INTRODUCTION

The Brandon Police Service (BPS) and Brandon Police Board recognize that community feedback is an important source of information that can help us identify community concerns and potential improvements in our service delivery. In the summer of 2016, BPS conducted an online Community Engagement Survey to elicit feedback from the residents in our community regarding their perceptions of crime and the services provided by BPS. We would like to extend our gratitude to the 518 individuals who chose to respond to this survey. The valuable feedback we received will be taken into consideration as we undertake future planning and delivery of services.

METHODOLOGY

The Community Engagement Survey was a twenty-two question online survey, intended to provide a broad understanding of 1) public perceptions of crime/fear of crime in Brandon, 2) perceptions of police priorities and performance, and 3) satisfaction with BPS. The survey ran from May to September, 2016 and was promoted through the BPS Website and social media. To ensure that local newcomers and minorities would be able to partake, the survey was translated into French, Spanish and Mandarin. In total, 518 people responded to the survey (487 responded to the English survey, while 31 responded to the French/Spanish/Mandarin survey).

SURVEY RESULTS

Perception of Crime and Fear of Crime

Perceptions of social disorder and elevated levels of crime can have a strong impact on residents’ quality of life. Fear of crime can be unrelated to a person’s actual risk of victimization or levels of crime in a community. A number of factors may influence residents’ perceptions, including recent crimes that a respondent has witnessed or heard about, reports in the media, and the presence of social disorder indicators such as graffiti, dilapidated buildings and garbage in public places.

We asked our survey respondents:

“Compared to 5 years ago, how safe do you feel for yourself/your family in Brandon.” Results show that three-quarters of respondents feel safe or very safe for themselves and their family in Brandon and 86% percent of respondents feel that their neighbourhood is safe or very safe compared to other neighbourhoods in Brandon.
Respondents who indicated that they felt “unsafe” or “very unsafe” for themselves or their family were encouraged to provide comments to explain their answer. Based on their feedback, it is apparent that fear of crime seems largely localized in the Downtown area, which was perceived by some respondents to be an unsafe area. Respondents expressed a number of concerns regarding the Downtown area, including poor lighting, being approached by intoxicated persons and panhandlers, and a perceived increase in muggings/gang-activity. As a result, many of our respondents avoid the Downtown area when possible. Below are some of the comments respondents provided:

"I work downtown and I feel uncomfortable walking around with some of the people that frequent the downtown area. It is not uncommon to be approached for money or to have people that are intoxicated (with alcohol or other substances) wandering around at all hours of the day and I refuse to bring my children to the downtown area for this reason."

"I am happy my toddler attends daycare in another community. I would not feel comfortable with her walking around the YMCA or Friendship Centre or new daycare downtown. It’s bad enough I need to see all that goes on downtown."

Survey responses also revealed that many respondents perceive property crimes have risen in the past five years. Forty percent of respondents indicate that they feel less safe for their property than they did 5 years ago, and many respondents reported personal experience with theft of property/vandalism or they know of someone who was a victim of property crime. Unlike personal safety, property safety was a concern is all areas of the city. Comments such as the following were received:

"Neighbors garages have been broken into on 3 occasions, a man attempted to gain entry into my fenced yard but was scared off by a neighbor, and another man was asked to leave as he was seen asleep on my front step in daylight. My house is visible from the police station."

"We live in a nice residential area, and for as long as I can remember I’ve never had to lock my vehicle, except in the past 4 years. Our neighbours have all started locking their cars and garages due to multiple
break-ins and thefts on our street. I've lived in Brandon over 4 decades and on our particular street for about 20yrs, and it's only in the past 4 years that I've ever had issues with property crime.”

Perception of Police Priorities

The Community Engagement Survey provided respondents with a list of police priorities and asked them to indicate which priorities they felt BPS should focus on. The responses show that while core-policing duties, such as responding to calls for service and being visible in the community, remain top priorities, respondents would also like police to focus on vulnerable sections of the population, including youth, seniors and those with mental illnesses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When you think about crime, safety and quality of life for you in Brandon, what are the police priorities that you feel the Brandon Police Service should focus on in the future?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quickly responding to calls for service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Policing (initiatives for youth, communication through social media)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police officers being more visible in your neighbourhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crimes targeting seniors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Community Engagement survey asked respondents to write comments about what they think BPS does well and what they think BPS needs to improve. Many survey respondents mentioned community relations as an area that BPS excels in, through their support for different community programs, involvement with Community Mobilization, and participation in local events and programs. BPS was also commended for their visibility in the community, proactive policing and for keeping the community well informed. When asked what the top five qualities are that they value in their police service, respondents chose professionalism (56%), integrity (54%), trustworthiness (51%), being respectful (43%) and being approachable (41).

In terms of improvements, a number of respondents commented as follows:

- BPS should increase their presence downtown, especially in ways that would make it easier for the public to approach an officer (e.g., foot patrol).
- A more diverse police force and sensitivity training could help improve officers’ understanding of marginalized populations in the community.
- BPS should become more involved with community organizations for kids and youth to help build a trusting relationship between the public and the police.
Satisfaction with police

To gauge public satisfaction with BPS, the Community Engagement Survey asked respondents to indicate their general satisfaction. The results show that the vast majority of the respondents (93%) reported being either satisfied or very satisfied with BPS.

Respondents who indicated that they had interacted with police in the past year, were asked to rate their experience with police. Two-hundred and twenty-seven respondents indicated that they had interacted with the BPS in the past year. Of these, 58% indicated that they had reported an incident, 27% had visited the BPS website, while 19% reported being the victim of a crime, 18% had requested background checks, 15% had attended a BPS event, 9% had been pulled over/given a ticket and 2% had been BPS volunteers, and 1% had been arrested or charged. Results show that 87.6% of the respondents reported their experience as satisfactory or very satisfactory.

Sources of crime-related information

The Community Engagement Survey asked respondents about what sources of information they rely on for information concerning crime, safety concerns, and issues in the community. Results indicate that most respondents still prefer traditional news sources, namely the newspaper (49%), radio (40%) or friends and family (48%). About ¼ of respondents also seek information from BPS’ website (27%) and Facebook page (23%), while 15% follow BPS’ twitter account.
Conclusions

The Community Engagement Survey shows the majority of Brandon residents support BPS and its efforts to keep our community safe. Despite that most residents report feeling safe in our city, specific concerns were raised concerning safety in the downtown area. The presence of intoxicated persons, panhandlers and suspicious person were cited as reasons why some respondents avoid attending to the downtown area. These results have highlighted a need for BPS to continue its efforts to promote safety in the downtown area in partnership with other City of Brandon departments.

Concerns were also raised about property crime, which many respondents feel has become more commonplace in the past 5 years. Some respondents reported feeling frustrated about the inability to keep their property safe. These sentiments indicate a need for BPS to expand on crime prevention efforts as well as provide crime prevention information to the public.

BPS was praised for its efforts in building a positive relationship with the community and local organizations, in particular through the newly established Community Mobilization Hub. Our survey respondents suggested continued outreach, a more diverse police force and training of police officers as means to build and maintain positive relationships with newcomers and other minority groups in the community. BPS strives to develop positive working relationships with all groups in our community and is committed to finding new ways to reach out to new and existing community members.

The 2016 Community Engagement Survey has provided BPS and the Brandon Police Board with valuable insight into the opinions and concerns of our local residents. Ensuring that the public feel safe in Brandon is of paramount importance to us. We will take the feedback that we have received through this survey into consideration in planning the future of our service delivery. Members of the public who wish to provide input or feedback on this survey can contact Brandon Police Service at any time at PoliceChief@brandon.ca

Vision Statement

Community First

Mission Statement

Committed to Community Safety

Core Values

Our Service stands for:

Respect – Professionalism - Integrity

I.R. (Ian) Grant, M.O.M.
Chief of Police