

Report to Council



Date: March 8, 2021

To: Council

From: City Manager

Subject: RCMP Community Policing Offices

Department: Community Safety

Recommendation:

THAT Council receives, for information, the report from the Community Safety Department, dated March 8, 2021.

AND THAT the 2021 Financial Plan be amended to remove the KLO CPO Lease Expense budget upon the cancellation of the lease.

Purpose:

To present an overview of Community Policing Offices (CPOs), including plans to increase service delivery at the Rutland CPO and to discontinue public-facing services at the KLO CPO.

Background:

The Rutland and KLO (Mission) CPOs have existed since 1993 and 1996, respectively. The Rutland CPO has historically been staffed by volunteers and provided basic crime prevention information (brochures). From 2014 to spring 2020, the KLO CPO, staffed by city employees, provided *limited* assistance to the public including minor offence reporting, connection with police members and the provision of information relating to crime prevention and community policing concerns.

Following its relocation from Lakeshore Road in spring 2014, the KLO CPO opened inside the Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO) building. Until June 2017, the CPO also served as the worksite for eight Police Services' staff, six RCMP Members (not assigned) and some volunteer programs.

In 2017, with the opening of the Kelowna Police Services Building (KPSB), the majority of municipal staff at the KLO CPO relocated to the new facility. A Community Policing Coordinator, volunteer programs and one Police Services Clerk (Transcription) remained at the KLO Office to provide limited front counter services.

In March 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, The Rutland and KLO CCPOs were closed to the public. In May 2020, the two KLO staff were redeployed to KPSB. Callers to KLO have since been redirected to the detachment's online and main phone services rendering the CPO, in effect, fully closed. Staff indicate that there have been no complaints since.

In 2020, as part of an ongoing review of all existing RCMP crime prevention programs / services with lenses of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, the CPOs were also reviewed.

Analysis

Well-situated and fully functioning CPOs are foundational to community policing. To be effective, best practices indicate that CPOs generally meet the following criteria:

- Be featured as part of Town Centres with high walkability;
- Have high accessibility (hours);
- Provide a range of meaningful programs and services;
- Located in higher needs/crime areas where police/community connectedness is important; and
- Be physically located in areas with a typically residential composition.

The Rutland CPO was analyzed against this criterion, with consideration of usage data collected in recent years, as well as indicators from local constituents. While the site meets all criterion, and data indicated relatively high usage, it is also clear that Central Kelowna and Rutland citizens, including members of the Uptown Rutland Business Association and the Rutland Residents Association, are engaged and want enhanced policing services in their community.

Accordingly, as part of the 2021 budget deliberations, City Council approved a 0.5 Police Services Information Clerk to enable full-time front counter services at the Rutland CPO. The new Police Information Clerk will enable the Kelowna RCMP to offer expanded police services beyond the main Detachment or the online crime reporting system.

In contrast, analysis of the KLO CPO against established criterion, supported by public usage data collected in recent years, concludes that the KLO CPO is ineffective, and that resuming operations post-COVID is not fiscally prudent.

Between June 2017 and March 2020, public usage was counted daily to quantify the number, nature and manner of public contact with the KLO CPO. Significantly, members of the public accessed the KLO CPO in-person an average of only 1.25 / day. This compared to over 100 in-person visits monthly at the Rutland CPO. The low number of public walk-ins at the KLO CPO are attributed to three factors:

1. This CPO is not situated within a designated town centre - offering direct connection to community – but is, instead, located in an area with a low “walkability score”.
2. As the CPO is in the RDCO main lobby and without a separate exterior access point, its hours of operation are limited to RDCO business hours, Monday to Friday (8am – 4pm), with closure on statutory holidays.
3. The CPO is not located in a higher needs / crime area, nor is it located in a largely residential area.

Data also reveals that the KLO CPO received only 83 phone calls monthly (4 / day), compared to 174 calls monthly at Rutland CPO. Since May 2020, phone inquiries to the KLO CPO have been seamlessly assumed by the main detachment. Lastly, the data reveals that the KLO CPO usage generally increased during the summer months (June to August) but that its usage has been declining year over year.

Conclusion:

A review of existing CPOs revealed that the Rutland CPO aligns strongly with best practices. This is reflected in the usage and demand by the local community, and expansion of the scope of services offered at the CPO are warranted and will be well-received. In contrast, a review of the KLO CPO concluded that public usage has been low and declining. While it is noted that no complaints have been received since the temporary closure of the CPO in May 2020, meetings with key organizations in the surrounding community would occur to share the results of the rational for this decision and educate on alternative ways to access services.

Internal Circulation:

Considerations applicable to this report:

Financial/Budgetary Considerations:

In 2013, an estimated \$124k of interior renovations were completed at KLO CPO to ensure the lease space met RCMP security standards. Closure of the KLO CPO in 2021, in the middle of the lease term, presents financial considerations in this context. Further, it may be negatively seen as a service reduction to citizens.

However, the recommendation is grounded in evidence that the CPO has minimal usage and that based on a cost / benefit analysis, it is not providing adequate value for taxpayer dollars. The CPO comprises 2,424 sq ft space leased from RDCO at a cost of \$57,727 / annum. Based on a conservative estimate of \$20,000 annually for a portion of salaries for two city employees required to staff the CPO, the annual operating cost is nearly \$78,000 for 300 walk-ins (~\$260 / walk-in).

Should permanent closure of the CPO be supported, the current lease agreement between the RDCO and the City of Kelowna would be cancelled with a requisite 180 days' notice. Based on cancellation date effective August 31, 2021, an estimated \$135,000 would be saved over the duration of the term. The staff have already been redeployed into higher value / priority activities at KPSB.

The recommendation reflects the City value to "lead responsibly" – through prudent fiscal management in this case - and aligns directly with the corporate priority "to improve or stop lower value activities".

Communications Comments:

Key messages have been developed and communications plan as it relates to the pending expanded service delivery at Rutland Community Policing Office is in progress.

Considerations not applicable to this report:

External Agency/Public Comments:

Legal/Statutory Authority:

Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements:

Existing Policy:

Submitted by:

C. Cornock, Crime Prevention Supervisor

Approved for inclusion:



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cc: S. Leatherdale, Divisional Director Corporate and Protective Services