



## **The Corporation of the City of Stratford Social Services Sub-committee MINUTES**

Date: September 10, 2019  
Time: 4:30 P.M.  
Location: Council Chamber, City Hall

Sub-committee Present: Councillor Bunting - Vice Chair Presiding, Councillor Henderson - Chair, Councillor Burbach, Councillor Ritsma, Councillor Vassilakos

Staff Present: Kim McElroy - Director of Social Services, Eden Grodzinski - Manager of Housing, Alex Burgess - Manager of Ontario Works, Jodi Akins - Council Clerk Secretary, Shannon Archer – Social Services Financial Officer, Angie Juarez – Social Services Supervisor

Also present: Member of the Public

### **1. Call to Order**

The Vice-Chair called the Meeting to Order.

### **2. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and the General Nature Thereof**

The *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act* requires any member of Council declaring a pecuniary interest and the general nature thereof, where the interest of a member of Council has not been disclosed by reason of the member's absence from the meeting, to disclose the interest at the first open meeting attended by the member of Council and otherwise comply with the *Act*.

Name, Item and General Nature of Pecuniary Interest

No disclosures of pecuniary interest were made by a member at the September 10, 2019 Social Services Sub-committee meeting.

**3. Delegations**

None scheduled.

**4. Report of the Manager of Housing**

**4.1 Britannia Street Affordable Housing – Phase 2 (SOC19-015)**

**Staff Recommendation:** THAT Stratford City Council supports the Housing Division recommendation to undertake planning for Phase 2 of the Britannia Street Affordable Housing development in 2020.

**Sub-committee Discussion:** The Manager of Housing advised that Phase 1 of the project is nearing completion. Staff are recommending using 2020 for planning Phase 2 and breaking ground in 2021, which would allow for new funds to be leveraged.

In response to a question regarding use of funds, the Manager advised that Years 5 and 6 of the Investment in Affordable Housing envelope were spent on Phase 1. The proposed funds for Phase 2 are from a new funding envelope under the National Housing Strategy. New RFPs will be issued for Phase 2.

A Sub-committee member advised of a citizen's suggestion of having a larger common space in Phase 2 and requested that staff take that into account. The Director noted that part of designing Phase 2 is learning from the operation of Phase 1.

With regard to availability of units, the Manager of Housing confirmed that 57 applications were received. The individuals who submitted a completely executed and eligible application were offered a unit.

It was suggested that when a public meeting is held for Phase 2, it would be helpful to gather feedback on the design and functionality from those living in the units constructed in Phase 1.

Concern was noted that not as many applications were received as anticipated. The Director advised that a robust marketing campaign would be completed for Phase 2 to ensure that it is reaching the intended population. A partnership with InvestStratford will be utilized.

It was noted that there is misunderstanding around the definition of "affordable housing" and it is often confused for subsidized housing.

Motion by Councillor Ritsma

**Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT Stratford City Council supports the Housing Division recommendation to undertake planning for Phase 2 of the Britannia Street Affordable Housing development in 2020.**

**Carried**

#### **4.2 Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy (SOC19-016)**

**Staff Recommendation:** THAT Council support the Social Services Department's proposal to become a Designated Community under Reaching Home: Canada's National Housing Strategy;

AND THAT any financial implications be approved during the budget process.

**Sub-committee Discussion:** The Manager of Housing advised the Government of Canada has opened up new funding for expanding the number of Designated Communities as part of the National Housing Strategy.

Staff submitted an expression of interest in the summer and Stratford was shortlisted to go forward to the next stage to submit a full application. This funding would allow for additional supports towards ending homelessness.

The Chair thanked staff for their work on this project.

Motion by Councillor Vassilakos

**Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT Council support the Social Services Department's proposal to become a Designated Community under Reaching Home: Canada's National Housing**

**Strategy;**

**AND THAT any financial implications be approved during the budget process.**

**Carried**

**5. Report of the Manager of Ontario Works**

**5.1 City of Stratford Ontario Works Service Plan, 2019-2020 (SOC19-017)**

**Staff Recommendation:** THAT City of Stratford CMSM Ontario Works Service Plan, 2019-2020 be received for information.

**Sub-committee Discussion:** The Manager of Ontario Works advised that the Ontario Works Service Plan was approved by the Ministry at the end of July and staff will begin implementing for the end of 2019 and 2020.

The plan highlights Ministry priorities, service delivery and local trends, overall service strategy and how the identified targets will be achieved and a high level review of program management.

Concern was noted with availability of housing stock and businesses bussing in out of county workers to fill their positions. The Director advised that staff are working on an initiative with InvestStratford. A key thing is the skills gap and making sure that local workers have the training needed for local jobs.

With respect to a commitment to the Connect to Skills program, the Director advised that program funding will be reassessed in March.

Motion by Councillor Henderson

**Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT City of Stratford CMSM Ontario Works Service Plan, 2019-2020 be received for information.**

**Carried**

## 5.2 Introducing MyBenefits (SOC19-018)

**Staff Recommendation:** THAT the report titled "Introducing MyBenefits" be received for information.

**Sub-committee Discussion:** The Manager of Ontario Works advised that several sites have been piloting this program and it is being slowly rolled out across the province.

MyBenefits is a portal available 24/7 that can be accessed on any device for participants to submit and look up information. This is particularly useful for rural residents. The program will continue to be made more robust, with the ability to change information and communicate with their caseworker.

The Manager demonstrated what the program looks like and walked Sub-committee through some of the features.

Reporting is very simple and still allows for the caseworker to accept or reject the evidence. This program is intended to support moving forward with a paperless strategy.

Concern was noted that not all participants would have a computer, that cell connection is not always great and that no tracking should occur. The Manager confirmed that this software is optional and that many participants have computers or cellphones. This is an added option and clients can still contact the office in the same ways they are now.

The Manager advised that he has a call with the Ministry and can ask about the tracking concern.

In response to how long payment history will be available, the Manager advised that the history ties into their current program and believes it will show up to 18 months.

Staff will offer registration and training for clients in office for this program.

Discussion took place regarding the Ontario Electricity Support program referenced in the OW Service Plan.

Motion by Councillor Vassilakos

**Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT the report titled  
“Introducing MyBenefits” be received for information.**

**Carried**

**6. Next Sub-committee Meeting**

The next Social Services Sub-committee meeting is Tuesday, October 15, 2019 at 4:30 p.m. in the Council Chamber, City Hall.

**7. Adjournment**

Motion by Councillor Burbach

**Sub-committee Decision: THAT the Social Services Sub-committee meeting adjourn.**

**Carried**

Meeting Start Time: 4:30 p.m.

Meeting End Time: 4:58 p.m.