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Item No. 9.1.1

Board of Police Commissioners
February 27, 2017

TO: Chair and Members of the HRM Board of Police Commissioners

SUBMITTED BY: Chief Jean-Michel Blais, Halifax Regional Police
C/Supt. Lee Bergerman, OIC RCMP Halifax Detachment

DATE: February 22, 2017

SUBJECT: Citizen Satisfaction Survey

ORIGIN

At the April 2015 Board of Police Commissioners' meeting, citizen satisfaction surveys were discussed. As a result of that discussion, a motion was put and passed that a staff report be created. Specifically, it was, "MOVED by Commissioner Mitchell, seconded by Commissioner Parris that the Board of Police Commissioners requests a staff report which examines the participation of the Board in the Citizen Satisfaction Survey subject to budget availability. MOTION PUT AND PASSED."

Following initial research by HRP staff, HRP elected to postpone the report until the arrival of our Research Coordinator, Dr. Chris Giacomantonio, who has extensive experience in policing research including research into citizen attitudes and trust and confidence in police.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Citizen satisfaction surveys are a form of citizen engagement. As such, this report has been prepared in keeping with sub-section 55(3)(e) of the *Police Act* which stipulates that one of the functions of the Board of Police Commissioners is to "(...) act as a conduit between the community and the police service providers."

RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT the HRM Board of Police Commissioners approve that Halifax Regional Police, working through the Board and in partnership with Halifax District RCMP, should instate and identify appropriate funds for quarterly telephone surveys on citizen attitudes toward and perceptions of policing in HRM, as outlined in this report.

BACKGROUND

Halifax Regional Police (HRP) conducted an annual citizen satisfaction survey through Corporate Research Associates' (CRA) omnibus survey from 1999 to 2004, after which HRP and Halifax District RCMP conducted a joint citizen satisfaction survey up to and including 2013. In fall 2013, Chief Jean-Michel Blais asked that oversight of the survey be handled by the Board of Police Commissioners given that, under the *Police Act* of Nova Scotia, they are to serve as the conduit between the community and the police service providers. The Board agreed they would undertake research on a citizen satisfaction survey and assume the oversight role, however, the Board's composition has changed since that time and there has been no further discussion and no action taken on this subject. As a result, HRP and Halifax District RCMP did not participate in an omnibus survey in 2014, 2015 or 2016 to date (though did participate as part of HRM's survey process in 2014).

Recognizing this gap, Chief Blais asked that this subject be raised at the Board of Police Commissioners' meeting in April 2015. As a result of that discussion, a motion was put and passed requesting a staff report on this subject. As noted above, further work on the survey was postponed until the arrival of the Research

Coordinator. Following his arrival, Dr. Giacomantonio and HRP's Director of Public Relations, Ms. Theresa Rath Spicer, looked at existing surveys at other Canadian police services and internationally, the prior surveying approach used by HRP working with Corporate Research Associates, and held a meeting with CRA to discuss the surveying options that were available and respective costs. The following discussion is based on Dr. Giacomantonio's prior experience in this area as well as this background research, and provides support to the recommendations outlined above.

DISCUSSION

1. **Surveying options:** Given the standing offer between HRM and CRA, and CRA's established basis in HRM and NS-level surveying, we would expect that HRP and Halifax District RCMP will draw on Halifax Regional Municipality's standing offer with Corporate Research Associates for this survey. The main surveying options offered by CRA are:
 - a. the Urban Report (400 HRM responses per quarter at \$600/question per quarter);
 - b. the Atlantic Report (170 HRM responses within a 400-response province-wide survey per quarter, at \$800/question per quarter);
 - c. stand-alone surveys, which are charged on a time rather than question basis, at approximately \$11,000 per 10-minute survey for 400 HRM responses.

Each question in option (a) or (b) can include up to three sub-questions/statements. Options (a) and (b) also include (at no additional cost) four basic demographic indicators (including age, gender, household income and neighbourhood, but excluding ethnicity, though this could be added) and a consumer confidence index score. These indicators are not included cost-free in a stand-alone survey. In turn – depending on question design – a six-question survey in option (a) or (b) would produce approximately 20 indicators for statistical analysis. Option (c) would likely produce fewer indicators at higher cost.

At present, we believe that the Urban Report is the most appropriate option. It would provide the most comprehensive picture of public attitudes toward policing in the HRM, and would allow direct testing on a quarterly basis of shifts in attitude at the neighbourhood level. In the future, we would also look to encourage other NS police services to use the same survey questions, either through a provincial exercise using the Atlantic Report or on a service-by-service basis.

An alternative option, which has been used before, would be to conduct a policing survey nested within HRM's Citizen Satisfaction Survey, however in HRP's opinion these should be separate processes. The HRM survey is conducted too infrequently to provide useful data on attitudes

toward policing, and the importance of frequency is discussed further below. However, even if the HRM survey frequency were increased, there would be strong methodological reasons to keep a stand-alone police survey. Specifically, grouping city services together in a single survey could have crossover or contamination effects between indicators – satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the city in one area of service at a particular point in time could augment responses on another area of service.

2. **Survey frequency:** Participating in an omnibus survey on a quarterly basis will provide the Board and police services with a legitimate comparison that addresses seasonality and tracks the same information with the same population using the same methodology. Overall, this will allow the Board and the police services to garner feedback on citizens' perceptions of policing and public safety from a quantitative standpoint, thereby supplementing the qualitative feedback received through the Board and Council, Divisional Commanders, social media and other avenues.

A satisfaction survey needs to be undertaken regularly to provide meaningful data, as a one-off survey does not contain adequate context. For example, a survey finding that x% of people expressed confidence in police tells us little about whether or not this is 'good' performance, unless we have a benchmark of previous performance. Such a figure is only meaningful in the context of whether it has increased or decreased from previous years, to understand whether, for example, police actions or engagement campaigns have had any impact (positively or negatively) on public attitudes over a period of time.

Subject to budget, quarterly surveys are also preferable over annual surveying (or surveying less regularly than annually, e.g. bi-annually). Annual surveys are more susceptible to recent events that can skew findings (such as negative or positive media reports) or seasonal fluctuations in attitudes toward policing (for example, police visibility will be higher in warmer months, and so perceptions of visibility will be lower in winter). A quarterly survey would overcome these potential impacts on results.

3. **Question design:** It is important to align the questions of the survey as much as possible with what is being asked in other Canadian jurisdictions. Aligning survey approaches would allow us to understand how HRP's performance compares to other police services in comparable cities both at a specific time as well as longitudinally.

With the Board's approval, the Research Coordinator would prepare a draft survey in consultation with the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACPP) Police Information and Statistics (POLIS) committee and researchers at Public Safety Canada (PSC). Based on current discussions with PSC, we expect that this would involve a joint project whereby Halifax's citizen satisfaction survey would serve as a pilot site for indicators designed through an international expert consultation exercise. This expert process may also, where appropriate, draw from discussions at the Municipal Benchmarking Network's (MBN) police expert panel meetings.

This process would allow the Board to establish a satisfaction survey for Halifax within the 2017 calendar year, while also contributing to improvements in the national citizen satisfaction surveying standard. If for any reason POLIS and/or PSC were not able to support a national approach, it should be relatively straightforward to establish the survey on our own; however, it is recommended that the development of a comparative national surveying approach be attempted as a first step.

Once the survey indicators have been established, it will be important to keep the survey instrument as similar year-on-year as possible to be able to track actually comparable data, as wording or question-order changes may have unexpected impacts on results and harm the validity of any analysis. Research has shown that slight changes in phrasing can drastically alter survey results, so even minor wordsmithing is very much discouraged in this field. Nonetheless, we recognize that the survey should have some flexibility to address issues that are of specific local interest, have some time-sensitivity, or otherwise arise after the design of the initial survey tool, and therefore also recommend that each year the Board may elect to design one or two additional questions to be placed at the end of the survey, asking about specific issues of interest to the

Board.

4. **Additional considerations:** We emphasize that the citizen satisfaction surveys be considered only one aspect of overall citizen engagement and that a citizen engagement strategy be created and implemented for the Board and the police services in the 2017-18 fiscal year. This strategy, which will be a deliverable in HRP's future business planning, will outline various outreach tactics, including, but not limited to, citizen satisfaction surveys, media relations opportunities, online/social media presence, community meetings, etc.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

The below table summarizes the options available regarding citizen satisfaction surveys and their budget implications. Costs for HRM's share of any survey option would fall under HRP's annual operating budget, as has been done in the past. HRP would subsequently invoice RCMP for their half of the cost of the survey. Annual cost for the Urban and Atlantic Report is based in each case on quarterly surveys of 400 respondents, using six questions as indicated in the discussion section. CRA have indicated that if HRP can 'lock in' regular surveying over a period of time, costs can likely be reduced for either of the Urban or Atlantic Report options.

| Option | Description | Annual Cost | Annual Responses |
|--------------------|--|--|---------------------------|
| Status quo | Do not reinstate the survey | n/a | 0 |
| Urban Report | Quarterly survey of 400 HRM residents | \$16,560 shared between HRP and RCMP | 1600 HRM 0 Provincial |
| Atlantic Report | Quarterly survey of 400 NS residents (170 HRM) | \$22,080 shared between HRP, RCMP and others | 680 HRM 920 Provincial |
| Stand-alone survey | Semi-annual survey of 400 HRM residents | \$22,000 semi-annually between HRP and RCMP | 800 HRM 0 Provincial |
| Joint HRM survey | Irregular survey of 400 HRM residents (may be less frequent than annual) | Unknown | 400 HRM 0 Provincial |

RISK CONSIDERATION

The risks of the recommended actions and alternatives have been considered. There have been no substantive risks to HRP or the municipality identified from the recommended actions.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The recommended actions (the re-establishment of a community survey) represent a form of community engagement. It is not however foreseen that the recommended actions would require additional community engagement to be properly implemented at this stage, though future iterations of the survey may include indicators of specific interest to community stakeholders.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Implications not identified.

ALTERNATIVES

There are no other appropriate alternative options that have been identified for this report.

ATTACHMENTS

None

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/cc.html> then choose the appropriate Community Council and meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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