violence, poverty, homelessness, and addiction. They are overrepresented in both the criminal justice system and the child welfare system.⁷

Such violence against Indigenous people is a result of the devastating impacts of colonization that continue to this day. The landmark report, *Reclaiming Power, and Place: The Final Report on the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019)* requires a decolonizing approach to fulfill its Calls for Justice. This means recognizing that Indigenous People have inherent rights, and that space and resources rooted in Indigenous cultures, languages, institutions, and traditions are critical to advancing safety.

The addition of an Indigenous-Led Community Safety Strategist will lead the municipality on the journey to prevent and respond to harms against Indigenous people in Halifax, with a particular focus on community mobilization, public education and awareness, violence against women and two-spirited people, and human trafficking. The Strategist will also provide strategic advice and guidance to promote decolonizing approaches to Indigenous community safety perspectives across the municipality.

⁷Heidinger, L. April 26, 2022. *Violent victimization and perceptions of safety: Experiences of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit women in Canada*. Centre for Canadian Justice and Community Safety Statistics, Statistics Canada <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2022001/article/00004-eng.htm>

Action 1.4: Establish public safety training capacity

| ACTION | ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES | TIMING |
|--|--|---------|
| 1.4 Establish public safety training capacity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create safer and more inclusive spaces • Promote healing from trauma • Broaden the spectrum of emergency and crisis response | 2023-24 |



Expanding public safety training capacity can cultivate a broader culture shift within the municipality by supporting staff in seeking alternatives to enforcement, meeting people where they are in their interactions with the public and focusing on needs of individuals and seeking to help them meet those needs.

Expanding public safety training capacity can cultivate a broader culture shift within the municipality by supporting staff in seeking alternatives to enforcement, meeting people where they are in their interactions with the public and focusing on needs of individuals and seeking to help them meet those needs. Building on ongoing work, in 2023-24 the municipality will develop curricula, and deliver training that supports business units and community stakeholders in applying public safety principles and practices in their people, places, and processes.⁸ The municipality will also establish a training unit capable of supporting current and future demands for public safety training across the municipality.

⁸As a priority, Non-Violent Crisis Intervention Training program for public-facing municipal staff is already in development.

Action 1.5: Enhance research and advisory capacity

| ACTION | ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES | TIMING |
|---|--|---------|
| 1.5 Enhance research and advisory capacity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide expert advice to promote public safety across municipal programs and services • Create a centre for a collective impact approach to public safety | 2023-24 |



The municipality will establish new roles that will expand capacity for new public safety initiatives using an evidence-informed approach.

Since its inception, the PSO has provided advice and research to support business units in promoting public safety for their people, places, and processes. Regularly, the PSO provides input into municipal initiatives that have public safety implications, as well as conducts studies in the municipality as directed by Council, and with external partners. Expanding research and strategic advisory capacity and capabilities for public safety will be an immediate priority beginning in 2023-24.

Within a new CoR (action 3.1), the municipality will establish new roles to expand capacity for new public safety initiatives using an evidence-informed approach.⁹

⁹While this Strategy identifies near-term actions that have been identified through several research and consultation exercises, new priorities to promote community-led public safety will continually emerge through the life of this strategy and beyond. For example, initiatives supporting senior safety, rural crime prevention, and neighbourhood conflict resolution have recently been discussed within the municipality, and the most appropriate way forward can be identified through a deliberative and evidence-based process involving problem targeting, testing of potential solutions, and tracking of outcomes.

Action 1.6: Promote investment in municipal infrastructure that supports community safety

| ACTION | ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES | TIMING |
|---|---|----------------|
| <p>1.6 Promote investment in municipal infrastructure that supports community safety</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide expert advice to promote public safety across municipal programs and services • Create safer and more inclusive spaces | <p>2023-24</p> |

A central component to a comprehensive and multi-sectoral approach to community-led public safety is the establishment and maintenance of safe and inclusive public spaces that allow community to gather, grow their networks and build resilience. These forms of ‘social infrastructure’ are essential aspects of preventative approaches to crime and violence prevention - for example by creating spaces where young people can gather and feel safe, where people experiencing homelessness can access needed supports, programs, and services, and where community groups can organize and collaborate.

Building on past work of the PSO, and working through the new CoR, the municipality will develop greater supports for business units to ensure a social infrastructure perspective is included during planning processes related to space and infrastructure.¹⁰



¹⁰These will focus primarily on the capital planning process and will include the development of resources (such as training), building of expertise within the CoR, and identification of key personnel who can advise on making spaces safe and inclusive when new spaces or renovations are planned.

Action area 2: A broader spectrum of responses to social issues and harms

In 2021, Regional Council directed staff to re-imagine public safety by developing a broader spectrum of response options that reflects the complexity of safety concerns it is mandated to address. Regional Council recognized that current response options, primarily police, are not always the best service to address complex, non-criminal safety concerns. Accordingly, this action area enables the municipality to broaden the spectrum of available response options to fulfill its mandate of maintaining safe and viable communities.

For example, as noted in previous policing studies, and reflected in police data, police are being asked to provide response to a wide range of calls for service which are increasingly complex and require a different skill set. Further, the municipality has substantial service gaps within its existing spectrum of response options and does not have appropriate response options for non-urgent, non-criminal and wellbeing matters.

In this Strategy, the municipality will focus on establishing several net-new services and expanding existing services to ensure the most appropriate responses and services are in place. In keeping with the guiding principles of this Strategy, these new services will be established in collaboration and communication with affected communities, utilizing new advisory mechanisms set out in the next section of the Strategy.

This approach recognizes that the most appropriate response to these social issues may differ in important ways when responding in African Nova Scotian or Indigenous communities, where greater trust needs to be established by the municipality, and where culturally appropriate responses will need to be developed. It will also differ in rural communities within the Halifax region, where the best way to ensure access to new services will look different than services delivered in the urban core.



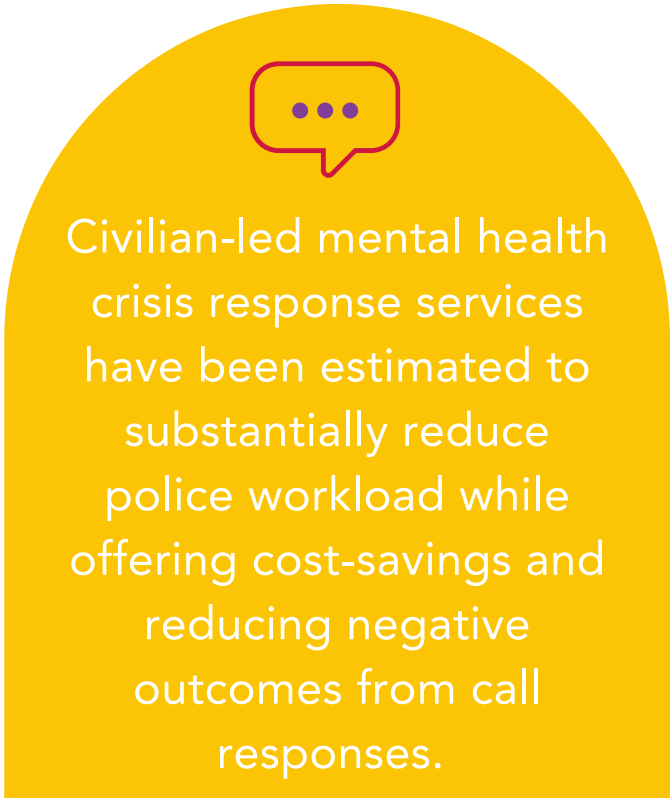
The services currently available are often unable to provide the most appropriate response to the municipality's mandate to create safe and viable communities and situations that create risks to public safety and community wellbeing.

Key actions for a spectrum of responses to social issues and harms

Action 2.1: Develop a Community Crisis Response Service Model for the municipality

| ACTION | ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES | TIMING |
|---|--|---|
| 2.1 Develop a Community Crisis Response Service Model for the municipality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance supports for people experiencing homelessness • Broaden the spectrum of emergency and crisis response | Plan 2023-24 Pilot 2025-26 |

In line with the strategic priority of ensuring the most appropriate responder to emergency and non-emergency situations and following the example of multiple municipalities across North America that have developed similar services, the municipality will work to develop a community crisis response service model tailored to the Halifax context. Civilian-led crisis response services have been estimated to substantially reduce police workload while offering cost-savings and reducing negative outcomes from call responses.



Civilian-led mental health crisis response services have been estimated to substantially reduce police workload while offering cost-savings and reducing negative outcomes from call responses.



For example, the Eugene Police Department indicates that between 3-8 per cent of all police calls are diverted to the well-known CAHOOTS program¹¹, and the Albuquerque Community Safety program diverts thousands of calls annually that would have gone to police to other responders including Mobile Crisis Team, Behavioural Health, Community, and Street Outreach responders¹². Edmonton's 24/7 Crisis Diversion Team responded to over 29,000 calls in 2021, and has demonstrated a three-year Social Return on Investment of \$1.91 for every \$1 invested in the program.¹³

Research conducted by Dr. Jamie Livingston at Saint Mary's University has identified over 160 civilian-led crisis response programs in North America, across several broad model types including clinician-led, crisis-worker-led, peer-support based, and community-based 'mutual aid' models, suggesting a wide range of model options from which to develop a made-in-Halifax solution.

This new service will be integrated into a broader spectrum of available response options and will be pursued as a partnership with provincial government and local service providers.

¹¹See the Eugene Police Department CAHOOTS webpage at: <https://www.eugene-or.gov/4508/CAHOOTS>

¹²ACS reports can be found at <https://www.cabq.gov/acs/reports>

¹³See Reach Edmonton's 24/7 Crisis Diversion Teams <https://reachedmonton.ca/initiatives/24-7-crisis-diversion/>

¹⁴<https://justmentalhealth.ca/programs/>

¹⁵There are many details to be determined on the most appropriate model, and this will involve a multi-stage process, including research into the available models that could be suitable for Halifax (examining necessary partnerships, funding, staffing and deployment approaches); developing a service pilot; and evaluating the pilot with an eye to scaling up the service if it is capable of providing

Action 2.2: Establish a drug and alcohol policy working group

| ACTION | ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES | TIMING |
|---|--|----------------|
| <p>2.2 Establish a drug and alcohol policy working group</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide expert advice to promote public safety across municipal programs and services • Create safer and more inclusive spaces • Enhance supports for people experiencing homelessness • Reduce harms associated with alcohol and drugs | <p>2023-24</p> |

The roots of the opioid crisis and other substance use issues are complex and intertwined, highly influenced by local political, social and cultural components that traverse multiple jurisdictions and sectors. In Halifax, different levels of government, community-based organizations and private sector groups all contribute to preventing, preparing, and responding to substance use and policy.

Beginning in 2023-24 the municipality will establish a drug and alcohol policy working group to set the stage for a more coordinated and strategic approach to this issue across sectors. This will include partners from the municipality and province, community, service providers, and people with lived experience, to promote initiatives and actions to reduce the harms associated with drug use and its criminalization.

The core goal of the working group will be to establish a municipal drug and alcohol strategy by 2025-26. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities sees municipal drug strategies as vehicles to promote multi-sectoral dialogue and planning to address local substance use issues through a set of goals, actions and measurable outcomes and indicators.¹⁶ Strategies are co-developed with all levels of government, community partners and are centred on people with lived experience. While tailored to each community, they combine at least four key pillars to achieve a comprehensive, strategic approach to drug policy and substance use: prevention/community safety, harm-reduction, treatment and enforcement. Such strategies build on private and public-sector work already taking place in the community and focus on actions that can be taken at the local level.

¹⁶Big City Mayor Caucus. May 2017. Recommendations on the Mayor’s Task Force on Opioid Crisis. Federation of Municipalities. <https://fcm.ca/sites/default/files/documents/resources/submission/opioid-crisis-recommendations.pdf>
 FCM also developed a Model Municipal Drug Strategy <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/lbrr/archives/hv%207431%20m83%202000-eng.pdf>

Action 2.3: Establish a sobering centre in Halifax Regional Municipality

| ACTION | ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES | TIMING |
|---|--|----------------|
| <p>2.3 Establish a sobering centre</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create safer and more inclusive spaces • Enhance supports for people experiencing homelessness • Broaden the spectrum of emergency and crisis response • Reduce harms associated with alcohol and drugs | <p>2023-24</p> |

A sobering centre provides, at minimum, a safe space for people to recover from intoxication due to drugs and/or alcohol. Sobering centres may also provide access to additional supports such as medical or paramedical care, referrals to other services, and mental health and addictions supports. A sobering centre is an appropriate service for people whose intoxication poses a risk to themselves or others, but who are not otherwise in need of emergency medical care, nor engaged in criminal activity. Sobering centres have been established in municipalities across the country to provide a more appropriate response to acute intoxication, while taking pressure off emergency response services such as police, fire, and emergency medical services.¹⁷

¹⁷The municipality has conducted extensive research on sobering centres, including a feasibility study, business case and cost model. See <https://cdn.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/regional-council/210629rc1115.pdf>; and <https://cdn.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/regional-council/220322rci02.pdf>

Action 2.4: Establish a mobile outreach and transportation team

| ACTION | ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES | TIMING |
|---|--|--|
| <p>2.4 Establish a mobile outreach and transportation team</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create safer and more inclusive spaces • Enhance supports for people experiencing homelessness • Broaden the spectrum of emergency and crisis response • Reduce harms associated with alcohol and drugs | <p>Plan 2023-24</p> <p>Pilot 2025-26</p> |

A consistent challenge identified by service providers in Halifax who support people experiencing homelessness and those precariously housed is the lack of a 24-hour service to transport people to and from shelter spaces, to connect with other outreach workers and navigators, and to conduct outreach with people to ensure they are able to access required supports. What may seem like minor instances of support – such as a ride to a medical appointment or helping someone connect with a better housing opportunity – can make a world of difference in the wellbeing of those individuals and avoid acutely negative outcomes.

Such a service would also be valuable to take pressure off emergency responders by providing an alternative option when an individual is found in need of shelter or non-emergency attention and would provide complementary service to a sobering centre and a mental health crisis service. As is the practice in other municipalities that have an outreach and transportation service, the service could be accessed through a dedicated phone number and integrated into the 911 dispatch system.¹⁸

¹⁸The correct structure for this service will need to be determined in consultation with local service providers, as well as relevant business units. The service could be provided directly by the municipality or through funding to a third-party service provider. Beginning in 2023-24, the municipality will determine the appropriate delivery model for an outreach and transportation service, with the intention of directly delivering or funding the service in 2024-25.



What may seem like minor instances of support – such as a ride to a medical appointment or helping someone connect with a better housing opportunity – can make a world of difference in the wellbeing of those individuals and avoid acutely negative outcomes.

Action 2.5: Address trauma as a root cause of youth violence and gang involvement

| ACTION | ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES | TIMING |
|---|---|----------------|
| <p>2.4 Address trauma as a root cause of youth violence and gang involvement</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create safer and more inclusive spaces • Promote healing from trauma | <p>2023-24</p> |

The municipality will develop an action plan for reducing gun and gang violence. This plan will guide the development of new resources for youth and their families, with a particular focus on addressing youth at greatest risk of serious violent victimization or offending. Specifically, the municipality will establish new positions within the municipality’s Multi-Service Youth Centres to provide counselling and service navigation for youth who have experienced trauma. Under this action, the municipality will also:

- Conduct research and service planning to identify effective violence prevention programs to strengthen gaps in current youth service provision in the municipality.
- Enhance community engagement and partnerships to better coordinate responses to youth violence, guns and gangs.
- Build capacity among local community members to provide support to youth who have experienced trauma.



Action Area 3: A Centre of Responsibility (CoR) for collective impact

Halifax finds itself in the midst of a cultural shift in the provision of public safety. Beginning with the *Public Safety Strategy 2018-2022*, the municipality explicitly recognized that public safety impacts are greatest through collective effort across municipal business units and through partnerships with communities and other orders of government. To do this well, the municipality needs to establish a robust 'backbone' office capable of providing leadership and supporting partners in promoting public safety.

Like municipalities elsewhere in Canada, Halifax is working to find ways to address priority public safety issues through new approaches to service delivery. The goal is to enhance the spectrum of available responses to issues related to addictions, mental health, homelessness, and community trauma. To move forward on key goals identified by Council in recent reports and motions, it is necessary to establish an administrative structure capable of delivering net-new services, for example in relation to mental health crisis response, and supporting people experiencing homelessness. This is not possible within the current PSO, as existing structure and staff capacity are insufficient to support creation of new services, expansion of existing services, or research, policy, and advisory work.

Additionally, Council has directed the municipality to consider potential civilian delivery of certain non-core police functions; however, there is currently no appropriate administrative structure that could support the migration and delivery of these services. To guide the development of these new approaches, the municipality needs to establish sufficient administrative and program delivery capacity in a robust Centre of Responsibility (CoR) for public safety.

Key actions for a Centre of Responsibility for Collective Impact

Action 3.1: Develop a Centre of Responsibility for community-led public safety

| ACTION | ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES | TIMING |
|--|--|----------------|
| <p>3.1 Develop a Centre of Responsibility for community-led public safety</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide expert advice to promote public safety across municipal programs and services • Create a centre for a collective impact approach to public safety | <p>2023-24</p> |

As indicated earlier in the report, and led by evidence on effective CoRs elsewhere, the new CoR should include a ‘backbone’ office with senior management and administrative support; capacity for training and program development; research, assessment, and evaluation capabilities; mechanisms for public engagement; championship of a public safety perspective across the municipality; and established multi-sector partnerships. As a key first step, the municipality will establish a Director role and a new reporting structure in an expanded Public Safety Division, which will serve as the backbone office and support a collective impact approach to public safety in the municipality.¹⁹

¹⁹The new division will also be responsible for managing third-party contracts related to new areas of service delivery and can act as a mechanism to identify and access third-party (e.g., philanthropic) and government funding sources to promote public safety initiatives in the municipality.

Action 3.2: Establish new community voice and advisory structures

| ACTION | ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES | TIMING |
|---|--|----------------|
| <p>3.2 Establish new community voice and advisory structures</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide expert advice to promote public safety across municipal programs and services • Create a centre for a collective impact approach to public safety | <p>2023-24</p> |

The 2014 Clairmont report identified the value of establishing an advisory structure to ensure the work of the PSO remains connected to and reflective of community needs and aligned with other activities and initiatives. In particular, recent consultations have consistently identified the need for ongoing engagement with communities affected by public safety issues (and municipal responses to those issues).

It is important to recognize that certain communities, such as African Nova Scotian (ANS) and Indigenous communities have had historic distrust of the municipality due to issues including systemic racism, neglect and dispossession from land and resources. Rebuilding this trust can only be done by ensuring that existing and new services are developed in ways that recognize the different needs of these communities – for example, the way in which new mental health and addictions services should best support Indigenous or ANS communities may differ from models based on Eurocentric concepts of mental health and wellbeing. Additionally, it will be important to ensure that, as new services are developed, they are created in such a way that they can benefit not only people living in Halifax’s urban core, but that they also provide services where appropriate to rural and suburban communities.

As such, beginning in 2023-24, the municipality will develop appropriate structures through which meaningful engagement with community partners can be established, reflective of the needs of diverse communities with which the municipality will work, and respectful of the time and energy of community partners.²⁰

²⁰Given the range of public safety initiatives in which the municipality is involved, it is not clear whether a single advisory committee with a wide range of partners would be the most appropriate structure, or if smaller initiative- or policy-area-specific community consultative groups should be established to ensure opportunities for community voice and advice. Additionally, the most appropriate advisory approach will in part be determined by the research and development work to be conducted by the PSO in establishing new initiatives and expanding existing work areas. Further, the appropriate advisory structures should be developed once a Director and enhanced CoR structure have been established.

Action 3.3: Assess existing municipal programs and services for migration to the new CoR

| ACTION | ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES | TIMING |
|--|--|----------------|
| <p>3.3 Assess existing municipal programs and services for migration to the new CoR</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide expert advice to promote public safety across municipal programs and services • Create a centre for a collective impact approach to public safety | <p>2023-24</p> |

In 2021, Council provided clear direction for the municipality to “examine the potential for shifting or creating programs for civilian delivery of non-core police functions,” including but not limited to “traffic enforcement, public safety, community standards, mental health, and municipal enforcement functions.” This Strategy includes clear intentions to enhance non-police delivery of mental health and public safety functions; however, through the current state assessment and consultation processes, it was made clear that the municipality was not ready to migrate additional functions until a more robust CoR structure is established.

Beginning in 2024-25, the new Director of Community Safety will be responsible to work with the CAO and other municipal business units to determine which programs and services (such as by-law, parking, and traffic enforcement; crossing guards; certain emergency management functions; services related to housing and homelessness; and other social policy activities) could be better delivered through the Community Safety Division.



Evaluation of the Strategy

The success of these actions will be measured in two ways. First, the municipality will establish milestones to ensure that progress is made on each action within the lifetime of the Strategy. Milestones for each action will be established in the new division's annual business planning cycle, and potential milestones are included in the summary of actions, below.

Second, the municipality will establish research and evaluation plans to measure impacts of strategic actions against four categories of impacts:

- 1. Community safety and wellbeing:** Healthy, safe, and more resilient communities are created through new and expanded services.
- 2. Harm reduction and prevention:** Harms across the community are reduced and prevented as people received equitable access to supports and services.
- 3. Ecosystem development:** The public safety ecosystem thrives as appropriate infrastructure is developed and grounded in/with community.
- 4. Reduced justice system pressures:** By connecting people to the right services at the right time, the burden on police response in the municipality is lessened.

Measuring these impacts will require analysis of existing data sources – such as data from police, fire and emergency services; data from calls to 311; resident surveys conducted by the municipality; and, where possible, provincial data sources that relate to emergency service, justice system, and health service use in the municipality. Additionally, new data sources will need to be developed related to key actions – such as input, output and outcome data related to the sobering centre, outreach service, mental health crisis service, CMT and Safe City and Safe Public Spaces program engagements; as well as, where possible, first-voice data from service users collected through interviews and focus groups.

To leverage existing data sources and establish new data collection mechanisms, the municipality will develop new capacity to conduct and deliver research and evaluation into strategic action areas, by drawing on internal resources in an expanded Public Safety Division as well as by expanding existing partnerships with the local academic community and other community-based researchers.

Summary of actions

| ACTION | STRATEGIC PRIORITIES | TIMING | POTENTIAL MILESTONES | KEY STAKEHOLDERS |
|--|---|---------|--|--|
| Action area 1 – Community-led public safety leadership | | | | |
| 1.1 Enhance Community Mobilization Teams | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide expert advice to promote public safety across municipal programs and services • Promote healing from trauma | 2023-24 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing peer-led counselling supports • Expansion to Spryfield | <p>Internal Parks & Recreation, Halifax Regional Police, Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency, Halifax Public Libraries, Office of Diversity & Inclusion/African Nova Scotian Integration Affairs Office</p> <p>External RCMP, Community organizations</p> |
| 1.2 Enhance Safe Cities and Safe PublicSpace program | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide expert advice to promote public safety across municipal programs and services • Create safer and more inclusive spaces • Promote healing from trauma • Create a centre for a collective impact approach to Public Safety | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding use of tools (e.g., Women's Safety Assessments) | <p>Internal Parks & Recreation, Halifax Transit, Halifax Regional Police, Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency, Office of Diversity & Inclusion/African Nova Scotian Integration Affairs Office, HR & Corporate Communications, Planning & Development, Property, Fleet & Environment, Legal & Legislative Services, Public Works, Halifax Public Libraries</p> <p>External Business Improvement Districts, Community organizations</p> |
| 1.3 Advance Indigenous-led community safety | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide expert advice to promote public safety across municipal programs and services • Create safer and more inclusive spaces • Promote healing from trauma | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing mechanism to respond to MMIWG Calls to Action | <p>Internal Parks & Recreation, Halifax Regional Police, Office of Diversity & Inclusion/African Nova Scotian Integration Affairs Office, Planning & Development, Legal & Legislative Services, Government Relations & External Affairs, Halifax Public Libraries</p> <p>External Government of Canada, RCMP, Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre , Community organizations</p> |
| 1.4 Establish public safety training capacity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create safer and more inclusive spaces • Promote healing from trauma • Broaden the spectrum of emergency and crisis response | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of front-line staff training in Non-Violent Crisis Intervention Training • Mental Health First Aid, Critical Incident Response Management, and Suicide Intervention (ASIST) training offered | <p>Internal All business units</p> <p>External Business Improvement Districts, Community organizations</p> |
| 1.5 Enhance research and advisory capacity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide expert advice to promote public safety across municipal programs and services • Create a centre for a collective impact approach to Public Safety | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New research resource established • Evaluation mechanisms for the Public Safety Strategy established | <p>Internal Information Technology, Finance & Asset Management, Legal & Legislative Services, Government Relations & External Affairs, Park & Recreation, HR & Corporate Communications and Diversity & Inclusion/African Nova Scotian Integration Affairs Office</p> <p>External Post-secondary institutions, Research Nova Scotia, Community organizations</p> |
| 1.6 Promote investment in municipal infrastructure that supports community safety | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide expert advice to promote public safety across municipal programs and services • Create safer and more inclusive spaces | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social infrastructure considerations added to capital planning process | <p>All business units</p> |

| ACTION | STRATEGIC PRIORITIES | TIMING | POTENTIAL MILESTONES | KEY STAKEHOLDERS |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| Action area 2 – A broader spectrum of responses to social issues and harms | | | | |
| 2.1 Develop a Community Crisis Response Service Model for the municipality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance supports for people experiencing homelessness Broaden the spectrum of emergency and crisis response | Planning: 2023-24 Pilot: 2025-26 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate model identified Funding and partnership agreements established Pilot started and evaluation plan created | Internal Government Relations & External Affairs, Office of Diversity & Inclusion, Parks & Recreation, Halifax Regional Police, Finance & Asset Management, Information Technology and Legal & Legislative Services External Province of Nova Scotia, Community organizations |
| 2.2 Establish a drug and alcohol policy working group | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide expert advice to promote public safety across municipal programs and services Create safer and more inclusive spaces Enhance supports for people experiencing homelessness Reduce harms associated with alcohol and drugs | 2023-24 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working group established to co-develop a drug and alcohol strategy for Halifax | Internal Government Relations & External Affairs & Parks & Recreation, Office of Diversity & Inclusion, Halifax Regional Police, Halifax Public Libraries External RCMP, Government of Canada, Province of Nova Scotia, Community organizations, Business Improvement Districts, People who use drugs |
| 2.3 Establish a sobering centre | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create safer and more inclusive spaces Enhance supports for people experiencing homelessness Broaden the spectrum of emergency and crisis response Reduce harms associated with alcohol and drugs | 2023-24 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Third-party provider identified Appropriate space identified and procured Pilot service started Initial evaluation completed | Internal Office of the CAO, Government Relations & External Affairs, Parks & Recreation, Halifax Regional Police, Finance & Asset Management, Information Technology and Legal & Legislative Services External RCMP, Province of Nova Scotia, Community organizations |
| 2.4 Establish a mobile outreach and transportation team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create safer and more inclusive spaces Enhance supports for people experiencing homelessness Broaden the spectrum of emergency and crisis response Reduce harms associated with alcohol and drugs | Planning: 2023-24 Pilot: 2024-25 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate model identified Funding and partnership agreements established Pilot started and evaluation plan created | Internal Government Relations & External Affairs, Parks & Recreation, Halifax Regional Police, Halifax Fire & Emergency Services, Public Works, Finance & Asset Management, Information Technology and Legal & Legislative Services External RCMP, Community organizations, Provincial government |
| 2.5 Address trauma as a root cause of youth violence and gang involvement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create safer and more inclusive spaces Promote healing from trauma | 2023-24 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New youth resources established in Multi-Service Youth Centres Youth Services Review completed | Internal Parks & Recreation, Halifax Regional Police, Office of Diversity & Inclusion /African Nova Scotian Integration Affairs Office, Halifax Public Libraries External RCMP, Community organizations |

| ACTION | STRATEGIC PRIORITIES | TIMING | POTENTIAL MILESTONES | KEY STAKEHOLDERS |
|---|--|----------------|--|--|
| Action Area 3 – A Centre of Responsibility for collective impact | | | | |
| 3.1 Develop a Centre of Responsibility for community-led public safety | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide expert advice to promote public safety across municipal programs and services • Create a centre for a collective impact approach to public safety | 2023-24 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New division created • Director hired • New reporting and staffing structure established | Office of the CAO, HR & Corporate Communications and Government Relations & External Affairs |
| 3.2 Establish new community voice and advisory structures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide expert advice to promote public safety across municipal programs and services • Create a centre for a collective impact approach to public safety | 2023-24 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New community advisory structures established | Government Relations & External Affairs, Legal & Legislative Services, Office of Diversity & Inclusion/African Nova Scotian Integration Affairs Office |
| 3.3 Assess existing municipal programs and services for migration to the new CoR | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide expert advice to promote public safety across municipal programs and services • Create a centre for a collective impact approach to public safety | 2024-25 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing municipal programs and services moved to the new CoR | Office of the CAO, HR & Corporate Communications, Finance & Asset Management and all business units with programs and services migrated to the CoR |

Appendix A: Municipal reports and other documents reviewed

The following municipal documents have been reviewed in the preparation of this report. Most of these reports were reviewed as part of the current state assessment activities. Additional sources are referenced in text in the main report as appropriate.

Reports and documents reviewed included:

- Municipal reports specifically focused on public safety and related issues:
 - HRM [Public Safety Strategy 2018-2022](#)
 - 2014 Roundtable Review [Clairmont main report](#) and [Watters supplementary report](#)
 - [Defunding the Police](#): Defining the Way forward for HRM
 - [Public Safety Strategy Annual Update](#) December 2021, incl. in appendices:
 - CMT Actions and Initiatives Reports
 - Alcohol and Drug Strategy Consultation Report
 - Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces scoping study
 - [Halifax, Nova Scotia Street Checks report](#) (Wortley report 2019)
 - And the [Wortley Report Two-Year Summary 2021](#)
 - [Reimagining Public Safety](#) council report March 2021
- Additional consultation reports and summaries:
 - HRM & The Youth Project: 2SLGBTQ+ Community Engagement May 2022
 - Conversations of Gender Equality with Indigenous Women & Two-Spirit Individuals March 2022
 - Race and Gender Data and the Safety of Asian Women and Non- Binary People
 - Anti-Black Racism in HRM: What we heard report 2022
 - Women and Gender Equity Strategy consultation report 2022
 - Rural Crime Prevention and Community Safety Training and Knowledge Exchange - 2022
- Municipal strategic policy frameworks that are particularly relevant to the development of the next Public Safety Strategy, including:
 - HRM [Social Policy report](#) 2020
 - HRM [Anti-Black Racism](#) framework 2021
 - HRM [Diversity and Inclusion Framework](#)
- Public opinion survey data, including data contained within the above-mentioned reports as well as:
 - HRM [2021 Resident Survey](#) (public safety section)
 - Survey data from the [Halifax Partnership](#) and [Angus Reid](#) on policing, crime and public safety in the municipality

Draft Future State Broader Spectrum of Response

