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County hears first community safety and well-being plan

Written By **Paula Brown**

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Dufferin County Councillors have had a look at the first official safety and well-being plan for the community.

Consultant Jennifer Kirkham presented the details of the four-year Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) Plan to councillors during their last meeting on May 13.

?It's fairly unique in that the plan will go to your local municipal partners as well so it will become a shared plan across Dufferin County,? said Kirkham.

The Community Safety and Well-Being Plan was mandated by the provincial government in January 2019, under the Police Services Act.

Municipalities are required to develop and adopt a plan, created in partnership with a multi-sectoral advisory committee, which targets risk and protective factors specific to Dufferin County residents.

The province also created a planning framework to help guide municipalities in developing the local plan with four priority areas, which include social development, prevention, risk intervention, and incident response.

?Typically when we think about community safety we go to things like protective services so police services, fire services and EMS more of those critical incident pieces,? said Kirkham.

?As part of the plan the province asked that we think beyond that.?

Kirkham added that they looked at housing, sense of belonging, education, poverty, and food security in developing the safety and well-being plan.

An advisory committee of fifteen stakeholders came together to help create the plan. The group conducted an online survey for the general public, community organizations, and a youth focus group to consult of the plan.

?We wanted to make sure the plan was evidence informed, meaning we just didn't get together in a room and develop a plan based on what we thought, but we actually went out and looked for data and gathered information to help us develop and inform the development of the plan,? said Kirkham.

The committee had identified five priority areas to focus on in the initial community safety and well-being plan including:

? Mental health and well-being

? Housing and homelessness

? Substance use and addiction

? Discrimination, marginalization and racism

? Community safety, gender-based violence prevention, and family and domestic violence prevention

To ensure implementation of the plan, existing lead tables will be taking over governance of a specific area of priority.

A new lead table will be created to focus on community safety and violence prevention.

Municipalities are required to have the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan approved by July 1.