

From: ["Mochrie, Paul" <Paul.Mochrie@vancouver.ca>](mailto:Paul.Mochrie@vancouver.ca)

To: ["Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"](#)

Date: 11/4/2021 9:14:15 AM

Subject: [Update on Decriminalizing Poverty and Prioritizing Community-Led Safety Initiatives](#)

Attachments: ACCS - GM - Memo (Council) - Decriminalizing Poverty Motion - Process Update (RTS 14410) (2021-11-03).pdf

Dear Mayor and Council,

Please find attached a memo from the General Manager of Arts, Culture, and Community Services Sandra Singh that provides an update on the work on the Council Motion "Decriminalizing Poverty and Prioritizing Community-Led Safety Initiatives" (RTS 14410). Highlights include:

- After significant discussion, community organizations named in the motion and staff have identified a process to advance work on the motion.
- The City will hire an external consultant to serve as a community coordinator, who will work with the groups and other stakeholders to develop recommendations.
- Given the broad agreement from community organizations that the City should investigate the potential for an alternative to police response to some calls and that the City should discuss interactions with people experiencing homelessness or inadequate housing while working to maintain sidewalks and other public realm spaces, staff will engage in initial exploration of these two potential initiatives through research, scoping, and discussion with internal and external stakeholders as Action While Planning initiatives. Staff will report back to Council.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to email Sandra and she will ensure your questions are responded to in the weekly Council Q&A.

Best,
Paul

Paul Mochrie (he/him)
City Manager
City of Vancouver
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The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

MEMORANDUM

November 3, 2021

TO: Mayor & Council

CC: Paul Mochrie, City Manager
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager
Lynda Graves, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office
Maria Pontikis, Director, Civic Engagement and Communications
Katrina Leckovic, City Clerk
Anita Zaenker, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Neil Monckton, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Alvin Singh, Communications Director, Mayor's Office

FROM: Sandra Singh, General Manager, Arts, Culture and Community Services

SUBJECT: Decriminalizing Poverty Motion Implementation – Process Update

RTS #: 14410

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to update Council on efforts to advance the work arising from the Council Motion, *Decriminalizing Poverty and Prioritizing Community-Led Safety Initiatives* (RTS 14410).

BACKGROUND

At its July 27, 2020 meeting, Council approved the motion *Decriminalizing Poverty and Prioritizing Community-Led Safety Initiatives* that directed staff to undertake the following work:

- A. THAT Council ask the police board to itemize the work they do that is related to mental health, homelessness, drug use, sex work, and the amount of money spent on it, including the number of tickets issued from enforcing related bylaws as well as the cost of this enforcement
- B. THAT Council ask staff to seek input from BLM, WISH, CCAP, BCCLA, Hogan's Alley Society, Vancouver Aboriginal Transformative Justice Services Society, VANDU, PACE, DTES Women's Centre, Western Aboriginal Harm Reduction Society, Battered Women's Support Services, PIVOT and the John Howard Society, people with lived experience, equity-seeking, and other community groups as well as housing and health providers,

social service providers and non-profit societies specializing in human rights, mental health and addictions, about how the city could support existing and future community-based harm reduction and safety services.

C. THAT Council ask staff to report back as soon as possible with a plan, timeline and budget to de-prioritize policing as a response to mental health, sex work, homelessness, and substance use and to prioritize funding community-led groups, non-profit societies and others with the experience and training to deliver harm reduction and safety initiatives in these areas.

Funding was provided in the 2021 budget to implement a community-led process to develop these recommendations and, at its April 28, 2021 meeting, Council approved a staff recommendation to establish a Council-appointed, multi-sector, interdisciplinary, and representative Community Panel to work arms-length from the City to develop recommendations.

Following the approval to create this Committee, staff engaged a community consultancy to assist with the identification and recommendation of co-chairs and panel members. In late June of 2021, staff received significant feedback from the 13 organizations named in the motion about the process and several of the named organizations advised the DTES community to not engage in the process.

Staff advised Council that the process was stalled and staff would discuss further with the community organizations they were directed to seek input from and update on a revised process.

DISCUSSION

Update on Process to Develop Recommendations

Social Policy staff met with representatives from the 13 named organizations several times since July 2021 to discuss how the work could best be done: either directly by several community groups, through a lead non profit, or through a consultant hired by the City to work closely with community groups was discussed. It is now agreed that the City will hire a community coordinator to work closely with community groups and seek input from other stakeholders to identify priority recommendations. Community groups will be involved in providing input into selection criteria and the hiring of the consultant.

It is recognized by all parties, including City staff, that there are many recommendations in reports that have already been published and that a key part of the work will be to help the community coordinator prioritize program ideas for implementation.

Community Engagement

The original process recognized that there were many potential community organizations beyond the groups specifically named in the motion who will wish to comment on the work. Staff will ensure that these stakeholders/organizations are also consulted in the development of recommendations. The community coordinator hired to undertake the work will also work geographically across Vancouver: while conscious of the needs in the DTES, staff remain cognizant of the needs across the city.

Financial Impacts

Staff will work within the assigned budget.

NEXT STEPS

As this process no longer requires the creation of a Council-appointed body and is instead an administrative process, staff will proceed to implement this approach.

Staff will seek to have recommendations to Council by summer 2022, subject to community capacity to engage.

Action While Planning Suggestion

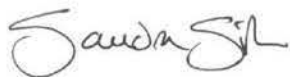
One program idea that has been raised consistently throughout discussions is the idea of looking at some type of pilot program to divert mental health and other calls that do not require police response to other community-service responders. The City of Victoria is working with CMHA-BC on developing a pilot. Staff will work on exploring what such a pilot would entail and will report back in advance of the broader motion report back. Another topic identified regularly by community groups has been how the City interacts with people experiencing homelessness or inadequate housing while undertaking cleaning of sidewalks and other public spaces, and so staff will also explore these concerns and discuss potential changes or alternatives.

Staff will report back to Council on these Action While Planning explorations, subject to community capacity to engage.

FINAL REMARKS

While it is unfortunate that there is a number of months delay in this advancing the work on this motion, with all groups now in agreement with how to proceed, staff can move to engage a consultant and work with stakeholders to develop recommendations.

If Council has any further questions or needs additional information, please feel free to contact Sandra Singh directly at sandra.singh@vancouver.ca.



Sandra Singh, General Manager
Arts, Culture, and Community Services

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