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Halifax Regional Council
October 5, 2004

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:

Betty MacDonald

Betty MacDonald, Director Governance & Strategic Initiatives

DATE: September 30, 2004

SUBJECT: Community Response Initiative

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN:

Council had identified Safe Communities as one of its four themes under the HRM Scorecard. Citizen outcomes include:

- timely and appropriate emergency response
- citizens feel safe
- buildings, properties and infrastructure in HRM are safe, healthy, and well maintained

The Safe Communities Theme Team has asked the Community Response Team to lead an Action Committee to increase citizens feeling of safety in the community. This report is to inform Council of the initiative.

BACKGROUND

The Community Response Team was established to engage HRM citizens and businesses with HRM service providers, and other government agencies as required, to reduce fear which accompanies crime, and to foster a safer, more livable neighbourhood. In the past two years, the Community Response Team has demonstrated its ability to assist neighbourhoods in achieving a safer environment, and has established excellent working relationships with communities and businesses.

DISCUSSION

The Safe Communities Theme Team has been meeting over the summer to consider the results of HRM's first Scorecard Report and the feedback received by the various business units from the public and from Councillors with regard to safety. The Theme Team has reconfirmed the high priority to be placed on the work of the Community Response Team, By-Law officers, Police (HRP and RCMP), community developers and those who make our properties, facilities and streets safe.

The Community Response Team has been asked to chair a workshop with those most involved in helping citizens feel safe, and to establish an Action Committee with representatives of the key operational business units. The workshop is scheduled for October 13, 2004.

The immediate areas of concern to be addressed at the workshop include: graffiti, panhandling, community disturbances, vagrants, crime related issues (e.g areas known to be prime locations for drugs), unsightly and dangerous premises. Other issues will also be identified and discussed.

The workshop will identify our most effective tools to deal with these issues, and areas where tools may need to be developed. We will explore HRM's Graffiti program, our Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) audit program, current by-laws, Neighbourhood Watch, City Watch, etc. We will also review our experience in dealing with community issues such as in North Dartmouth, Gottingen Street, community clean-ups and the work of the Community Response Team. Some issues will require immediate action, some will require partners and some may require longer term solutions.

An action plan will be developed and reported to Council, and will identify deliverables, accountabilities, time lines and resources. Actions will include proactive work with neighbourhoods and communities, as well as strategic. It is expected the Action Team will meet on a monthly basis to review progress and new issues. The Action Team will report to the Safe Communities Theme Team.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

This initiative is provided for within the 2004/5 budget

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

Additional copies of this report, and information on its status, can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

Report Prepared by:

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