

Municipality of Chatham-Kent
Community Human Services
Employment and Social Services
Information Report

To: Mayor and Members of Council
From: Polly Smith, Director, Employment and Social Services
Date: October 24, 2022
Subject: Hoarding Report Update

Background

On December 6th, 2021 Councillor Crew made the following notice of motion:

“Whereas hoarding disorder is a mental illness with serious impacts on the person, families, communities, emergency responders affecting safety and wellbeing and is an extremely complex situation.
Hoarding is a known cause of health and safety concerns to the person, such as fire hazards, infestations, cause for eviction and homelessness
Serious health and safety risks are experienced by the emergency responders in efforts to assist person who is in a hoarding situation
Therefore, the Director of Employment and Social Services in consultation with Fire, EMS, Building and Development, Police and Public Health as well as community partners provide in a report to Council about the issue of hoarding, with data on the prevalence in Chatham-Kent and include how other communities respond to hoarding with any recommendations to be returned by the end of January 2022”

At this time, the division and other municipal departments were heavily involved with assisting in emergencies related to the pandemic, homelessness, and the gas explosion in Wheatley and this deadline was not met. The Director of Employment and Social Services advised the Councillor of this, and offered to go back to Council for an extension. The Councillor advised that the other emergency work was a priority and that it was not necessary to request an extension, but requested informal updates on progress and a report to Council when possible.

Since that time meetings were held with internal and external partners. Unfortunately, several meetings were cancelled due to key members attending other emergency response meetings.

The partners consulted agreed that: there was a lack of hoarding services in the community, a lack of knowledge on how pervasive the issue of hoarding was locally, and a lack of a system or available funding to address the issue. They also agreed that true hoarding impacts the health and wellness of the person living with the concern and can be potentially life threatening to themselves and emergency responders during any type of rescue scenario.

Comments

Hoarding is a complex multi-faceted issue with little data available to inform any type of community response. At the last meeting in September, 2022, the committee, including the General Manager of Community Human Services, the Fire Chief, and the Director of Employment and Social Services agreed on the following next steps:

1. That municipal staff in Fire Services, Police Services, Emergency Medical Services and Employment and Social Services be trained on identifying potentially dangerous hoarding situations;
2. That a common hoarding definition be agreed upon for Chatham-Kent and reported to the FIRST committee to assist with response;
3. That local hoarding data from all sources, including FIRST, be collected for one year after these systems are put in place; and
4. That a new report come to Council about next steps, including what community agency and/or municipal department should be responsible for any recommendations outlined within the new report.

Currently, and in the interim, anyone who appears to be suffering from a hoarding disorder can be helped by Employment and Social Services to access services and supports by calling the main office number and asking to speak to a Community Resource Worker.

Consultation

A variety of municipal departments have participated in the planning process, along with key community partners. Consultation with all stakeholders will continue as the project progresses.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications resulting from this report.

Prepared by:

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Reviewed by:

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Attachment: None