

Joint Dispatch Centre

Exploration

Recommendation

That the November 2, 2020, Citizen Services report CR_8454, be received for information.

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the July 6/8, 2020, City Council meeting, the following motion was passed:

2. b.iv. A report that explores the creation of a joint dispatch Centre that includes mergers and amalgamations of all social service ecosystem partners to ensure the right services and units (ranging from fire to police to peace officers to Emergency Medical Services to crisis diversion or mental health teams) are being appropriately and efficiently dispatched to calls for service

Executive Summary

The social services support ecosystem in Edmonton consists of many different service providers, each with its own mandate, mission and funding model. There is no central municipal or provincial agency that oversees and coordinates how these independent groups work together, or could work together, to deliver services.

Each of these service providers receives calls that do not fall within its mandate, often leading to calls being transferred to and/or coordinated among service providers after a call is received. Administration explored a number of models to best serve Edmonton. Improvements in service through coordination among service providers is contingent on having the right services available at the right time, as well as a real-time assessment and mitigation of risk. Outcomes of interactions could possibly be improved in some situations if non-law enforcement individuals are able to respond first or instead of law enforcement officers. Outcomes could also possibly worsen if a police response is needed and not provided. Administration and Edmonton Police Service will continue to explore a fully integrated model through completion of a business case.

Report

Currently, calls for service are received by various sections within Administration, the Edmonton Police Service and community agencies (Attachment 1). Each organization

has their own mandate, area of specialization and telephone number to receive calls for service. Calls are often received by one service provider that are better suited for one of the other service providers; these calls are referred, transferred or coordinated between organizations.

As part of the 2015-2018 capital budget, City Council approved funding for a co-located dispatch and emergency operations centre. The business case for this project included efficiencies by co-locating Edmonton Police Service, Fire Rescue Services, and Community Standards and Neighbourhoods dispatch centres in the same building. This project did not include an evaluation of integrating business processes or consideration of how to best dispatch the right resources at the right time. During the Fall 2019 Supplemental Capital Budget Adjustment deliberation, City Council directed that capital profile 15-70-0003 - Co-Located Dispatch and Emergency Operations Centre be deferred and the business case be updated for consideration in the next budget cycle.

In 2018, Administration conducted a program and service review of the bylaw and provincial act enforcement service, which included consideration of the integration of dispatch involving Community Standards, Edmonton Transit Service, Corporate Security and Development Services. One of the recommendations of the review was to build a business case to consolidate dispatch services for Community Standards.

Current Challenges

Edmonton Police Service often responds to calls for service when the event is not uniquely a fire or medical emergency call, when the situation is unknown or there may be risks to safety of the agency responding. Edmonton Police Service has joint response teams with therapists and social workers in place to respond to these types of calls. In situations where joint teams are needed, there are not always enough teams available to respond to all of the service calls received. In non-criminal scenarios, other agencies may be more suited to respond. It is not always clear based on the information provided by the caller when a joint team is required. Outcomes of interactions could be improved in some situations if non-police are able to respond first or instead of police. Outcomes could also be worsened if a police response is needed and not provided.

Improvements in service through coordination of dispatch services and agencies is contingent on having the right services available at the right time, as well as real-time assessment and mitigation of risk. Some of the social agencies that are best suited to respond to these calls for service currently lack the resources required to provide around-the-clock, on-demand response services. These underlying issues must be addressed in order for coordinated dispatch to achieve the outcome of providing better safety and well-being services to Edmontonians.

Opportunities

Exploration of coordinated dispatch services is an opportunity to identify barriers that prevent agencies from working together to best serve Edmontonians. A coordinated dispatch could facilitate:

- consistent and integrated response leading to holistic public safety
- dispatch of the right service provider to provide the right support on the first call leading to a potential reduction in harm and better outcomes for Edmontonians
- streamlined response to provide a more efficient and cost effective system and a more effective distribution and use of funding
- real time information sharing enabling data-informed decision making

The success of any coordinated dispatch model depends on the ability of non-emergency social and mental health agencies to respond on-demand 24 hours per day, seven days per week.

Alternate Models for Further Exploration

A jurisdictional scan identified several approaches, including:

- Integrated dispatch teams for police, fire and bylaw in a single facility and future additional technology integration (Calgary)
- Integrated provincial 911 call-answer services dispatching police, fire and other agencies (British Columbia)
- Amalgamated fire, police, social services, housing/homelessness, mental health and outreach under Social and Protective Services to specifically assess calls and move them to non-police teams at the point of dispatch (Grand Prairie)

Technology, facility and process integration would be part of the evolution of each of the possible models. The models above do not address the core issue of having the right resources available at the right time. Administration has identified three levels of integration that could improve outcomes in Edmonton.

1. Continuous Improvement within Existing Model

Currently the organizations involved in response are involved in continuous improvement, making steady progress towards service improvement. The long-term goals of continuous improvement are:

- increased communication
- improved citizen and responder safety
- process efficiencies

Organizations continue to address issues and identify opportunities to improve outcomes. Examples of ongoing work include:

- The work of agencies and the effort of new and existing programs, like Child At Risk Response Team, Police and Community Teams and the

Edmonton Police Service Community Safety and Well-Being Bureau to provide innovative solutions.

- Administration and Edmonton Police Service are working towards better integration between police and peace officers.
- Edmonton Police Service, Fire Rescue Services and Alberta Health Services are members of the Alberta E911 Advisory Association, a 911 agency-coordinated group that meets annually to share issues, concerns and research which provides insight into how other regions in Alberta deliver dispatch services.

Under this scenario, service providers can continue without any agreement amongst agencies through focused activities such as more training on assessing crisis diversion options and using standard protocols in all current dispatch systems. Under this scenario, there will likely be additional costs in the future as the various dispatch centres require upgrading, maintenance and eventual expansion to maintain service levels as call volumes increase over time.

2. Integration of City of Edmonton Services Response

One current challenge with response to events is the integration of real-time communications and information sharing between the primary service providers – police, fire, bylaw and provincial act enforcement and medical. Edmonton Police Services, Fire Rescue Services and Community Standards and Neighbourhoods represent three independent service providers, each with their own command structure, response processes, regulatory and governance requirements and accountability. Emergency Medical Services is operated by Alberta Health Services, the provincial health authority, which has a separate provincial deployment model.

Integrated evaluation and dispatch could result in better alignment of dispatch and response resources, potentially leading to efficiencies through sharing of administrative resources, training opportunities and shared technologies. Responder safety may also increase through real-time information sharing and access to more intelligence prior to dispatch.

This model would require:

- overarching governance for integrated service provision
- clear understanding of roles, expectations and risk ownership
- collaboration with the provincial government and Alberta Health Services (responsible for delivering most mental health services)

3. *Creating a Continuum of Response*

Bringing together Edmonton Police Service, Community Standards and Neighbourhoods, Fire Rescue Services, the Government of Alberta, housing services and the community social agencies providing service response could create a fully integrated continuum of response. This scenario would require a complete reimagining of how calls for assistance are evaluated, integrated processes and intelligence that provide for the most accurate understanding of what response is required for each situation and how best to deploy and manage that response. This model would deliver on:

- consistent and integrated response to support community safety and well-being
- dispatch of the right service provider to provide the right support on the first call leading to a potential reduction in harm and better outcomes for Edmontonians
- streamlined response to provide a more efficient and cost effective system and a more effective distribution and use of funding
- real-time information sharing enabling data-informed decision making

Integration at this level could provide the most benefit as Edmontonians would receive a holistic response, based on the needs of the caller, improving the outcomes for individuals and overall public safety. The following would need to be addressed:

- a clear commitment to collective outcomes from all partners
- overarching governance for integrated service provision
- technology integration that allows service providers to talk to each other when needed
- clear understanding of roles, expectations and risk ownership
- equitable distribution of costs and funding with a goal to leverage all expenditures into better collective outcomes and economies of scale cost efficiency
- participation of the provincial government and Alberta Health Services as providers of mental health services
- participation of community-operated social agencies

Next Steps

Administration will begin developing a business case which will be presented to City Council in fall 2021. The business case will help determine the viable options and methods to fully integrate the continuum of response (inclusive of the social ecosystem). Such a business case would include:

- a comprehensive summary of the need of each partner/service provider
- a matrix of viable delivery options and pathways to move forward
- relevant financial, risk and commercial analysis
- potential risks and mitigations

- an assessment of the transformation readiness of the various partners/service providers as well as potential sequencing based on impact

Budget/Financial Implications

Development of a business case would require funding of approximately \$200,000 to be split between the City of Edmonton and the Edmonton Police Service, covered within existing budgets.

Depending on the recommendations in the business case, a future operating or capital request will be brought forward to City Council for consideration.

Corporate Outcomes and Performance Management

Corporate Outcome(s): Edmonton is a safe city			
Outcome(s)	Measure(s)	Result(s)	Target(s)
Decreased communications time leads to improved outcomes and mitigation of the emergency	Percent of dispatch fire/rescue events that the Communication Time (time the call is answered to the time the first apparatus is dispatched) is less than 90 seconds	2020 YTD - 96.3% 2019 - 95.9%	Ongoing: 90%
Provide reliable enforcement service to citizens and a consistent and timely response	Average number of days from when a citizen complaint is received to the initial investigation by peace officers	2020 YTD - 6.14 days 2019 - 6.13 days	Ongoing: 4 days
	Average number of days from when a citizen complaint is received to the initial investigation by municipal enforcement officers	2020 2.63 Days YTD 2019- 4.13 Days	
Calls are answered in a timely manner to ensure public safety	Average time to answer 911 calls	2019 - 3.77 seconds 2018 - 3.83 seconds	Ongoing: 15 seconds or less
	Average time for police evaluator to answer police emergency (transferred from 911) and non-emergency calls	2019 - 63.72 seconds 2018 - 40.53 seconds	Ongoing: 50 seconds or less

Attachments

1. Overview of Current Response to Calls for Service

Others Reviewing this Report

- M. Persson, Chief Financial Officer and Deputy City Manager, Financial and Corporate Services
- C. Owen, Deputy City Manager, Communications and Engagement
- G. Cebryk, Deputy City Manager, City Operations
- B. Andriachuk, City Solicitor