



## **Committee of the Whole Report**

### **For the Meeting of June 22, 2017**

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**To:** Committee of the Whole  
**From:** Chris Coates, City Clerk  
**Subject:** Urban Deer

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**Date:** June 16, 2017

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

That Council receive this report for information.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Within the Capital Region, deer are an issue involving such things as conflicts with human activities such as gardening as well as vehicle conflicts, and in rural areas with commercial farming activities. The Capital Regional District did initiate discussions on a regional basis to seek out ways in which to address these issues. The different issues within the various municipalities resulted in more independent approaches being taken by some communities.

In December 2016, Council directed staff to report back on the status of urban deer management in the region. To date, several municipalities including Central Saanich, Oak Bay and Esquimalt have undertaken deer management initiatives, with the support of both the Capital Regional District and Provincial Government.

The City's 2016 Operation Plan identified the interest in providing a report on activities of neighbouring municipalities and identifying potential solutions.

Differing views on the jurisdictional responsibility for urban deer management remains: with the Province asserting that municipalities are responsible for urban deer, while municipalities expect the Province to play a larger role in the issue.

At this point, limited data has been collected in the City of Victoria, making it difficult to determine the full extent of the urban deer issue. However, studies authored by the Province and CRD suggest that deer-human conflicts are on the rise in the region. It is clear that deer are present in the City and there have been complaints received from residents, although the volume of complaints is not significant in numbers.

Should Council choose to proceed with a deer management strategy, there are a number of tools, including population counts, inventories and public opinion surveys, which can help determine the extent of the problem and to develop appropriate solutions for consideration.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update on the status of urban deer management strategies within the region, including funding opportunities as well as discuss the implications of examining the problem in Victoria.

## BACKGROUND

### Council Direction

At the December 1, 2016 Committee of the Whole meeting, as part of the Quarter Three Update, Council passed the following motion:

*That Council request staff to provide a report at the next Quarterly Strategic Update on the implications of examining the urban deer problem in Victoria such as determining the extent of the problem and what funding might be available to examine this.*

The above motion was in relation to an initiative identified in the 2016 Operational Plan:

*Monitor the efforts in neighbouring municipalities and create a report regarding a solution to the urban deer problem.*

### Deer-Human Conflicts

Conflicts between deer and humans have become increasingly common in urban environments throughout the Capital Regional District. Urban deer come into conflict with people by eating landscape and garden vegetation, defecating, colliding with motorists and by attacking pets and more rarely, people. Concurrently, urban deer are often highly regarded by residents. Many people enjoy viewing them and are concerned for their welfare. This division has created significant management challenges in many communities in the region.

### Deer Management Options

Options for managing deer populations fall into several broad categories:

**Conflict Reduction** - hazing and frightening, landscaping alternatives, repellants and fencing

**Population Reduction** – capture and relocation, capture and culling, controlled public hunting.

**Deer-Vehicle Collision Mitigation Options** – roadway design, signage, wildlife crossings, speed limit reductions

**Fertility Control** – immunocontraception vaccines

**Public Education** – information campaigns

Both the capture and relocation and fertility control options are considered experimental. Research projects on capture and relocation are currently underway in several Kootenay municipalities.

### Provincial Role in Deer Management

Traditionally, the provincial government has supported local governments through:

- Participation on community-based deer management committees
- The provision of technical advice
- The development of hunting regulations and the issuance of permits to manage deer populations within or near urban areas
- The loaning of available equipment to communities

More recently, the provincial government has:

- Jointly delivered an Urban Deer Workshop in collaboration with UBCM
- Convened a Provincial Urban Deer Advisory Committee to provide support to local governments in BC managing urban deer conflicts

### Funding Opportunities

The Province established the Urban Deer Operation Cost Share Program, which provides \$100,000 (total) to local governments in BC for operational or research projects related to urban deer management. Five local governments, including Invermere, Grand Forks, Elkford, Cranbrook and Oak Bay were recently awarded funding for both conflict and population reduction measures. The Province has not yet committed to another round of funding under this program.

### Regional Urban Deer Management Strategies

In the region, the Capital Regional District and several municipalities including Oak Bay, Central Saanich and Esquimalt have undertaken deer management initiatives.

### Capital Regional District

- Published a Regional Deer Management Strategy, which included short, medium and long term recommendations for both urban and rural environments.
- Developed conflict reduction and public education tools for all municipalities.
- Funded two pilot projects in Central Saanich and Oak Bay.

Since the completion of the pilot projects in 2015, the CRD has reduced its role in regional deer management.

### Central Saanich

- Participated in a pilot project, which included public education, population counts, crop damage inspections, deer collision mitigation such as improved signage and road way brushing and advocating for changes to Hunting and Trapping Regulations. The majority of this work was completed in spring/fall of 2013. CRD staff consider the pilot successful.

### Oak Bay

- Participated in a pilot project focused on both conflict reduction and population control, which included a communications plan, population counts and the capture and culling of 11 deer. A permit was issued by the Province to cull up to 25 deer. Most of the pilot project took place during 2014, with the cull completed in February of 2015.
- Completed a Lessons Learned document that is attached as Appendix A.
- For 2017, Oak Bay was awarded a grant under the urban deer cost-share program to radio-collar up to 20 deer and place motion-activated video cameras on trails frequented by deer.

### Esquimalt

- In 2016, completed a public survey of residents to document their attitudes and wishes regarding deer as well as a public education initiative. A population count is currently planned for 2017.

### Urban Deer Management Strategies across the Province

Municipalities in the Kootenays including Kimberley, Cranbrook, Invermere and Elkford have pursued deer management strategies, including two types of population reductions measures: capture and cull as well as the more experimental capture and relocation.

## **ISSUES & ANALYSIS**

### Jurisdictional Responsibility

Local governments contend that wildlife remains a provincial responsibility and that the provincial government should play a larger role in deer management and provide more effective solutions specific to urban deer, as traditional wildlife management techniques such as hunting are not as relevant, practical or safe, in dense urban environments. The Province asserts that municipalities must determine the attitudes and opinions of their residents and that urban deer should primarily be managed by municipalities. Given this, many local governments, including those noted above have chosen to lead deer management initiatives with the support of the Province.

### Extent of the Problem in Victoria

The City of Victoria does not currently track public complaints of nuisance deer or the number of deer-vehicle collisions and a population count of deer in the City has never been performed. Data from other sources such as ICBC is reported for Vancouver Island and is not currently available at the municipal level.

With limited baseline data, it is difficult to determine the true extent of the problem. However, staff do occasionally receive complaints from residents. For example, urban deer conflicts was a frequently raised issue during the Growing in the City project and some residents are investing in conflict reduction tools, including fencing and landscaping alternatives. Although the extent of the problem in Victoria is currently unknown, Provincial reports, including the British Columbia Urban Ungulate Conflict Analysis and the CRD's Urban Deer Regional Management Strategy suggest that deer-human conflicts are increasing in the region. Anecdotally, this does impact residents of the city to some degree.

### Next Steps

Should Council wish to take an active role in deer management, there are a number of tools at the City's disposal, which could be used to determine the extent of the problem and identify appropriate solutions.

These include:

- Population counts
- Public opinion surveys
- Inventory of impacts
- Public education campaigns
- Community Advisory Committees

The above can be completed independently but more often is conducted as part of a larger community deer management plan. Engaging the Capital Regional District and neighbouring municipalities in developing collaborative approaches is a further alternative. No funding is currently allocated in the 2017 budget for this work. Should Council wish to pursue deer management initiatives, staff recommend providing direction to develop a project plan and bring that forward for Council's consideration for the 2018 budget process. Development of program details, costs and implementation timelines can be accommodated in Quarter 4 of 2017.

Respectfully submitted,



Shannon Jamison  
Legislative Planning Analyst



Chris Coates  
City Clerk



Jocelyn Jenkyns  
Deputy City Manager

**Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ June 16, 2017

**List of Attachments:**

Appendix A: Lessons Learned: Resulting from the District of Oak Bay's Participation in the Capital Regional District Deer Management Strategy Urban Pilot Project