



Administrative Report

Office of the Manager, Community Services

To: Warden MacDonald and Members of Essex County Council

From: Jeanie Diamond-Francis
Manager, Community Services

Date: Wednesday, February 15, 2023

Subject: Essex County Homelessness Hub Update

Report #: 2023-0301-LCS-R02-JDF

Purpose

To provide County Council Members with updated information on the status of the Essex County Homelessness Hub program.

Background

For several years, County Administration has been advocating with the City of Windsor, as the Consolidated Regional Service Manager, for homelessness services to be located in County municipalities, more specifically in Leamington where the number of individuals experiencing homelessness continues to grow. It is believed that the number of people experiencing homelessness continues to be on the rise throughout the County of Essex and the lack of affordable housing, increasing rates of inflation and the impacts of COVID-19 are all contributing factors to the difficulties of maintaining safe and affordable housing.

In addition, housing and homelessness services were offered inconsistently and at various locations which made it difficult for individuals without transportation to access services when they needed them. Furthermore, during the COVID-19 lockdown and during extreme hot or cold temperatures, individuals experiencing homelessness in the County had few options to remain safe and get their basic needs met.

Due to the lack of centralized services, individuals experiencing homelessness can sometimes be difficult to find and when housing help and

support services are available, it is extremely challenging to locate and to make connections with individuals in the County.

In an effort to respond to these concerns, County Administration requested County Council support the development of an innovative program to address the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness and create an environment where individuals can receive various types of support including housing and basic needs.

On June 1st, 2022, County Council approved funding for a two-year pilot program for the County of Essex to enter into an agreement with a Service Provider to deliver homelessness services to Essex County residents. These services would be provided through the development of a Homelessness Hub located in Leamington with services to be deployable to any parts of the County where needed.

Discussion

On July 1st, 2022, the County of Essex entered into an agreement with Family Services Windsor Essex (FSWE) to develop a Homelessness Hub Program and deliver various services to individuals experiencing homelessness in Essex County. County Administration and leadership staff at FSWE collaborated to find appropriate space and engaged with the South Essex Community Council (SECC) to lease space out of their existing building located at 215 Talbot Street.

The Essex County Homelessness Hub began operating on September 6th, 2022, and a grand opening was held on October 21st, 2022. It should be noted that between September 6th and October 21st, there was minimal advertisement and no visible signage for the program, therefore, awareness of the program was shared by word of mouth to service providers and from the individuals that attended the program.

Between September 6th, 2022 and January 31st, 2023, 167 unique individuals attended the Essex County Homelessness Hub to access services with a total of 740 visits. These numbers far exceed the anticipated utilization of this program and demonstrate the need of having homelessness services delivered locally in Leamington and accessible to the entire County of Essex. The Service Provider delivering the program will present additional data during their delegation presentation.

Financial Implications

As mentioned previously, on June 1st, County Council approved funding for a two-year pilot program. The cost to deliver the program is \$250,000 per year for a two-year period with a total cost of \$500,000. This pilot program is funded under the Ontario Safe Restart Program, therefore has no impact on the County's operational budget and tax levy.

Consultations

Consultations for this report were held with:

Mary Birch: Interim CAO, Director, Legislative and Community Services/Clerk

Barb Iacono: Housing Manager, Family Services Windsor-Essex

Recommendation

That Essex County Council receive Report #2023-0301-LCS-R02-JDF on the Essex County Homelessness Hub, as information.

Approvals

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeanie Diamond-Francis

Jeanie Diamond-Francis, Manager, Community Services

Concurred With,

Mary Birch

Mary Birch, B.A., CMO, Interim Chief Administrative Officer

Appendix Number	Title
N/A	N/A