



CITY OF RICHMOND

REPORT TO COMMITTEE

TO: General Purposes Committee
FROM: Ted Townsend
Manager, Communication and Public Affairs
RE: Community Policing Communications Strategy

To General Purposes - Feb. 5, 2001
DATE: February 5, 2001
FILE: 5355-01

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Community Policing Communications Strategy be endorsed in principle with the strategy to be reviewed and updated once the Community Safety Division is implemented.
2. That a public awareness campaign be undertaken to better inform Richmond residents of the implications of the creation of the new Community Safety Division and of proposed initiatives arising from the BC Policing Study.
3. That the public awareness campaign include public information/consultation meetings designed to introduce the new Community Safety Division and seek input in developing the overall vision for delivery of public safety services.
4. That the RCMP be encouraged to re-establish community consultative groups at each of the Community Police Stations with a mandate to improve communications to neighbourhoods regarding specific safety matters happening in their area. Further, the RCMP should be encouraged to co-ordinate its own ongoing public awareness campaign on community policing with City initiatives and to involve auxiliary constables in these efforts.
5. That the City website's section on Police/RCMP Services be expanded to provide more detailed information on community policing programs and in particular the roles and functions of the Community Police Stations.

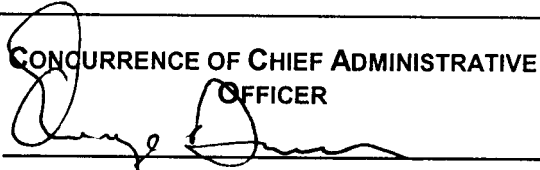
6. That the Manager, Communication and Public Affairs take action specified in the Community Policing Communications Strategy to raise public awareness of the Citizen's Advisory Committee on Policing in order to increase its effectiveness as an advocate for community policing and as a forum for public input on issues surrounding the delivery of policing services.

7. That the Community Safety division co-ordinate its communications strategy to reflect all community policing-related initiatives, including the Task Force on Drugs and Crime.



Ted Townsend
Manager, Communication and Public Affairs

CONCURRENCE OF CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE
OFFICER



STAFF REPORT

ORIGIN

In November, City Council endorsed several recommendations stemming from the staff review of the Citizens' Advisory Committee on Policing's Year 2000 Review of Community Policing. Among those recommendations was: "That a communications strategy be developed jointly by the City's Manager of Communications and the RCMP in consultation with the Public Relations Sub-Committee of the Citizen's Advisory Committee on Policing."

ANALYSIS

Community policing initiatives have shown to be a strong deterrent to crime throughout North America. In Richmond, a RCMP statistical analysis has shown that, when fully operational, the existing South Arm and Steveston Community Policing Stations and other community policing initiatives have proven successful in reducing crime. City Council has strongly endorsed the continuation and further development of community policing in Richmond. It has also identified the need to fully develop a City vision, strategies and action plans for police services before an evaluation of community policing is initiated.

The Manager, Communication and Public Affairs met with the Citizen's Advisory Committee on Policing, members of the Richmond RCMP community policing section and other RCMP and City personnel to facilitate development of a Community Policing Communications Strategy.

Community Safety Division/BC Policing Study

City Council has reinforced its commitment to community policing through the planned establishment of a new Community Safety Division and through active participation in the BC Policing Study. While these initiatives deal with all aspects of policing, they will specifically lead to implementation of measures that will increase overall local accountability of policing services and strengthen support for community policing. In fact, several initiatives of the BC Policing Study, including increased City involvement in the selection of senior RCMP detachment personnel, are already being enacted.

The further local development of the community policing concept must be accompanied by efforts to increase public awareness of those initiatives. Current community policing initiatives, such as Block Watch, Speed Watch and the establishment of Community Police Stations, have achieved measurable success. But there is still a general lack of knowledge and clarity among the public about the community policing concept and the programs offered. In addition, there is low public awareness of the strategic commitment City Council has made to its public safety goals and objectives and the impact that commitment will have on local policing services.

The community policing concept for Richmond will be more clearly defined over the coming months, following the pending launch of the new Community Safety Division. As a follow-up to the recent review on community policing, Council has instructed that the new division work with the RCMP to develop a clear City vision for the appropriate model for police services in Richmond. That vision is to include a plan for ensuring that the delivery of police services more closely reflects community needs, rather than the traditional RCMP model. It will also include

greater co-ordination of all the initiatives which support community policing, including the Citizen's Advisory Committee on Policing, the Task Force on Drugs and Crime and others.

Once the new policing model is defined, a longer-range communications strategy can be developed that more closely complements the overall vision. Until then, an interim communications strategy has been developed.

It is therefore recommended that the Community Policing Communications Strategy be endorsed in principle, with the strategy to be reviewed and updated once the Community Safety Division is implemented.

Public Awareness Campaign

A public awareness campaign is needed to better inform Richmond residents of the implications of the creation of the new Community Safety Division and of initiatives arising from the BC Policing Study. The Manager, Communication and Public Affairs would co-ordinate the public awareness campaign beginning with media releases to coincide with the formal establishment of the Community Safety Division. The Manager, Communication and Public Affairs would also seek to obtain follow-up coverage with key media outlets, featuring interviews with key City staff and members of Council to highlight the significance of the City's enhanced community policing commitment and new emphasis in dealing with overall public safety issues. The Block Watch newsletter and other City information resources would also be used to raise awareness.

Council members could also choose to further address the issues through available vehicles including councillor's City Scene columns, Chamber of Commerce Council Breakfasts and other public forums.

It is therefore recommended that a public awareness campaign be undertaken to better inform Richmond residents of the implications of the creation of the new Community Safety Division and of proposed initiatives arising from the BC Policing Study.

Public Information/Consultation

The public awareness campaign could be further augmented by public information/consultation meetings designed to introduce the new Community Safety Division and seek input in developing the overall vision for the delivery of policing services. The public meetings would also be used to reinforce public awareness of existing community policing programs through use of displays and information booths focusing on the Community Policing Stations, Block Watch, Auxiliary Policing, the Citizens' Advisory Committee on Policing and other public safety initiatives. The public meeting process would be developed by the new division's personnel and could be timed to take advantage of pre-existing events such as Police Week.

It is therefore recommended that the public awareness campaign include public information/consultation meetings designed to introduce the new Community Safety Division and seek public input in developing the overall vision for delivery of public safety services.

RCMP Initiatives

Council has identified a priority need for improved communications to neighbourhoods regarding specific safety matters happening in their area and to enhance the visibility and accessibility of the police force in the community. Currently, community policing resources are primarily focussed on crime prevention and enforcement. Greater attention needs to be dedicated to raising public awareness of the presence of Community Police Stations and their role in the community.

The initial community policing concept called for the establishment of community consultative groups at each community police station to provide broad-based neighbourhood-representative feedback to each of the stations. Currently, the community consultative groups are dormant, in part due to a lack of a clear mandate being provided to those groups. The RCMP should be encouraged to re-establish community consultative groups at each of the Community Police Stations with a mandate to focus on public awareness and input initiatives.

The RCMP's community policing section has identified a need to hold more regular formal public meetings, and better promote the presence of the Community Police Stations and their role. Efforts in these areas have been hampered by the high number of recent staffing vacancies in the Community Police Stations, a situation which is expected to be resolved in the near future. With full staffing and a large existing volunteer base, augmented by community consultative groups, more resources would be available to develop public awareness. Working with the Community Safety Division, the community consultative groups could help create new public awareness initiatives and identify and solicit the resources needed to implement those measures.

The reinstatement of the Auxiliary Policing program also provides additional resources for promoting community policing. The recent Auxiliary Policing report to council identified a number of opportunities for auxiliary constables to assist with communications initiatives. Auxiliary constables could greatly enhance public relations by acting as direct communications liaison between the police and the community and participating at community public relations functions.

The Richmond RCMP Media Relations Officer has also committed to further develop its ongoing media awareness campaign on community policing initiatives. This could further enhance awareness, particularly if co-ordinated with the City initiatives outlined in this strategy.

It is therefore recommended that the RCMP be encouraged to re-establish community consultative groups at each of the Community Police Stations with a mandate to improve communications to neighbourhoods regarding specific safety matters happening in their area. Further, the RCMP should be encouraged to co-ordinate its own ongoing public awareness campaign on community policing with City initiatives and to involve auxiliary constables in these efforts.

Website Promotion

The opportunity also exists to make greater use of the City's website to promote community policing. The City's website currently contains extensive and valuable information on crime prevention. However, the information on some programs, including community policing, is limited. The Police/RCMP section of the City's website could be expanded to provide more

detailed information on community policing programs and in particular the roles and functions of the Community Police Stations. Since most of the information would be of a static nature and would not require frequent updating, this project could be easily achieved by the current website staff once suitable information is provided. It is anticipated that the information would be developed by the Community Police Station staff and volunteers.

It is therefore recommended that the City website's section on Police/RCMP be expanded to provide more detailed information on community policing programs and in particular the roles and functions of the Community Police Stations.

Citizen's Advisory Committee on Policing

The public awareness of community policing could also be enhanced by greater use of the volunteer resource provided by the Citizen's Advisory Committee on Policing. Currently, the effectiveness of the advisory committee is hampered by the lack of a higher public profile. While members are able to offer personal and professional expertise in their advisory roles, there has been little interaction between the advisory committee and the community-at-large. Feedback from beyond the committee members' personal and professional circles has thus been limited.

Committee members have indicated a willingness to take on a greater role as advocates for community policing and as a conduit to the City and RCMP for public input on policing issues. The re-establishment of community consultative groups at the Community Police Stations would provide an immediate vehicle that could enhance interaction between the Citizen's Advisory Committee on Policing and the broader community.

The committee's general public profile must also be heightened in order to increase its effectiveness. Greater use of the committee brochure is recommended as the first step in increasing public awareness of the committee and its role. Currently, the brochure is produced in relatively small numbers and informally distributed by committee members. It is recommended that the brochure be produced in greater numbers and distributed in sufficient quantities to the City Hall front-of-house display, Richmond RCMP offices, Community Police Stations, court facilities, Richmond Connections, community centres, Richmond Public Library, Richmond Youth Services, Richmond School Board and other public facilities. The Manager, Communication and Public Affairs would oversee distribution on an ongoing basis.

The advisory committee's presence on the City's website should also be enhanced by provision of an electronic response form, similar to that already featured in the brochure. In addition the website should include a full listing of committee members and updated contact information. This project could be completed by the Manager, Communication and Public Affairs in conjunction with the website team and the City representatives on the advisory committee.

The committee's profile could also be raised by greater participation in public events already attended by RCMP and/or other community safety personnel or volunteers. Currently, the RCMP's Crime Prevention/Victim Services section participates in numerous public events annually including the National Crime Prevention Week mall display, Police Week, Emergency Preparedness Week, Kids Sense, Public Works Open House, Steveston Salmon Festival, Multifest and many others. City and RCMP staff involved in organizing civic participation and/or co-ordinating such events should ensure that an invitation to participate is extended to the Citizen Advisory Committee on Policing. It would be up to the committee to determine the

priority and level of participation in specific events based on the availability of volunteers and resources.

It is therefore recommended that the Manager, Communication and Public Affairs take action specified in the Community Policing Communications Strategy to raise public awareness of the Citizen's Advisory Committee on Policing in order to increase its effectiveness as an advocate for community policing and as a forum for public input on issues surrounding the delivery of policing services.

Task Force on Drugs and Crime

Council recently received the draft one year work plan of the Richmond Task Force on Drugs and Crime. The draft plan is now being circulated to community stakeholders for comment, with a report on this findings to be submitted to General Purposes Committee by the end of February. The draft report includes several recommendations for public communication initiatives to both raise awareness of the issue and encourage public involvement in seeking solutions.

While the Task Force will ultimately require the support of a number of City divisions, an opportunity exists to take a co-ordinated approach to public awareness, consultation and other communication initiatives evolving from the many parallel objectives of the Task Force and the Community Safety division. Through a co-operative approach and joint initiatives, the new Community Safety division and the Task Force on Drugs and Crime can more effectively and economically realize mutual goals.

Many of the measures already detailed in the Community Policing Communications Strategy could also be used to advance and highlight the work and objectives of the Task Force on Drugs and Crime. For instance, the City's website currently lacks a dedicated web page on the Task Force on Drugs and Crime. Information on the Task Force should be added to the website in conjunction with other planned expansion of policing information. Similarly, the Task Force should be represented in other communication initiatives and/or special events designed to promote community policing.

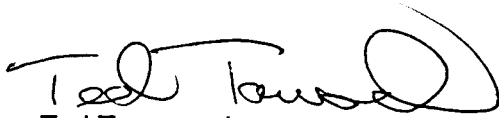
It is therefore recommended that the Community Safety division co-ordinate its communications strategy to reflect all community policing-related initiatives, including the Task Force on Drugs and Crime.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact at this time. The recommended actions require use of existing internal resources and could be accomplished within existing work programs. A need for additional resources may be identified once the Community Safety Division is implemented and the communications strategy is updated.

CONCLUSION

The City has been working to further develop community policing on a number of fronts. A new Community Safety Division is being implemented and staff have actively participated in the BC Policing Study, which has identified improving local accountability of policing services as its main priority. Concurrently, the Citizen's Advisory Committee recently completed an extensive review on Community Policing in Richmond. An outcome of that report was Council's direction that a communications strategy on community policing be developed. An interim communications strategy is detailed in this report.



Ted Townsend
Manager, Communication and Public Affairs

TT:tt