

**Present:**

Councillor Kooner, Chair  
Councillor Stutt, Vice Chair  
C. Izsak  
J. Gosal  
M. Mubanda  
M. Rooney  
N. Atwal

**Absent:**

J. Cuenca

**Staff Present:**

T. Waterhouse, General Manager, Community Services  
L. Cavan, General Manager, Parks, Recreation and Culture  
A. Murphy, Acting Manager, Housing and Social Development  
P. Sanderson, Manager, Strategic Planning & Responses  
T. Ahmad, Senior Policy and Program Lead  
S. Lee, Administrative Assistant

**Guests:**

K. Booth, Shelter Volunteer  
B. Gillis, Shelter Volunteer  
S. Wieczorek, Member of the Missional Renewal Committee  
D. Tennant, CEO, UNITI  
L. Simpson, Community Development Leader, UNITI  
L. Boughen, Director of Inclusive Living, UNITI  
K. Milne, Self Advocate Leadership Network Board Secretary

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**A. ADOPTIONS****1. Adoption of the Agenda**

It was

Moved by M. Rooney  
Seconded by N. Atwal  
That:

1. The agenda of the October 18, 2023, Livability and Social Equity Committee meeting be amended by adding Item E.2: Accessibility Policy in Surrey and Item E.3: Social Equity in the City of Surrey Economic Strategy under Other Business; and
2. The agenda be adopted as amended.

Carried

**2. Adoption of the Minutes – June 21, 2023**

It was

Moved by N. Atwal  
Seconded by M. Rooney  
That the minutes of the Livability and Social  
Equity Committee meeting held on June 21, 2023, be adopted.

Carried

J. Gosal joined the meeting at 6:04 p.m.

**B. DELEGATIONS****1. Kathy Booth, Shelter Volunteer, Dr. Bonnie Gillis, Shelter Volunteer, and Su Wiczorek, Member of the Missional Renewal Committee**

The delegation provided a presentation regarding Extreme Weather Response Shelter Site in winter on the Semiahmoo Peninsula and permanent supportive housing. The following information was highlighted:

- There is an urgent need for a location for the Extreme Weather Shelter for the 2023-2024 Emergency Weather Response (EWR) season and permanent supportive housing for the unhoused citizens in the Semiahmoo Peninsula. For 15 years, the Faith Community provided the EWR shelters on the Peninsula from November 1 to April 1, but there are currently no church sites available for the 2023-2024 EWR season. The delegation suggested that the City find an EWR site on the Peninsula to keep people alive in adverse weather by offering them a warm refuge. The number of guests seeking refuge has increased from a few people a night in 2008 to up to 40 guests a night last year. Options Community Services has always provided staffing and up to 50 volunteers have actively supported the guests.
- Mt. Olive Lutheran Church hosted an EWR shelter and a temporary winter shelter (TWS) for the last two years because there were no other viable options for a winter shelter in South Surrey or White Rock. They were not located on a bus route, did not have showers or laundry facilities, and the layout of the church made it difficult for the staff to monitor or assist the guests easily and efficiently. Due to commitments with other user groups, shelter hours were limited, and the guests were unable to access assessment and support services for their various needs.
- The Church had 20 mats available for guests, but they were often over capacity with up to 35 people seeking shelter on some nights. The majority were residents of South Surrey or White Rock, ranged in age from 19 years old to senior citizens, and included people with physical disabilities, mental disabilities, addiction issues, but mostly people who could not afford both food and shelter in the community. During the 2021-22 shelter season, the shelter was open 112 nights and had 1902 guest visits, an average of 17 guests per night with a high of 35 guests. During the 2022-23 shelter season, they were open 135 nights and had 3245 guest visits, an average of 24 guests per night with a high of 35-40 guests on many nights. Since their multi-purpose room space was overwhelmed and could not safely support all guests, the church closed the shelter at the end of February 2023. Due to other commitments, the Church cannot offer their multi-purpose room for future shelter use.
- Sponsored by the Peninsula Homeless Housing Task Force, three volunteers coordinated the Homelessness on the Peninsula Forum in June 2023 which was attended by 150 people. There were presenters from Options, Sources, BC Housing, City of Surrey, and video presentations featuring several unhoused residents. The City of Surrey presented on the permanent supportive housing sites the City has built with other partners in other areas of Surrey, which provide residents with the safety and dignity of having their own home and 24/7 wrap around services to support them in meeting their goals. It also reduces costs associated with homelessness and benefits everyone in the community.

- In 2013, the Master Plan for Housing the Homeless in Surrey stated that shelters and transitional housing need to be distributed through Surrey's six communities close to transit and services; however, South Surrey is still one of the only areas of Surrey which does not have Permanent Supportive Housing. 519 letters signed by residents of South Surrey and White Rock were sent to the Councils of Surrey and White Rock requesting that they work with partners to establish permanent supportive housing. The delegation is keen to work with the City to provide support for an EWR Shelter and Permanent Supportive Housing for the most vulnerable residents on the Semiahmoo Peninsula.

In response to questions from the Committee, the delegation and City Staff provided the following information:

- Around 80% of homeless individuals are from their home communities, as per the most recent Homeless Count Report. The point-in-time count may not capture the entire homeless population due to people refusing to be counted and those who are not found during the process. When considering these factors, the actual number of homeless individuals is considered to be significantly higher than what is recorded in the point-in-time count.
- According to the Homeless Count Report, there has been a 32% increase in homeless individuals in the Greater Vancouver area since the last count in 2020. Surrey experienced an increase of 65%. Notably, 12% of the respondents identified as LGBTQIA and 3% identified as transgender. The homeless population is diverse with about one-quarter being seniors. The delegation emphasizes the need for permanent housing on the Semiahmoo peninsula as it is the only area of Surrey without such housing.
- Options, Sources, and Engaged Communities are the three social service agencies in South Surrey that the City is collaborating with and actively looking at all potential and available locations on the Peninsula to find an EWR site even though very few options are available. The City is also actively engaged in addressing the need for permanent supportive housing on the Peninsula. Over the past several years, the nature of the need for support has become more complex. Collaboration extends beyond working with BC Housing and includes Fraser Health. The synergy created between BC Housing, Fraser Health, the City, social service providers, and community groups is focused on finding solutions on the peninsula.
- The 2013 Master Plan identified the need for an additional 450 units of supportive housing through a combination of supportive housing projects and rent supplements for people who can rent in the private market. Priority populations were identified, including those with complex mental health and substance use, women, women with children, youth and Indigenous people. The plan aimed to shift from building shelters to providing permanent homes. Over a 10-year period, the city achieved the targets of the 2013 plan. However, there is currently no permanent housing or shelter in South Surrey. As the plan is being refreshed, the City may reconsider geographic needs, unit types, priority populations, and the availability of land. BC Housing plays a significant role in funding building construction and ongoing operations, with the City having a smaller role in the process.

- The EWR program is designed to provide emergency shelter for nights when people's health and safety is at risk due to extreme winter weather conditions. Initially, the program was not envisioned to be as large in scale as it is today, but rather to provide a few mats for individuals in need. The EWR shelters are low-barrier, ensuring that people are not turned away, especially on severe weather nights. However, they do not offer on-site services beyond providing shelter.
- EWR is an emergency response program. The building department and fire department inspect EWR premises to ensure they are safe. When a site is used as a temporary winter shelter (open every night), it is not considered an emergency response so is subject to the requirements of the BC Building Code and the BC Fire Safety Code.

The Committee noted the following comments:

- In addition to ensuring there are enough beds for individuals, it was suggested that there is a need for wrap around services and clothing supports in the extreme weather shelters.
- The Back on Track Recovery House has a warehouse full of donations such as clothes and hygiene products which they could provide to the EWS sites.

2. **Doug Tennant, CEO, UNITI, Lauren Simpson, Community Development Leader, UNITI, Lise Boughen, Director of Inclusive Living, UNITI, and Krista Milne, Self Advocate Leadership Network Board Secretary**

The delegation provided a presentation on the benefits of affordable and inclusive housing in Surrey. The following information was highlighted:

- UNITI builds affordable and inclusive housing. According to the Surrey Housing Needs Report, the city is experiencing a shortage of below-market rental housing. The report identifies a current need for over 18,000 affordable rental units below market rates. Looking ahead to 2031, the demand for below-market rental or affordable housing is estimated to be as high as 13,700 units that need to be constructed in Surrey.
- Upon comparing the construction of cooperative and rental social housing in Vancouver and Surrey from 2016 to 2020, it showed that Surrey has been primarily focused on building market housing, with substantial construction in this sector. In the same time frame, Vancouver built 3,134 total units, while Surrey built only 245 total units. UNITI is responsible for a quarter of the 245 total units constructed in Surrey during this period.

- Chorus Apartments is a huge benefit to the community. Completed in 2016, Chorus was the first new purpose-built rental building built in Surrey in years. It has won awards for its form and its inclusive tenancy. Chorus features 71 affordable rental homes and 3 long-term leases, of which 20 units have tenants who have developmental disabilities. Chorus is an apartment similar to other apartments in South Surrey. People with disabilities have social power; the apartment exists because of them and is a benefit to the whole community. According to research by UNITI, people with disabilities or anybody living in quality affordable housing enjoys the benefit of improving their overall quality of life. It improves physical and emotional well-being, personal development, social inclusion, interpersonal relations, rights, and self-determination. Affordable housing is beneficial for local businesses as the residents live and shop within their communities, stimulating the local economy.
- Modeled on the award-winning Chorus Apartments, Harmony Apartments was to be built on 5.5 acres of property UNITI owns in South Surrey. It was a perfect location, close to transit, shopping, and employment. Though it was the most supported affordable housing project in BC's history and strongly supported by City staff, it was still rejected by the previous Council before being approved unanimously at Third Reading by the current Council in January, 2023. If Harmony Apartments was not rejected by Council the first time, it would have cost \$20 million less to be built. UNITI is adding in more of its own resources and BC housing is funding \$10.5 million to cover the additional cost.
- Many municipalities in BC have created bylaws to support Development Cost Charges (DCC) waivers for affordable housing projects. These can be project specific or comprehensive for non-profit affordable housing projects in that municipality. The bylaw can be as broad or restrictive as needed to control the number of applications that would qualify. The delegation suggested that the City create a specific bylaw to waive DCC for Harmony Apartments. Metro Vancouver and TransLink already provide a DCC waiver for non-profit owned affordable rental housing projects. The City could also use funds from Affordable Housing Fund, though it is currently small, to provide an affordable rental housing grant program to help cover the cost of DCCs and Secondary Plan Amenity Charges.

In response to questions from the Committee, the delegation provided the following information:

- The delegation suggested that a directive should originate directly from the Council to waive DCCs on non-market or non-profit affordable rental housing projects.
- Funds collected through DCCs are mostly committed to various infrastructure projects.

**C. STAFF PRESENTATIONS****1. General Manager, Community Services and General Manager, Parks, Recreation and Culture, City of Surrey**

Staff provided a presentation on the City of Surrey Extreme Weather Response system. The following information was highlighted:

- The Surrey Extreme Weather Action Plan was endorsed by Council last year. It is managed by the General Manager of Community Services Department, General Manager of Parks, Recreation, and Culture Department, and the Fire Chief. The plan is a coordinated response to extreme cold, heat, and smoke for Surrey and its residents. The Extreme Winter Response is resourced directly by BC Housing.
- The first aspect of the plan is broad awareness in the community. The Division of Marketing Communications ensures there is active information dissemination through the City's website, social media channels, and partner organizations. The communication strategy aims to raise awareness when extreme weather conditions occur. They provide comprehensive and up-to-date information on available city facilities for community members seeking relief from extreme weather. Collaboration with partners ensures that individuals in the community can access these locations effectively.
- The second aspect of the plan involves preparation. Staff collaborates with the Homelessness Services Association of BC (HSABC) and other community partners to update an annual EWR plan for the winter response. The Plan includes the criteria under which an EWR Alert is activated by HSABC. The provision of EWR shelters falls under the provincial mandate with funding from BC Housing. BC Housing contracts HSABC to coordinate the EWR program in Surrey.
- Response to extreme weather events is structured into three levels – EWR warning, EWR Alert and Emergency. The City is prepared for extreme emergencies when weather conditions significantly threaten lives and increase the risk of fatalities and/or there are major disasters and/or the Province declares an emergency. In such cases, the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) may be activated, which is managed by Surrey Fire Service. Additional support services, such as the Emergency Social Services program, funded by the Province, are made available to ensure that individuals have access to shelter during extreme emergency situations.
- The City has designated its recreation facilities as places of respite during extreme weather conditions. Staff are trained to create a welcoming environment. Several locations have been identified in each town center for this purpose. Surrey Libraries also serve as important locations for people to seek refuge during regular operating hours, especially during inclement weather. Recreation facilities and libraries offer snacks, water, and connections to other services if needed. Transit passes are provided to individuals staying during the day and needing to access shelters at night. The Parks, Recreation, and Culture Department works in close collaboration with the Community Services Division throughout the year to ensure readiness and support for these initiatives.

- The approach to extreme weather response in winter is similar to that in the summer, but with some differences. Winter responses often include shelter operations. Respite from cold, heat, or smoke during the day is provided in the City's recreation facilities, which are available for all extreme weather conditions.

In response to questions from the Committee, the staff provided the following information:

- The City has never asked private developers to provide shelters. The focus has been on working with developers to encourage the development of more purpose-built rental housing. There are policies, such as some Community Amenity Charges waived for rental units. In such cases, developers must secure the units as rental tenure for at least 20 years.
- Rent-to-own programs does not fall under the City's jurisdiction. Currently the Province does not have a program that encourages rent to own. Apparently, such programs did not work well in the UK.

## **2. Manager, Strategic Planning and Responses, Community Services, City of Surrey**

Staff provided an update and overview of the planning to develop the Integrated Community Safety and Wellbeing (ICSWB) Plan requested by the Public Safety Committee. The following information was highlighted:

- The evolution of the program began in 2010 with the Crime Prevention Strategy focused on crime prevention, enforcement, and intervention with repeat offenders. This was followed by the 2017 Public Safety Strategy which broadened the scope to include community and focused on children, families, community connections, safe spaces, and support for the vulnerable. The City then created the Mayor's Task Force on gang violence which provided recommendations for preventing and disrupting gangs in Surrey. The Surrey Anti-Gang Family Empowerment (SAFE) program emerged out of that work. Community Services Department aims to revitalize ICSWB Plan with efforts by the entire department and the City.
- The community safety plan is being formed by referencing successful community safety programs globally. In Canada, Toronto and Edmonton have the most implemented and developed programs. Community safety and wellbeing is defined in three parts by physical safety, cultural safety, and psychological safety. Policy and language have shifted from public safety to community safety and wellbeing via external and internal factors. The shift results in a more holistic approach to individual and community safety, exemplified by the national bylaw in anti-racism and systemic issues addressing Indigenous reconciliation. Locally, the shift is exemplified by the decriminalization and toxic drug poisoning crisis.

- Staff concluded the presentation by discussing the journey map for the ICSWB Plan. The Community Services Department's mandate is integrated with other departments to create a unified approach and align their goals. The department aims to bring all the stakeholders together to show their work and obtain support for their programs. Currently the ICSWB Strategy is obtaining input from committees and the community. The strategy will be reviewed by Council in April 2024; and once endorsed, the strategy will launch with events and activities. The Public Safety Committee will receive a progress report on measures and plan for ongoing monitoring in Fall 2024.

In response to questions from the Committee, the staff provided the following information:

- Surrey has ongoing initiatives and programs. The new strategy aims to enhance existing successful programs and services. Enhancement may involve scaling up effective programs and improving integration between services. Community input is valuable for identifying service gaps. The strategy seeks to identify needed services that might currently be unavailable in Surrey.
- The idea of a single comprehensive service access point is appealing but not always effective. A more successful strategy is to connect various services so that they are aware of each other's activities. Creating a system where anyone seeking help can be directed to the appropriate service is proven to be effective.
- The Front Room at 135A Street is permanently closed. Federal and provincial funding was secured a couple of years ago to create the Surrey Welcome Hub on King George Boulevard, which serves as a respite space. The space is open to everyone and provides meals, shelter from extreme weather conditions, access to Fraser Health supports, and shelter beds. There is recognition that there might also be a need for an LGBTQI-specific space.
- Safety is a subjective feeling rather than just an objective reality. Crime rates have been decreasing over the last 15 years, making the city safer from a statistical perspective. However, many people do not feel safe, and that perception is essential. People's feelings of safety can vary based on their community within Surrey such as Fleetwood and Guilford, and their personal identity such as race and gender identity. The safety strategy needs to address various aspects of safety, including lighting, street design, and public infrastructure.
- The business community is one of the stakeholder groups that staff aims to engage with. This engagement includes organizations such as the Surrey Board of Trade and Business Improvement Associations.



The Committee noted the following comments:

- When the delegation asked what questions the community engagement sessions should seek to explore or address, the Committee suggested asking people what safety means to them and if they resonate with the seven pillars of safety plan.
- Public safety is a matter of perception, especially from the 2SLGBTQ+ community's perspective. Many individuals in the community lack both psychological and physical safety. Instead of expecting marginalized communities to come forward, efforts should be made to go to them to understand their safety needs. The strategy involves meeting people where they are, such as at public events, and having focused conversations, especially with marginalized populations. The President of Surrey Pride Society is suggested to facilitate some of the sessions with marginalized communities.
- It was suggested that the Committee share their ideas and suggestions via email with the relevant staff members at any time and not just during formal monthly meetings. Programs should be measurable to determine their effectiveness. Instead of funding the same programs without assessing their impact, the decisions should be based on measurable outcomes. The goal is to assess what groups did with the previous year's funding. Some groups may deserve more funding, some less, and some may need to be discontinued or merged. Identifying and addressing the most serious problems is a priority. Meetings should lead to progressive actions, and the Committee was encouraged to contribute by getting engaged.
- There's a plan to consider merging the Livability and Social Equity Committee and the Public Safety Committee in the future. The Public Safety Committee encompasses various aspects beyond just the police, including fire and bylaws. When people express not feeling safe, it involves multiple elements that need to be addressed. The specific model and resources for the future are uncertain. The goal is to ensure that both committees work together to identify and address issues related to safety.
- Crime in Surrey has been decreasing, and the reasons for this need to be identified and supported. The availability of resources for future programs and initiatives is uncertain. Policing is just a part of the public safety equation; it involves multiple departments such as the fire department, bylaws, and crisis management. The goal is to avoid working in silos and embrace a holistic approach to public safety. The Livability and Social Equity Committee and the Public Safety Committee need to collaborate, where the committee members provide recommendations based on their unique talents and contributions.

**D. NEW BUSINESS****1. 2024 Committee Meeting Schedule**

The Committee was requested to review the proposed 2024 meeting schedule. Meetings are proposed to be scheduled monthly on the third Wednesday at 6PM, except February and September where they are scheduled on the fourth Tuesday. No meetings are scheduled for March, July, August, and December.

It was  
Moved by M. Rooney  
Seconded by J. Gosal  
That the Livability and Social Equity  
Committee adopted the 2024 meeting schedule as presented.  
Carried

**E. OTHER BUSINESS****1. Delegation Request****(a) Dr. Ariella Zbar, Medical Health Officer, Fraser Health**

Requesting to appear before the Committee to provide a presentation on Fraser Health Services that are provided in collaboration with non-profit organizations in Surrey, with a focus on the toxic drug response.

It was  
Moved by J. Gosal  
Seconded by M. Mubanda  
That Dr. Ariella Zbar, Medical Health  
Officer, Fraser Health be heard as a delegation at the Livability and Social  
Equity Committee.  
Carried

**(b) Surrey Vulnerable Women and Girls Working Group**

Staff are proposing that the Committee invite the Surrey Vulnerable Women and Girls Working Group to provide a presentation on their new research report entitled, In Their Own Words Research, 2023: Current Reflections on Housing and Service Needs for Vulnerable Women and Girls in Surrey.

It was  
Moved by J. Gosal  
Seconded by Councillor Stutt  
That Surrey Vulnerable Women and  
Girls Working Group be invited as a delegation at the Livability and Social  
Equity Committee.  
Carried

**2. Accessibility Policy in Surrey**

It was Moved by M. Rooney  
Seconded by Councillor Stutt  
That staff report back at the next meeting on  
a presentation plan regarding the accessibility policy in Surrey.  
Carried

**3. Social Equity and City of Surrey Economic Strategy**

It was Moved by M. Rooney  
Seconded by Councillor Stutt  
That the Manager, Economic Development  
be invited to a future Livability and Social Equity Committee meeting to provide a  
presentation on how the City is incorporating social equity into the City of Surrey  
Economic Strategy.  
Carried

**F. NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Livability and Social Equity Committee is scheduled for  
Wednesday, November 15, 2023.

**G. ADJOURNMENT**

It was Moved by J. Gosal  
Seconded by M. Mubanda  
That the Livability and Social Equity  
Committee meeting be adjourned.  
Carried

The Livability and Social Equity Committee adjourned at 8.00 p.m..

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Jennifer Ficocelli, City Clerk

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Councillor Kooner, Chairperson