

## **COUNCIL – AGENDA REPORT**

**Meeting Date:** 7 March 2022

**Subject:** Summary of Municipal Anti-Bullying Activities

**Boards Routed Through:** N/A

**Date:** N/A

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### **Issue:**

Council is being provided with a summary of municipal anti-bullying activities for information as the first part of a response to a motion from Council.

### **Background:**

At the regular meeting on November 15, 2021, Council moved to direct Administration to report back regarding:

- A. actions taken to date to combat bullying; and
- B. options to create a community stakeholder committee/working group for the purpose of information sharing and strategy building, to help tackle this community issue which could include stakeholders such as (but not limited to) the City of Airdrie, RCMP, all school divisions private and public, School administration and Social Services agencies.

Administration is returning with information and recommendations for the first part of the motion.

### History of Previous Actions:

Airdrie City Council adopted Public Behaviour Bylaw No. B-09/2007 to set the standards for public conduct and provide associated penalties for violation. Like many communities, Airdrie updated its Public Behaviour Bylaw to define and address 'bullying' in the community through amendment to Bylaw No. B-22/2013. The amending bylaw added and defined 'bullying' as a term with specified fines and diversionary powers for the prosecutor in the circumstance(s) of violation(s) of the bylaw.

The report provided by Administration in support of Bylaw No. B-22/2013 recognized bullying as a broad and complex issue, with excerpts from the report as follows:

Zero-tolerance policies and anti-bullying bylaws provide very little opportunity for both the bully and the bullied to learn what is appropriate and inappropriate behaviour because the focus is always on either punishing the bully (either through penalties, school expulsion, or community service) or treating the bully by placing him or her in counseling programs or other types of treatment programs. From a prevention standpoint, promising practices in bullying prevention tend to take on a more positive and community-wide approach...

Research has shown that bullying is a social phenomenon that goes beyond the bully-bullied interaction and depends greatly on peer group dynamics and the critical role of bystanders. Promising practices in bullying prevention recommend a multi-faceted approach to addressing bullying and harassment. As a comprehensive safe and community approach, ideally it would include the following elements:

- An amendment to the Public Behaviour Bylaw
- A social marketing and awareness campaign
- Support to the PEACE Committee in leading stakeholder consultation
- Providing funding opportunities to build community capacity in delivering safe and inclusive community programs

Administration concluded the report by recommending a multi-faceted approach to combat bullying that involved actions and funding for the following:

1. Therapeutic counseling
2. City-wide education/awareness campaign
3. PEACE partnership
4. Anti-bullying fund

From 2014 to 2017, Community Links and the Airdrie Boys and Girls Club collaborated under a service agreement with the City of Airdrie to implement the recommended community-based, anti-bullying initiative. Administration presented an independent review of the initiative to Council in November 2017. The review noted the following metrics indicative of success:

- 92.9% of survey respondents noted increased awareness of the negative effects of bullying after participation in a group;
- 98.5% of survey respondents noted improved social skills and competencies after participating in a group; and
- 100% of survey respondents reported increased knowledge of how to demonstrate empathy after participating in a group.

The independent study conducted by Objective Research and Evaluation Inc. had resource limitations that prevented measurement of the total or cumulative impact on actual levels of bullying in Airdrie. However, the review did present the following recommendations, which were seconded by Administration in presentation to Council:

1. The City of Airdrie and stakeholder groups should not invest resources to develop bullying prevention tools and resources. Instead, the parties should invest their resources to bring different community stakeholder groups together to review the

best available information and collectively develop strategies that target bullying in a systematic and proactive manner.

2. The City of Airdrie and stakeholders should adopt an inclusive community approach.
3. The City of Airdrie should use its resources and seek provincial and/or federal resources to ensure that there is enough funding available to allow all stakeholders to participate.
4. The City of Airdrie and stakeholders should seek professional evaluation and consultation to ensure that a comprehensive theory of change model is developed for planned activities to increase the prevalence of healthy relationships and diminish the incidence of bullying.

Administration identified the next critical step as that of ensuring that the Airdrie Resource Council (ARC) and the school interagency committee could create opportunities for service providers to share program information and network with other stakeholders. Administration subsequently shared the findings with ARC and the School Interagency (including RCMP School Liaisons). This put together all service providers who have expertise/touch points with people who may be experiencing bullying. It allowed for the creation of a resource inventory for the community and placed current bullying prevention resources in the hands of groups that have the autonomy to develop action plans if they see the need in the community.

#### Current Anti-Bullying Recommendations

Bullying continues to be regarded as a broad and complex issue that requires an equally broad and measured response. Airdrie presently benefits from four official community groups (see list in recommended actions below) that have stepped up to assist with anti-bullying programs. Administration described this to the Municipal Policing Advisory Board (MPAB) on January 27, 2022. As part of that presentation, Administration indicated that incidents of alleged bullying behaviour continue, but that charges have never been laid from the 'anti-bullying' amendments made to the Public Behaviour Bylaw. This prompted the RCMP to review their handling of such investigations. The RCMP determined that they had responded to 28 calls for service involving bullying behaviour in 2021, with the following conclusions:

- the RCMP mediate a solution between the parties in almost all cases;
- Criminal Code charges are laid where warranted and with no-contact protection for victims; and
- there have been no repeat calls for service.

Additionally, the RCMP note that local school administrators have been very helpful in resolving situations requiring a call for service.

The success of proactive work in the school system, as well as either mediation or diversion when required for service, has led the RCMP to recommend the following to continue the efforts to curb bullying in Airdrie, especially for youth:

1. A potential Anti-Bullying Bylaw for the purposes of:
  - a. automatically building in diversionary programs; and
  - b. holding parents of offending youths to account.
2. Approving a modest budget for diversion programs.
3. Using Airdrie citizens and community groups to facilitate the program(s), including:
  - a. Restorative Justice facilitated by Airdrie Victim Services Unit (VSU);
  - b. The Airdrie Boys and Girls Club;
  - c. Humble Boxing via Lucas George;
  - d. Community Links.

The recommendations reflect the evolving views and tools as bullying has become a more prevalent social issue. Presently, Administration and Police have determined that we can align our actions to address bullying within a bylaw if it is written in such a way that it can be applied in conjunction with the legislation of the Youth Criminal Justice Act and the Criminal Code. The City of Chestermere has adopted such a bylaw and had considerable success in addressing bullying behaviour.

The MPAB accepted these recommendations for information on January 27, 2022, with the proposed Anti-Bullying Bylaw and support resource requests to be brought forward to Council for decision some time in Q2 2022.

### **Alignment with South Saskatchewan Regional Plan and AirdrieONE:**

Under the AirdrieONE pillar of “Socially Sustainable Communities”, the municipality aspires to Support a Child and Youth-Friendly City. Addressing bullying behaviour is a key aspect in the improvement of quality of life for all, especially Airdrie’s youth.

### **Boards Routed Through:**

Administration presented recommendations for further anti-bullying actions to the MPAB on January 27, 2022, based on a summary of previous actions and an evaluation of best practices for this issue. MPAB requested the opportunity to review the potential Anti-Bullying Bylaw, once drafted, as part of the path to Council. However, the specific summary provided in this report has not been presented to a Board or Committee of Council in the context of addressing Council’s motion.

### **Alternatives/Implications:**

#### **Alternative 1:**

Council could choose to accept this summary of municipal actions to combat bullying as the response to the first part of the motion made in November 2021 for information and evaluate the timing and requirement for further response to this motion, pending bylaw development and amendments, as well as any resource requests, to implement best practices to combat bullying.

#### Implications:

Accepting this report for information provides Administration with sufficient time to develop bylaw requirements and define appropriate resources necessary to implement

such changes. The second deliverable for Council's motion would be held in abeyance until after Council's review of proposed bylaw development and/or amendments and resource requests.

### **Alternative 2:**

Council could choose to accept this summary of municipal actions to combat bullying as the response for the first part of the motion made in November 2021 for information and direct Administration to prepare options for a community stakeholder or working group to share information and strategies to combat bullying within a defined period.

### Implications:

Administration would continue to draft bylaws and/or amendments to combat bullying and determine the resource requests to implement those amendments for delivery in Q2 2022. Council would continue to have the opportunity to decide on the drafted bylaw(s) and requests for resources accordingly. However, other resources within the CAO Office and Community Development would be directed to research and evaluate options for this form of service delivery concurrent with the bylaw development and resource requests, without the benefit of the outcomes from new bylaws and/or amendments.

### **Communications Plan:**

Administration has developed and implemented a communications plan for the scheduled Policing Forum of March 15, 2022, where the community may raise questions about the state of municipal actions to combat bullying. Further communication efforts depend on the issues raised in the forum and/or the ultimate direction of Council on a potential new Anti-Bullying Bylaw and/or amendments to the Public Behavior Bylaw that may address the applicable motion.

## **Recommendation:**

That Council:

1. accepts this summary of municipal actions to combat bullying as the response to the first part of the motion made in November 2021 for information; and
2. evaluates the timing and requirement for further response to this motion, pending forthcoming amendments to the Public Behaviour Bylaw and resource requests to implement best practices to combat bullying.

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Attachments:	N/A
Appointment:	N/A