

INFORMATION REPORT

Climate Action, Planning and Development

To: Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council
Date: January 30, 2023

From: Jackie Teed, Acting Director, Climate Action, Planning and Development
File:

Item #: [Report Number]

Subject: Proposed Homelessness Action Plan for 2023

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council receive the proposed Homelessness Action Plan for 2023 for information.

PURPOSE

To inform Council of the proposed Homelessness Action Plan for 2023, which includes 24 actions for addressing homelessness and related issues.

SUMMARY

On July 11, 2022, Council endorsed in principle the New Westminster Homelessness Action Strategy (Attachment 1). The Strategy incorporates a five-year vision and plan for addressing homelessness and related issues and contains 46 actions toward: meeting the diverse needs of the unsheltered and precariously housed; ensuring that facilities, programs, services and supports are responsive to those needs; and, eliminating or significantly reducing barriers to access.

The Strategy contains the following vision for a future:

- where all residents can locate affordable and secure housing;
- where there is an adequate income and opportunities for employment, including supported, to maintain one's housing; and,
- where there are services and supports to assist the unsheltered and precariously housed, and to address underlying issues which may jeopardize one's housing.

The Strategy's 46 actions are organized according to the following five categories:

- Coordination and Partnership
- Shelter, Housing and Tenant Support
- Income, Employment and Financial Literacy
- Services and Supports
- Communication, Engagement and Involvement

The City and the Homelessness Coalition Society will take primary responsibility in the implementation of the Strategy. As a first step, a Homelessness Action Strategy Implementation Working Group has been established and is co-chaired by the City and the Coalition. This body includes a diverse membership, including people with lived and living experience of homelessness and poverty, and has the following responsibilities:

- inform updates related to the Homelessness Needs Assessment;
- develop an annual Action Plan based on the actions as contained in the Strategy;
- inform the implementation of specific actions; and,
- inform monitoring and reporting related to the implementation of the Strategy.

The Working Group has prepared an Action Plan for 2023 (Attachment 2). The Action Plan includes 24 actions for 2023 and information related to resourcing, responsibility and implications for staff work programs. The City and the Working Group will apply for funding and grants from, and seek collaboration and partnership with the senior levels of government, as they have jurisdiction for addressing homelessness and related issues.

With guidance from the Working Group, City staff will prepare an annual monitoring report to share with Council and other interested public and non-profit bodies. This report will summarize key indicators related to homelessness. It will also provide a progress update on implementing the annual Action Plan; indicating for each action item whether it was achieved fully, partially or not at all. If partially or not at all, reason(s) will be stated (e.g., inability to involve key community partners, lack of resources, etc.). The first annual monitoring report will be prepared for in January 2024.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

For 2023, \$32,800 has been allocated for Homelessness Coalition coordination services, \$20,000 has been allocated to advance social benefit zoning, \$10,000 has been allocated for an anti-stigma campaign and \$3,000 has been allocated for tenant education and information sessions; and these expenses are contained in the Climate Action, Planning and Development Department Operating Budget under Consultants. Also for 2023, \$35,000 has been allocated to cover administration costs of the New Westminster Rent Bank Program and this expense is contained in the Climate Action, Planning and Development Operating Budget under Affordable Housing Grants; and, \$27,000 has been allocated for enhanced outreach services and this expense is contained in the Climate Action, Planning and Development Operating Budget under

Other Community Grants. Regarding coordination services, \$32,800 will be required for each of the years of 2024, 2025, 2026 and 2027. For these and other expenses, City staff will explore foundation and senior government funding opportunities. Additionally, \$650,000 has been allocated for a 24/7 free-standing, prefabricated toilet; and this expense is contained in the 2023 Capital Budget.

All funding is to be approved by Council as part of the 2023 budget approvals process and any actions requiring funding that are not approved by Council will not proceed.

The City received funding under the Strengthening Communities Program for the following actions in 2023: \$200,000 towards expanding the availability of toilet facilities for the unsheltered, and \$123,736 to fund the I's on the Street micro street cleaning program. The City also received \$15,000 under the Strengthening Communities Program to fund digital inclusion initiatives in 2022. Additionally, the City has received a \$5,000 grant under the Community Food Action Initiative to develop a Food Justice Pilot Project.

OPTIONS

There are two options for consideration:

1. That Council receive for information the attached proposed Homelessness Action Plan for 2023.
2. That Council provide staff with other direction.

Staff recommends option 1

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: New Westminster Homelessness Action Strategy (2022)
Attachment 2: Proposed Homelessness Action Plan for 2023

APPROVALS

This report was prepared by:
Claudia Freire, Social Planner

This report was reviewed by:
John Stark, Supervisor of Community Planning

This report was approved by:
Jackie Teed, Acting Director of Climate Action, Planning and Development
Lisa Spitale, Chief Administrative Officer