

Analysis in Uniforms, Colours and Training

Recommendation

That the November 16, 2020, Edmonton Police Commission report EXT00046, be received for information.

Previous Council/Committee Action

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

4. f. That the Mayor, on behalf of City Council, write a letter to the Edmonton Police Commission, requesting the following:

An analysis on how things like uniform colour and design, and vehicle livery and design, can be adjusted to put forward a different face to the public, and how certain training and enforcement tactics can be adjusted to support greater professionalism in the service.

Executive Summary

This report discusses in detail several concerns from the July 6/8 City Council meeting relating to vehicle livery, uniforms, tactics, and training. It explains the rationale behind why certain techniques and types of equipment are used by the Edmonton Police Service (EPS). It also discusses the limitations facing Council relating to any changes they wish to make to the operations of the EPS. Attachment 1 provides further information on all of these topics. Attachment 2 directly addresses some incomplete media coverage involving in-custody deaths. The attachment provides additional information as to the circumstances surrounding those deaths.

Report

Existing Oversight

The Edmonton Police Commission has oversight of the EPS. It is also regulated or monitored by several other sources and statutes, including the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Criminal Code of Canada, Alberta Police Act, provincial and federal case law, provincial standards, the Alberta Serious Incident Response Team, the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police and the Alberta Association of Police Governance. Each of these agencies establishes protocols or operating procedures that EPS must adhere to. Should City Council wish to change any element of EPS

operations, those changes will likely need to be reviewed and approved by one or more of these agencies.

Uniform Colour and Design

After reviewing the impact that uniform design and colour have on the perception of police officers, we believe that efforts to improve the professionalism of the officer wearing the uniform would be more productive than changing the uniform itself. Police officers need to be immediately distinguishable from all others on a scene, and the uniform achieves that purpose.

Tactical and Canine officers have different uniform requirements than a patrol officer, which explains why their uniforms have a more muted look. They frequently work in high risk situations and have a need for interoperability with the other agencies, like the RCMP. They also need the ability to conceal their presence if required, which is why the current ranger green - coloured uniform is used.

Vehicle Livery

The design of EPS vehicles was changed in 2011, as the organization was experiencing difficulty with white Ford Crown Victoria vehicles from other non-policing agencies being mistaken for EPS patrol vehicles. Citizens were complaining that “police cars” were ignoring their needs when, in fact, the vehicles belonged to other agencies. The current design is immediately recognizable as a police vehicle and cannot be confused with other vehicles. Our review indicates that, as with the uniforms, a change in vehicle design does nothing to change the attitude and professionalism of the driver behind the wheel.

Training

Training and education are essential to providing equitable and efficient policing to the citizens of Edmonton. In order to accomplish this, we recognize that the amount of training time needs to increase for all police officers. Specific suggestions for training are outlined in Attachment 1. Any reduction of funding or re-appropriation of funding to uniform or vehicle purchases would hinder the necessary training and development of the membership even more.

Enforcement Tactics

In policing terms, enforcement tactics are most commonly referred to as “use of force”. Force can range from a verbal instruction from a police officer to lethal force.

The use of force is an unpleasant but necessary reality in the world of policing. A police officer’s use of force is governed by the Criminal Code of Canada. The law is clear - police can use as much force as is reasonably necessary to effect a lawful arrest. In Alberta, use of force is highly regulated. The EPS cannot simply add or change use of force techniques. Police must subject any changes to an approved use of force option to a provincial standard review.

No police officer sets out to use force in a given situation, as they run the risk of injuring themselves or others. However, there are occasions that an individual will use physical violence as a way of escaping from or harming the police officer or the public, and a police officer must be prepared to respond. Use of force is used to bring about a safe resolution if the subject does not comply with the officer's de-escalation and voice commands.

Armoured Rescue Vehicles (ARV's) bring a unique tool to the resources available to a police officer on a scene. First and foremost, the two EPS ARV's are used for rescues in the event that an injured police officer or citizen needs to be safely removed from a dangerous scene. Secondly, their presence also serves as a de-escalation tool to dissuade an individual from either attacking the public or police, or attempting to escape and potentially cause injury or death. They are also used to create a barrier between a threat and a member of the public or police. Finally, the vehicles allow Tactical members the opportunity to safely put themselves closer to the subject, to identify threats and make appropriate responses. Note that the word "armoured" refers to the reinforced steel panels. The vehicles themselves carry no weapons.

As of mid September, there have been 101 shooting incidents reported to the police, and 756 firearms recovered. It is imperative that police officers have the equipment necessary to respond to these shooting incidences while safely protecting themselves and the surrounding public. While some might feel that this is "militarization", our practices and equipment contribute significantly to citizen safety during criminal or public risk events.

Conclusions

As noted earlier, there are several areas where EPS training could be enhanced. A long-term organizational training strategy, prepared with the involvement of the community, would be of value. Additionally, expanding on training opportunities to address areas such as bias awareness, mental health and historical trauma are being considered. Alternate forms of training for mandatory topics could be explored along with the use of contemporary adult learning strategies. Some of the training currently provided to new recruits could be enhanced and available to all police officers in EPS.

In the "use of force" area, the amount of peer intervention training could be expanded. This training places a responsibility on each officer to monitor the action of other police officers and intervene when actions become excessive.

As time and resources allow, these topics and others will be considered by the Training Advisory Committee.

Corporate Outcomes and Performance Management

Corporate Outcome(s): Edmonton is a safe city			
Outcome(s)	Outcome(s)	Outcome(s)	Outcome(s)
EPS reviews and acts on misconduct allegations and citizen complaints	EPS reviews and acts on misconduct allegations and citizen complaints	EPS reviews and acts on misconduct allegations and citizen complaints	EPS reviews and acts on misconduct allegations and citizen complaints
EPS reviews and monitors use of force to ensure balanced approach to enforcement	EPS reviews and monitors use of force to ensure balanced approach to enforcement	EPS reviews and monitors use of force to ensure balanced approach to enforcement	EPS reviews and monitors use of force to ensure balanced approach to enforcement

Attachment

1. Analysis of Uniform, Vehicle Livery, Training & Tactics

Others Reviewing this Report

- Edmonton Police Service Chief’s Committee
- Deputy Chief Darren Derko – Corporate Services Bureau
- Inspector Trevor Hermanutz – Professional Development Branch
- Acting Executive Director Jason Halayko – Supply Services Section
- Director Stacey York – Materials Management
- Staff Sergeant Terry Langley – Training Section
- Acting Staff Sergeant Michelle Greening – Office of the Chief
- Acting Staff Sergeant Scott Innes – Tactical Section
- Acting Staff Sergeant David Jones – Research & Innovation Section
- Sergeant Travis Eltom – Continuing Education Unit