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Item No. 15.1.1
Halifax Regional Council
November 14, 2023

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed

Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: October 13, 2023

SUBJECT: **Formation of Committee of Council on Defunding the Police**

ORIGIN

November 22, 2022, Halifax Regional Council motion (Item 15.5.1)

MOVED by Councillor Blackburn, seconded by Councillor Smith

THAT Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to request a staff report on forming a committee of Council to work on the recommendations of the Subcommittee on Defunding the Police report on de-tasking police:

1. The role of the Committee will be to review the report recommendations in line with the Working Group's report and determine how each recommendation could be implemented.
2. The Membership of the Committee would include:
 - a. Two Board of Police Commissioners members;
 - b. Two HRM Councillors;
 - c. Two representatives from HRM (CAO's office, Public Safety Office, Social Policy, etc);
 - d. Representative from the Province of Nova Scotia Department of Justice;
 - e. Representative from Halifax Regional Police;
 - f. Representative from Halifax District RCMP; and
 - g. Four members at large from the community with relevant experience.
3. The Committee will provide regular updates to the Board of Police Commissioners.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter 2008 section 21(1) states:

The Council may establish standing, special and advisory committees.

Police Act 2004 section 55(1) states:

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The function of a board is to provide

- (a) civilian governance on behalf of the council in relation to the enforcement of law, the maintenance of law and order and the prevention of crime in the municipality; and
- (b) the administrative direction, organization and policy required to maintain an adequate, effective and efficient police department

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council

- 1) Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to review areas of alignment and associated recommendations and actions between the Wortley Report, Defund Report, Public Safety Strategy and Mass Casualty Commission Final Report;
- 2) Direct the Chief Administrative Officer or delegate(s) to meet with provincial representatives, including from the Department of Justice and the Department of Community Services, and community stakeholders to receive input on implementation options for recommendations;
- 3) Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to report back to Halifax Regional Council and the Board of Police Commissioners within 6 months

BACKGROUND

In September 2020, the Board of Police Commissioners (BoPC) appointed Dr. El Jones to develop a proposal and recruit a subcommittee to recommend a definition of defunding the police for the Board's consideration. The Subcommittee's final report, Defunding the Police: Defining the Way Forward for HRM, was presented to the Board in January 2022.

In March 2021, Regional Council received a staff report entitled "Reimagining Public Safety: Review of Enforcement Delivery and Role of Police Agencies in HRM." This report was a response to Regional Council's August 2020 motion requesting "a process and timeline for a broad review of policing and public safety, including examining the potential for shifting or creating programs for civilian delivery of non-core police functions." The report made it clear that the Public Safety Office will incorporate relevant recommendations from the Defunding report into the new Public Safety Strategy.

In June 2022, the Board adopted a motion to form a working group to review the report's 36 recommendations, identify which order of government has jurisdiction to implement each recommendation, and to draft Terms of Reference for a subcommittee to advise on implementing the recommendations.

In November 2022, Commissioner Blackburn gave an update on the working group's review of the report's recommendations and advised that a Committee of Council be formed to continue the work of reviewing the report's recommendations. Commissioner Blackburn explained that a committee of Council would accomplish the following:

- a) Bring together the two levels of jurisdiction (Board and Council) in the review;
- b) Combine a review of the Subcommittee on Defunding the Police's report with a review of Council's police transformation study; and
- c) Maintain the BoPC's jurisdiction while leveraging the resources of a committee of Council.

Regional Council's 2023-2024 budget moves crossing guards from the HRP's budget into the Community Safety Office. Regional Council's budget debate also initiated early discussions regarding creating some victim services outside the auspices of police.

DISCUSSION

Significant developments have taken place since November 2022, when Regional Council's motion to

request a staff report on forming a committee of council was adopted. In early 2023 a Community Safety Business Unit was formed, with a mandate to lead the implementation of the Public Safety Strategy. By bringing together staff from across Business Units with a stake in public safety, the Community Safety Business Unit will enable the municipality to fulfill many of the tasks that were envisioned for the subcommittee.

This motion was also considered in advance of the release of three foundational reports related to public safety, namely the Public Safety Strategy 2023-2026 ("The Public Safety Strategy"), which was adopted by Regional Council at their March 7th meeting and endorsed by the BoPC at their March 9th meeting, the Policing Model Transformation Study: Future Policing Model Recommendations ("the Police Transformation Study"), which was received by Halifax Regional Council at their April 25th meeting and subsequently referred to the Board of Police Commissioners, and the Mass Casualty Commission's Final Report ("the MCC Report"), which was released publicly on March 30th. Each of these reports emphasize the need for a shared approach toward public safety, collaboration with community, and governance structures to support that shared accountability and collaboration.

Both the Police Transformation Study and the Public Safety Strategy are informed by the Defunding the Police report. The Public Safety Strategy was also informed by a community advisory committee that included two representatives from the Defund report Subcommittee and incorporates actions from the Defund Report recommendations. Several other actions are influenced by recommendations in the Defund Report.

For example, the Public Safety Strategy recommends a continuum of responses to social harms, to ensure the most appropriate responder and to reduce pressures on emergency services. The Public Safety Strategy specifically proposes the development of "a Community Crisis Response Service Model for the municipality". The Police Transformation Study recommends the creation of a community safety function (CSF) to respond to mental health and houselessness calls, among others, and that the CSF function be composed of skilled civilianized first responders, separate from police services.

Similarly, the Mass Casualty Commission Final Report acknowledges that "among those who contributed to our process it was universally agreed that police are not best trained or equipped to act as first responders to those who experience a mental health crisis, and that serving this function takes police away from performing other functions for which they are better suited." The MCC Report recommends that "[t]he Province of Nova Scotia...establish a comprehensive and adequately funded model of mental health care service provision for urban and rural Nova Scotians. This model should include first response to those in mental health crisis and continuing community support services to prevent mental health crises from arising or recurring." The MCC Report goes on to recommend that the federal government subsidize the cost of these mental services at the same proportion to which it subsidizes RCMP services.

Coordination, collaboration and partnerships with community stakeholders and other orders of government is required to determine whether and how Defund Report recommendations will be implemented. Furthermore, any consideration of implementing Defund Report recommendations must take place in tandem with a close analysis of recommendations and actions contained in the Wortley Report, Public Safety Strategy, Mass Casualty Commission Final Report and the Police Transformation Study. This collaboration and analysis can take place outside of the formal structure created by a committee of council. A further consideration is that the recruitment of residents on committees of council must follow the formal recruitment process, which risks adding delays to demonstrable action on the Defund Report. For these reasons, forming a Committee of Council is not recommended. The Executive Director of the Community Safety Business Unit has been consulted and is supportive of the recommendations contained in this report.

Through a motion adopted at their August 2nd meeting, the BoPC provided direction to convene the Community Safety Office, the Halifax Regional Police and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to prepare a staff report outlining areas of overlap and associated recommendations contained in the above referenced public safety reports. This work will inform the BoPC's 2023-2024 workplan. A preliminary analysis suggests that there are significant areas of overlap across these reports, and that Regional Council's endorsement

of the Public Safety strategy creates a framework for several recommendations contained in the Defund report to be implemented.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate financial implications to this report. Any future financial implications arising from implementation of the recommendations will be addressed in staff reports and HRM departmental budgets as required.

RISK CONSIDERATION

No risk considerations were identified.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Board of Police Commissioners is comprised of four citizen members and three Councillors. Meetings are live webcast on Halifax.ca. The agenda, reports, video, and minutes of the Board are posted on Halifax.ca.

The Board's Subcommittee had a diverse membership (including those with lived experience) from groups impacted by policing, with an emphasis on organizations that provide community-based services. They deployed multiple engagement strategies, including focus groups, written submissions, a live-streamed public engagement session and an online survey that garnered 2,351 unique responses.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

No environmental implications were identified.

ATTACHMENTS

None

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.

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