



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

Date: September 14, 2021

Time: 3:30 P.M.

Location: Electronic Meeting

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

Staff Present: Kim McElroy - Director of Social Services, Alex Burgess - Manager of Ontario Works, Jeff Wilson - Manager of Housing/Acting Manager of Children's Services, Jodi Akins - Council Clerk Secretary, Angie Juarez - Supervisor of Social Services, Tatiana Dafoe – City Clerk

Also present: Member of the public

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

The 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 14, 2021, Social Services Sub-committee meeting.

**3. Delegations**

None scheduled.

**4. Report of the Supervisor of Social Services - Housing Division**

**4.1 2021-2022 Approved Alternate AMR and Britannia St Housing Project Rent Increases (SOC21-011)**

**Staff Recommendation:** THAT the report titled 2021-2022 Approved Alternate Average Market Rent and Britannia Street Housing Project Rent Increases (SOC21-011) be received for information, including the alternate Average Market Rent (AMR) that has been approved by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) for the City of Stratford, County of Perth, and Town of St. Marys for 2021-2022;

AND THAT staff be authorized to implement the proposed market rates for the Britannia Street Housing Project for 2022.

**Sub-committee Discussion:** The Manager of Housing/Acting Manager of Children's Services reviewed the staff report. The Service Manager has conducted a local rental market scan for the City of Stratford, County of Perth, and Town of St. Marys. Using that information, an application was made to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) for an alternate market rent (AMR). The application was approved on July 13, 2021.

Staff are proposing to use the new AMR at the Britannia Housing Project in 2022. It was clarified that there are both affordable and market rent units at Britannia. The new AMR would be for the market rent units and the affordable units would be at 80% of the AMR. The Supervisor of Housing stated that there are no rent-geared-to-income (RGI) units at Britannia, but some units are in receipt of a rent supplement.

Motion by Councillor Vassilakos

**Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT the report titled 2021-2022 Approved Alternate Average Market Rent and Britannia Street Housing Project Rent Increases (SOC21-011) be received for information, including the alternate Average Market Rent (AMR) that has been approved by the Ministry of Municipal**

**Affairs and Housing (MMAH) for the City of Stratford, County of Perth, and Town of St. Marys for 2021-2022;**

**AND THAT staff be authorized to implement the proposed market rates for the Britannia Street Housing Project for 2022.**

**Carried**

**4.2 Britannia 2022 Rent Increase and Annual Rent Increases (SOC21-012)**

**Staff Recommendation:** THAT the report Britannia 2022 Rent Increase and Annual Rent Increases (SOC21-012) be received for information;

THAT City Council approve a 1.2% rent increase guideline for the Britannia Street Housing Project effective January 1, 2022;

AND THAT City Council amend Delegation of Authority By-law 135-2017 as amended, to delegate authority to the Director of Social Services to implement the Ontario Annual Rent Increase Guideline at Britannia Street Housing Project going forward.

**Sub-committee Discussion:** The Manager of Housing/Acting Manager of Children's Services advised that the Ontario government legislated a rent freeze that ends December 31, 2021. They have also permitted a rent increase of 1.2% in 2022. Staff are proposing a 1.2% rental increase for existing tenants at 230 Britannia to cover increasing operational costs.

Motion by Councillor Bunting

**Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT the report Britannia 2022 Rent Increase and Annual Rent Increases (SOC21-012) be received for information;**

**THAT City Council approve a 1.2% rent increase guideline for the Britannia Street Housing Project effective January 1, 2022;**

**AND THAT City Council amend Delegation of Authority By-law 135-2017 as amended, to delegate authority to the Director of Social Services to implement the Ontario Annual Rent Increase Guideline at Britannia Street Housing Project going forward.**

The need to stay on top of operational costs and future capital reserves was discussed. With respect to how close 230 Britannia is to recouping costs, the Manager advised that the end result is net zero, but the City puts \$160,000 into a reserve fund for future capital costs each year.

The Chair called the question on the motion.

**Carried**

**5. Report of the Housing Stability Policy and Program Coordinator**

**5.1 2021 Homeless Enumeration (SOC21-010)**

**Staff Recommendation:** THAT the report titled "2021 Homeless Enumeration" (SOC21-010) be received for information.

**Sub-committee Discussion:** The Manager of Ontario Works advised that a homeless enumeration has been mandated by the Province for 2021. The last mandated enumeration was in 2018 and there was also an unmandated enumeration in 2017.

Staff are in the initial planning phase and are confident in the by-name list. The list was deemed quality by Built for Zero Canada. Staff are working with the access points to obtain monthly updates. The intent of the enumeration is to complete a data clean to make sure the by-name list is accurate and up to date.

A point in time count with all individuals and families on the list will be completed. Staff will be using October 30, 2021, as the point in time date and the enumeration will run from September 1 to 10, 2021.

Maintaining the by name list is a large partnership with the agencies listed in the report and they were thanked for their assistance.

Motion by Councillor Burbach

**Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT the report titled "2021 Homeless Enumeration" (SOC21-010) be received for information.**

**Carried**

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

**6.1 Update on the Ontario Works Caseload and Caseload Forecast for 2022-23 (SOC21-009)**

**Staff Recommendation:** THAT the report titled "Update on the Ontario Works Caseload and Caseload Forecast for 2022-23" (SOC21-009) be received for information.

**Sub-committee Discussion:** The Manager of Ontario Works advised the report details what has been seen over the last 18 months with respect to

the Ontario Works caseload. There was a spike in May 2020, then a decline due to income assistance through the federal government.

The first half of 2021 saw an average caseload of 550. The average caseload for the previous few years has been sitting around the high 600 and low 700s. The composition of the caseload is generally the same, however, staff have seen a decrease in individuals working on assistance, due to the availability of CERB or CRB.

Staff had strong concerns about the 3% target increase set by the Province. Staff were able to hit target for the percentage of files exiting to employment for 2019 and 2021.

The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) provided a forecast showing a steep increase in cases at the end of the 2021 fiscal year. Staff are gearing up to see an increase in applications to Ontario Works as federal benefits wind down. Should the increased caseload follow the MCCSS forecast, it would be the highest caseload numbers the Service Manager has had.

The MCCSS fully funds social assistance payments and 50% of the administrative costs of the program. Staff have not seen funding options for additional staff to handle an increased caseload to date.

It was noted by a Sub-committee member that a caseload of 860 would be almost double since they started on Council, however, caseworker numbers have not doubled. Staff are already stretched and there are concerns about getting ahead of staffing issues.

The Director of Social Services advised that in 2008 the caseload went from 420 to 600-700. At that time, a caseworker and intake worker were added. In 2019, they lost the Addiction Services funding and one caseworker.

Motion by Councillor Vassilakos

**Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT the report titled "Update on the Ontario Works Caseload and Caseload Forecast for 2022-23" (SOC21-009) be received for information.**

Discussion was held on the potential pressure on staff and whether it has been flagged for the Ministry. It was suggested that if a letter from Council was useful for forwarding to AMO, one could be provided. The Director stated that ongoing advocacy is occurring at OFSA.

The Chair called the question on the motion.

**Carried**

**7. Next Sub-committee Meeting**

The next Social Services Sub-committee meeting is **Wednesday, October 13, 2021**. Meetings were shifted to accommodate Thanksgiving Monday.

**8. Adjournment**

Motion by Councillor Vassilakos

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

**Carried**

Meeting Start Time: 3:30 P.M.

Meeting End Time: 3:51 P.M.