



# Cobourg Police Service

Paul VandeGraaf  
Chief of Police

## Board Report:

In Camera Session: No

Date of report: December 14, 2021  
Date of meeting: December 21, 2021

Mr. Dean Pepper, Chair  
and members of the Cobourg Police Services Board

**Subject: Officer Safety Plan – Financial Results Community Consultation Report**

**Chief's Recommendation: "That the Cobourg Police Services Board receive and determine next steps for this project."**

**Motion: TBD**

## Background:

The Cobourg Police Services Board (the Board) and Cobourg Police Service (CPS) began exploring the use of body worn cameras in the summer of 2020. Public consultations have been key to ensure the Board continues to make fiscally responsible decisions to support community safety and service excellence in Cobourg.

In August 2020, CPS conducted a community consultation on the use of body worn cameras as it relates to police accountability, community safety, and privacy. Through the survey, we heard the community's insights, perceptions and beliefs on body worn cameras, which has helped inform the next steps.

Of the 211 respondents, 94% indicated support for the use of body worn cameras. Over half of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would feel safer if a police officer is wearing a body worn camera; that body worn cameras will enhance police transparency and increase public trust; and will protect police against false accusations. In July of 2021, the Board received a comprehensive report on the use of body worn cameras and opened a consultation period.

This was followed in September 2021 by the Board's request for additional information on the total cost of a body worn camera program scaled to CPS.

At a special meeting held on November 4, 2021, the financial impact of a proposed comprehensive Officer Safety Plan, which included the body worn camera program and replacement tasers, was presented.

At the special meeting, the Board deferred the decision on the implementation of the Officer Safety Plan until their regularly scheduled December meeting to allow for further public consultation on the financial impact of the plan.

The Cobourg Police Services Board Chair, Dean Pepper, Chief of Police, Paul VandeGraaf, and Chief Financial Officer, Roger Ramkissoon, presented the financials of the Officer Safety Plan at Cobourg's Town Council at the 2022 Divisional Staff Budget Presentation Meeting on November 10th, 2021, where the Police budget was presented.

A community consultation on the Officer Safety Plan, including a survey on the EngageCobourg platform was launched after the presentation on November 10th, 2021. The consultation period closed on Sunday, December 5, 2021.

In total 228 people viewed the survey and 28 people completed the actual questions.

The attached report outlines the results of this consultation.

Respectfully Submitted,

Paul VandeGraaf  
Chief of Police



Cobourg Police Service

# **Officer Safety Plan – Community Consultation Results**

## Introduction

This report summarizes the findings of a public consultation on a proposed Officer Safety Plan, including a survey of Cobourg residents and business owners. Survey objectives were as follows:

To receive feedback from residents and business owners on the value and cost of the proposed Officer Safety Plan, which includes, but is not limited to, body worn cameras.

In addition to the survey through the EngageCobourg platform, the public was invited to send comments and feedback directly to the Cobourg Police Services Board or the Chief of Police.

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### Summary of survey findings

Over 90% of respondents were aware of the proposed Officer Safety Plan. Generally, respondents indicated that the Officer Safety Plan would contribute to community safety (Q2) and officer safety (Q3). 71.4% of respondents thought that body worn cameras specifically would contribute to officer safety.

Likewise, 71.4% of respondents believed that the Officer Safety Plan would increase accountability and transparency of Cobourg Police Service and 71.4% of respondents believe that the service should implement the Officer Safety Plan as part of its 2022 budget.

### Additional public engagement methods and resources on the Officer Safety Plan

In addition to the survey through the EngageCobourg platform, the public was invited to send comments and feedback directly to the Cobourg Police Services Board or the Chief of Police.

These communications can be found in Appendix A.

Additional notes and resources relevant to the officer safety plan are included in Appendix B.

### Respondent Profile

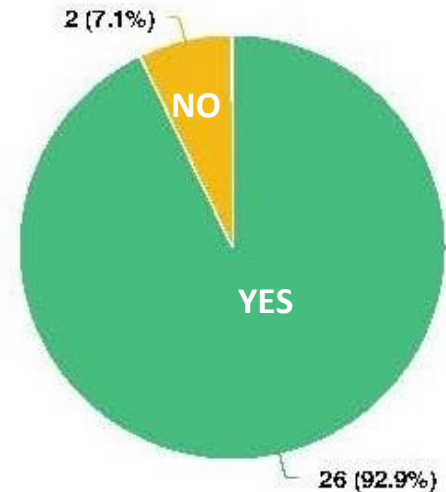
Total of **28** surveys submissions,

- all residents of Cobourg or business owners

### Survey Questions:

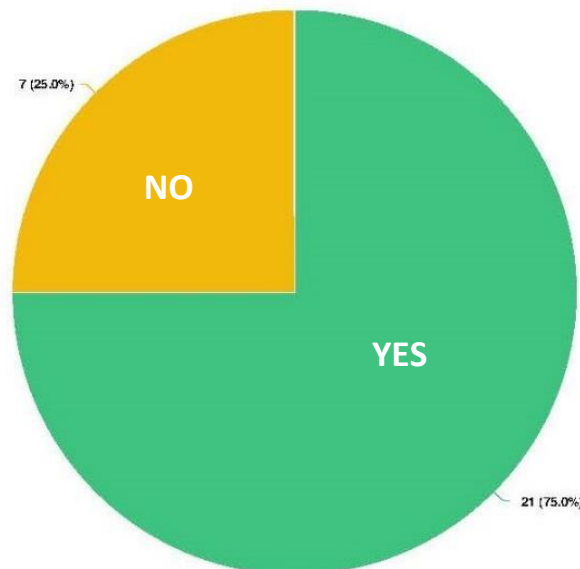
#### 1. Are you aware of the Cobourg Police Service's proposed Officer Safety Plan, which includes body worn cameras?

\*Note if the participant responded *NO* they would receive the following message before continuing:  
*The questions that follow may be difficult to answer without the information provided in the 2022 Police Budget Presentation to Cobourg's Town Council and the supporting slide deck. To access these documents, please visit [engagecobourg.ca](https://engagecobourg.ca)*



### VALUE

#### 2. Do you think the proposed Officer Safety Plan will contribute positively to community safety?



Please explain your answer:

#### *Verbatim responses below*

1. Cameras are good for the officers and public.
2. The police should have up -to-date technology available to them to ensure more effectiveness in their job performance.
3. I think we need to keep our officers safe so they can do the job that is demanded of them!

4. A safety plan is an important tool but also needs regular review and flexibility to adapt to changing needs of both the police service/officers and community.
5. I feel it infringes on the officers right to be able to do their job without eyes on them
6. Training : needed to de-escalate situations, improve communication skills. Tasers: working, up to date tasers may be a better choice than guns in many situations. Cameras: Adds accountability to officers, streamlines reporting giving more time for direct interaction with citizens. Increase civility on both sides, as officers and citizens know they are being recorded. Provides opportunity for training - should highlight any areas where increased training is needed for an individual officer re; communication or implicit biases.
7. Given that only .04% of interactions with the public led to complaints, the cost of these cameras is not justified.
8. Body cameras will protect both officers and the public if worn properly.
9. I think this will help keep vulnerable populations more safe. It will also enhance the safety for officers.
10. More transparency
11. It will give perspective for both sides.
12. It will give the officers the security of knowing their actions are trapped and can't be miscommunication.
13. It will protect the public and the police. There are always 3 sides to a story. Both people and the truth in the middle. Body Cams will record the truth
14. I think that this is a helpful method to insure community safety and proper procedures
15. Its a safety plan....
16. I feel our officers would be better protected and deserve a safer work environment.
17. It is important that as the public is held accountable so are the officers. This is important for the safety of officers and the public as well.
18. Makes both the officers and public accountable with recorded evidence.
19. More evidence leads to better justice.
20. I don't agree with surveillance
21. No need, how can an officer wearing a body camera contribute to community safety. Please provide factual data that body cameras will contribute to the safety of our Cobourg citizens.
22. Money could be spent else where,
23. An added burden on policing does not assist police. Lawbreakers already costing citizens a fortune, let's not exacerbate that.

- 24. As outlined by Chief VanderGraaf, use of body cameras should help increase public trust in their police service.
- 25. Increases transparency and hopefully officers and public will behave more appropriately if they know they are "on tape"
- 26. Small town Not needed Too costly
- 27. SAFETY FOR PUBLIC AS WELL AS OFFICERS
- 28. I believe that relying on one's memory is not always accurate - cameras if left on will give more of the story

**3. Do you think body worn cameras specifically will contribute positively to community safety? Please explain your answer:**

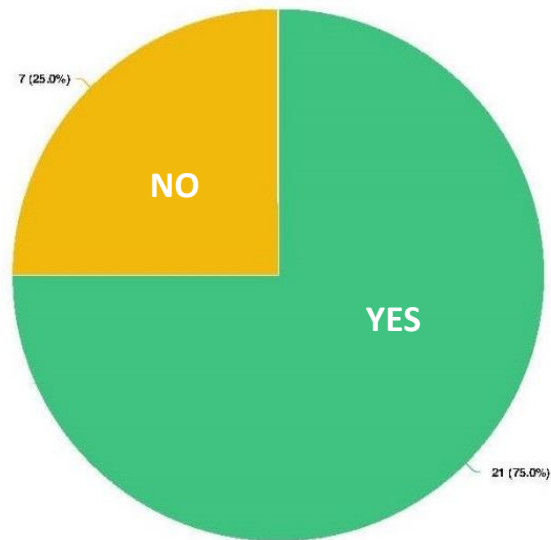
*Verbatim responses below*

1. Yes. Cameras do not lie
2. I believe it will make for better interactions with the public, since members of the public will likely be on their best behaviour knowing that they are being recorded.
3. I do think they need the body cameras. It will greatly help when they are alone and back up the info the officer is giving the public.
4. The officer to have discretion whether camera is on or off and a protocol to explain why be available to both officer and the public. A body camera likely safer for the officer. I have average expectation that such cameras will contribute to community safety and have grave concerns about facial recognition technology which has been reported to be biased in that IT patterning sort of way.
5. No
6. Adds accountability to officers, streamlines reporting giving more time for direct interaction with citizens. Increase civility on both sides, as officers and citizens know they are being recorded. Provides opportunity for training - should highlight any areas where increased training is needed for an individual officer re; communication or implicit biases.
7. See the above comment.
8. I feel that video footage doesn't lie. Having video of an incident can guarantee the truth will be seen by the judge and our legal system. Maybe it will also improve the behaviour of both the community and police officers.
9. I think when interactions are being recorded, people on all sides of an interaction might act a bit different. I think vulnerable populations might feel a bit more safe with their interactions with police. Hopefully knowing that interactions are being recorded will help to 'cool the temperature' of heated exchanges. I think that the police may feel more safe knowing that people can't make up allegations. In general, I think body worn cameras will positively impact the relationship between the citizens and the police which will make a safer community for everyone.
10. Yes
11. Yes tells both sides as long as they are turned on
12. Same as above
13. I believe wearing the body as will be a positive aspect of policing for the community. It will show accountability



14. I think they will be used to help ensure safety in the community
15. Yes been physically assaulted by an officer i don't feel safe and would feel safer if they had cameras
16. I do, I feel our officers are constantly under scrutiny and this would provide them and the community with an added level of safety.
17. See above
18. Yes
19. Yes. See reason above to question 3.
20. No. Cops need to feel trusted by their community
21. No , once again can please provide the data that it will. Officers patrolling, investigating, safety awareness seminars, plain clothes etc... will contribute to our safety.
22. No it's an invasion of everyone's privacy including the officers. Community safety is about prevention, worn cameras won't help
23. No
24. By increasing public trust, police should receive more public input, and more citizen cooperation in dealing with crime and problems.
25. Yes. See above comment
26. No Not needed in Cobourg Privacy issues
27. Same answer as question three
28. Yes as it makes people more accountable for their actions

4. Do you think the proposed Officer Safety Plan will contribute positively to police officer safety?



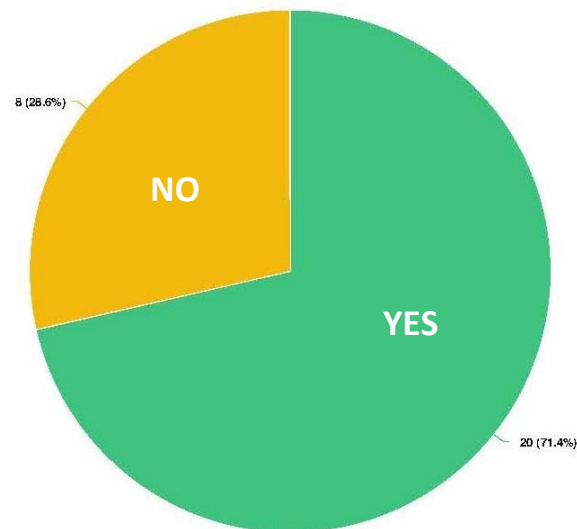
Please explain your answer:

*Verbatim responses below*

1. Video proof is always more reliable than a witness or recall
2. Being able to access information or upload photos from the members of the public in real time will directly enable them to perform their jobs more efficiently. This will increase their safety and morale.
3. It will help when the public know the cameras are running.
4. Better if the officers themselves have significant input into the Safety Plan.
5. -
6. Training on de-escalation and empathy helps both the officer and citizen. Body cams encourage both parties to be mindful of being on tape. Also removes he said/she said aspect of confrontation and reports. Takes away some of the emotion and leads to more fact based situational analysis which may protect officers
7. In the six years I have lived in Cobourg, I have not seen or read of any officer safety issues.
8. Not sure really.
9. Answered above
10. -

11. Will show any discrepancies
12. It may act as a deterrent should someone want to be resistant.
13. It will protect the public and the police. There are always 3 sides to a story. Both people and the truth in the middle. Body Cams will record the truth
14. I think it will make officers and community members think twice about how they handle situations
15. -
16. I feel that the ability to share information virtually gives police a safety net that don't currently have. I feel our police service deserves every protection measure we can provide.
17. See above
18. Anything to help police officer safety would be beneficial
19. See reason above to question 3.
20. See number 4
21. How is the body camera going to protect or "contribute" to officer safety. More police officers on the street looking out for each other. Not relying on your Special Constables to be patrolling.
22. Same answer, this question should be asked to the officers, which I'm sure they oppose. Imagine having to wear a camera to your job? Dosnt make sense.
23. Stated above.
24. Body worn cameras will likely deter some (probably not all) suspects being investigated from violent confrontation with police officers.
25. -
26. This is not a large centre with a lot of serious crime and criminals Officers are already safe
27. True record of calls
28. People will feel more safe

**5. Do you think body worn cameras specifically will contribute positively to police officer safety?**



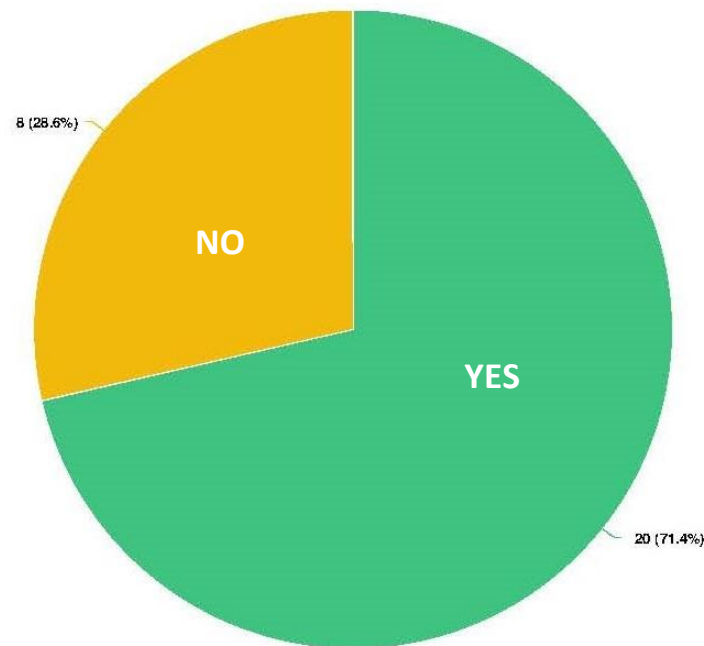
Please explain your answer:

*Verbatim responses below*

1. As mentioned above
2. The most important thing is to ensure that all officers are safe and return to their families at the end of their shifts. Recordings will hopefully result in civil interactions between police and members of the public. Further, these recordings will help clear up any inconsistencies between what happened and what was alleged to have happened. This in turn will provide the officers with better peace of mind by protecting them from frivolous complaints attacking their character.
3. I don't think people realize what an office has to go through on the job. I think the cameras will not let the criminals say it went one way, when it really went the other.
4. How about special constables? Where do they fit in this plan?
5. -
6. Body cams encourage both parties to be mindful of being on tape. Also removes he said/she said aspect of confrontation and reports. Takes away some of the emotion and leads to more fact based situational analysis which may protect officers
7. See above
8. As mentioned above, if people know that they are on camera and their will be footage of their exact words and behaviour, it may prevent assaults and violence against officers.
9. -

10. -
11. Especially in home searches or attacks on officers
12. Same as above
13. It will protect the public and the police. There are always 3 sides to a story. Both people and the truth in the middle. Body Cams will record the truth
14. I think it will help with safety for the community
15. -
16. I feel the police would feel safer and possibly, this might prevent potential criminal activity.
17. See above
18. Both police officers and members of the public will be less inclined to act inappropriately when they know they are being recorded
19. See reason above to question 3.
20. See number 4
21. AS QUESTION SIX - THE ANSWER IS NO.
22. Wearing a camera is not protecting anything or anyone...
23. Stated above.
24. Video can also be used by officers to review past incidents, and learn how they might be more effective in diffusing confrontational situations.
25. Yes
26. See comments above
27. Same answer as question 7
28. Again back to accountability

6. Do you believe the proposed Officer Safety Plan will increase accountability and transparency of our police service?



Please explain your answer:

*Verbatim responses below*

1. Same fore question 7,8 and 9
2. A technology trail will certainly be helpful in assisting all aspects of effective policing and will garner public trust over the long term.
3. Officers need to know someone has their backs.
4. This survey is too restrictive with yes and no answers. My reply would be 'maybe'. It does depend upon how information is collected and used, and who can access it and when. Further, technology to manipulate is already here.
5. -
6. Body cams are, I believe, the main factor in this. See below.
7. See above
8. Why are we trying to fix something that is not broken?
9. Unsure.
10. -

11. Shows transparency
12. Everything is recorded
13. It will protect the public and the police. There are always 3 sides to a story. Both people and the truth in the middle. Body Cams will record the truth
14. I think and hope that this makes officers think twice about how they engage with the community
15. -
16. I feel our police are already accountable, but this would provide protection for false claims against our police.
17. -
18. They can't hide behind the badge
19. See reason above to question 3.
20. See number 4
21. Is there an issue in this community with the transparency of our police service. The majority of people I speak with have no issue in this regard.
22. -
23. -
24. Accountability will be improved, because body worn cameras will provide for objective review of police actions by constables on duty.
25. -
26. Not currently a problem
27. True account from both sides .
28. If cameras are on it will make people think twice before acting in ways that is not appropriate

**7. Do you believe body worn cameras specifically will increase accountability and transparency of our police service? Please explain your answer:**

*Verbatim responses below*

1. Yes I do.
2. I think cameras will result in fewer confrontations with the police and should a confrontation occur, video evidence will to the benefit of all. I should add that in instances of issues, a neutral third parties should be responsible for reviewing the footage of any incident.
3. Yes the cameras will not let the officers say it went one way when it went the other.
4. Maybe. See above.
5. No
6. Increased accountability via video evidence that is downloaded and maintained.
7. See above
8. Yes, as long as they are worn properly throughout an entire shift. And not turned off inappropriately by officers.
9. I think when people know they are being recorded, they might act slightly different. There could be a great self-reflection and professional development piece that could come from reviewing footage of interactions. Sometimes when people see or hear themselves, they might be able to identify ways in which they can improve.
10. Yes
11. Absolutely but only if the cameras are turned on
12. Same as above
13. It will protect the public and the police. There are always 3 sides to a story. Both people and the truth in the middle. Body Cams will record the truth
14. I hope it will make officers more accountable for their actions
15. Absolutely the officer who assaulted me lied if they had of had cameras it would of helped
16. See above
17. Yes
18. The evidence will speak for itself
19. See reason above to question 3.
20. No. See number 4

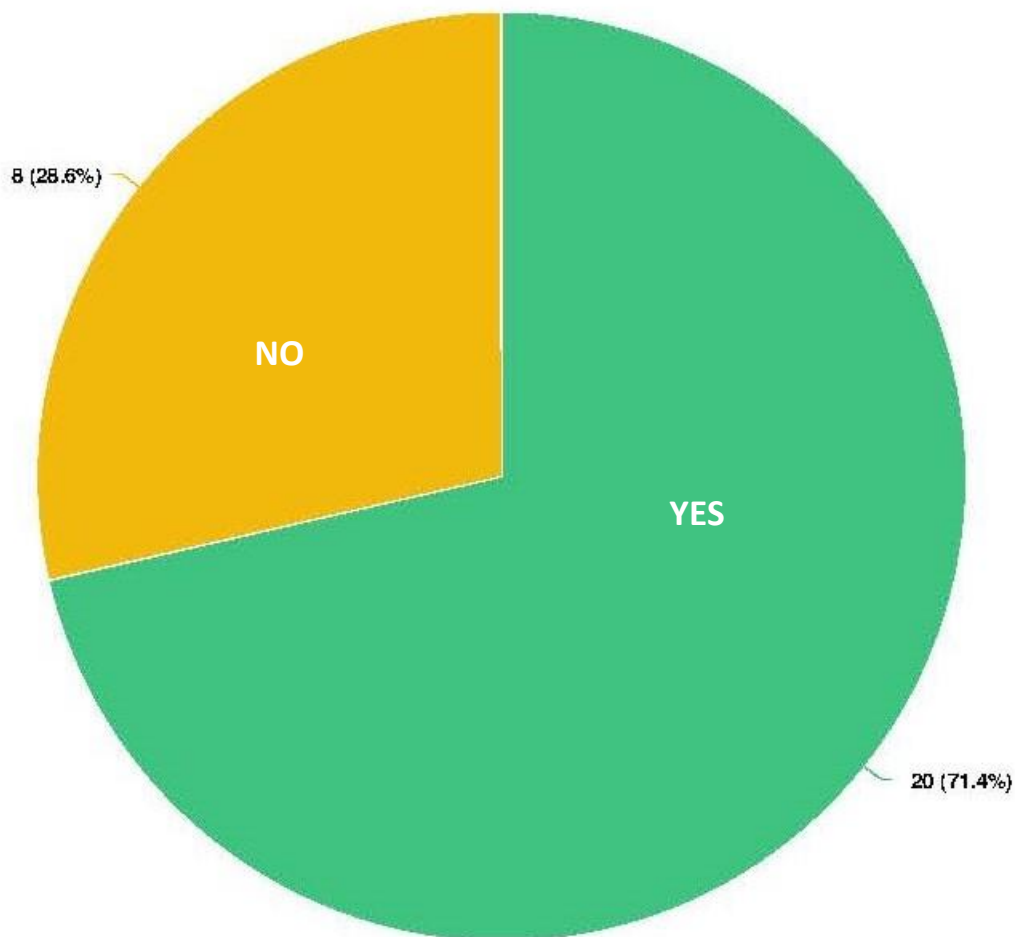


- 21. See above
- 22. No
- 23. No
- 24. Yes, because video will hopefully always be shared with the public, when requested.
- 25. Yes
- 26. Perhaps
- 27. Yes
- 28. If cameras are on it will make people think twice before acting in ways that is not appropriate

## COSTING

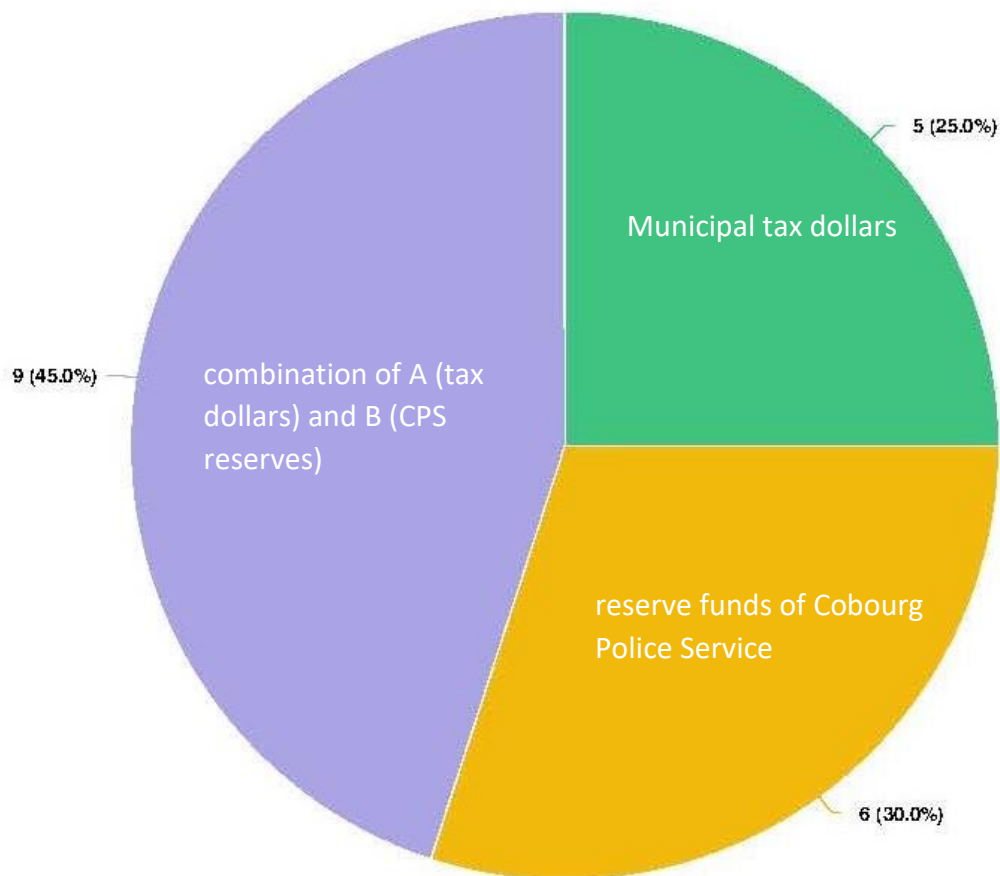
The proposed Officer Safety Plan will cost the Town of Cobourg a total of \$621,927 over 5 years. In other words, the annual cost for the next 5 years is \$124,385 (including both capital and operating costs).

8. Based on your assessment of the value of the Officer Safety Plan to community and officer safety against the cost of implementing the Plan outlined above, do you believe Cobourg Police Service should implement the Plan as part of its 2022 Budget? In other words, should the Town of Cobourg invest \$124,385 annually for the next 5 years to implement the Officer Safety Plan that includes body worn cameras?



**9. In your opinion, how should Cobourg Police Service fund these additional annual costs?**

*\*Only participants that answered YES to Q8 are included in Q9.*



Please explain your answer:

*Verbatim responses below*

1. We must always give our Police as much protection as possible. The question always comes down to cost. I ask what is a Life worth to you? Keep them safe.
2. This is exactly the type of issue that property tax is supposed to fund.
3. We need to back up our officers and make sure they are safe. This would be dollars well spent.
4. I tried to access the link earlier in this survey to the police budget presentation and it did not lead to the information. I tried an alternative route i.e. googling topic, again no luck. Being somewhat familiar with the Town and police budgets process I think, generally, the reserve funds/business unit of the police service should fund this at this time. View as a 5 year pilot project with a full public report and review after the five years. Then, a review of funding source also.

5. Money could be spent elsewhere
6. If the CPS has reserve funds, they should share in the cost. The town taxpayers should also share because we benefit from this new technology.
7. Police services are already the biggest part of the town's budget. Cobourg is already known as a high tax town. This proposal will further bloat the already high police budget. Budgeting for cameras is something that is not proven necessary.
8. We already pay extremely high taxes in Cobourg.
9. The Cobourg police seem to already have a large portion of our tax dollars. It would be a nice gesture to the community if they covered the cost from an existing budget line.
10. It's a shared contribution
11. We are still in the pandemic and as such it may be difficult to increase taxes
12. I feel comfortable paying a bit extra in taxes to cover the cost as long as the Towns Reserve is also chipping in
13. The money could be used to help fix real problems in the community, like sidewalks, parks
14. and things to help the youth stay out of trouble
15. Not B
16. This is for officers and public so both should bear the cost.
17. The program is long term but should have immediate positive results. Funding should come from those immediately impacted, ie the taxpayers, and funds with a long-term perspective
18. the value to the community outweighs the cost
19. The cost and there is no need, if you want the cameras then cut your police budget by \$124,385.00 to fund it. Why does this service have to react to public demands made in Toronto or other large jurisdictions for body worn cameras. Leave our officers to patrol and do their job.
20. Chief Paul VanderGraaf noted how the first two years can be funded from proceeds from Corporate Service revenues.
21. Venture 13 provides the CPS with adequate funding to pay for this.
22. dramatically No increase in taxes to public.
23. Our tax dollars need to be spent getting the homeless off the streets and into safe housing

**10. If there is anything else you would like to share with us about the Officer Safety Plan and body worn cameras, please provide your comments below.**


*Verbatim responses below*

1. Other than my belief in this plan, no.
2. Our town is growing very fast and we need to grow with it.
3. Crime and safety seem to be getting more complicated. The police need the right tools. The public and community need corresponding mechanisms to ensure accountability and transparency.
4. I've said it all above. I support adequate and effective policing, but the need for cameras has not been demonstrated (again, only .04% of police interactions resulted in complaints) and I'm not aware of any officers having been attacked or injured in interactions with police.
5. Thank you for considering this!
6. No
7. No
8. I think it is a good idea but needs more thought and proper planning, but the real problems in the community need to get dealt with first
9. Cameras weigh less than a pound and are affordable in the budget theres a reason some officers dont want cameras ive been a victim of assault by police how many more officers are going to assault and get away with it
10. None
11. no
12. I would very much like to see the factual data that you are using for this proposal. I'm also not sure why you using the term "Officer Safety " to push this ahead. I believe there is absolutely no need in this jurisdiction to have these cameras.
13. Don't implement these
14. No
15. Until the Police presentation to Council, we were not convinced that we needed to go the expense of adding body worn cameras in our community. Now we are.
16. How much of a percentage would the police budget increase
17. No
18. No

## Appendix A

Feedback and comments received by the Cobourg Police Services Board on the Officer Safety Plan during the community consultation November 10 – December 5, 2021.

Communication received by the Cobourg Police Services Board

	THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF COBOURG
	EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
TO:	Brent Larmer, Municipal Clerk/Manager of Legislative Services
FROM:	Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Secretary
MEETING DATE:	Thursday, November 11, 2021
SUBJECT:	<b>Motion to Support the Cobourg Police Services Officer Safety Plan (Body Worn Cameras).</b>

The following Motion was adopted at the Thursday, November 11, 2021 Cobourg Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Advisory Committee (EDIAC) Meeting:

**Moved by Member Heidi Carisse:**

THAT the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Advisory Committee (EDIAC) endorses the Cobourg Police Service Officer Safety Plan (Body Worn Cameras) for the Cobourg Police Officers; and

FURTHER THAT this motion of support and endorsement from the Equity Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee (EDIAC) be forwarded to Municipal Council and the Cobourg Police Services Board as part of the public engagement process.

**Carried**

**From:** [tricia.hurst](#)  
**To:** [CPS Chief](#)  
**Subject:** Body Cam Survey Inquiry  
**Date:** December 6, 2021 12:25:03 PM

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Hello there,

After working with community partners operating the overnight COVID Emergency Respite Centre I have the utmost respect for the challenges cops working the streets are faced to encounter. It is not an easy moment for this region, Fentynal and Meth are living large in this community which brings its own craziness to bear and in no way has COVID helped slow it down.

I greatly appreciate all that the Police Services does to protect Cobourg residents. I know and understand that you as the new chief have worked diligently on community outreach. Holding info sessions and offering community members to complete an opinion survey on the new Officer Safety Plan.

I am curious if the folks who may interact with police more often due to current life circumstances were able to provide feedback on this survey.

From my understanding many would be considered homeless and/or may not perhaps have a Cobourg address. Nor would some have the capacity to access or complete an online survey of this kind.

Could you provide me some clarity on this? Were there any initiatives made to include this vulnerable population and how was this orchestrated? If inclusion was considered, was the execution to solicit feedback from this population what were the terms in which it would be successful? Also how and what impacts this may have in the future with this population? I know that it is a busy time but hope you are able to provide me some insight to my inquiry. Thanks in advance for your cooperation and consideration on this matter.

Regards,

Tricia Hurst



## Appendix B

Post on the St. Thomas Police Service Facebook page on November 18, 2021

*Note: In addition to the note below, St Thomas Police Service recently created a page on their website dedicated to sharing information on body worn cameras including a report on their three-month pilot and frequently asked questions. <http://www.stps.on.ca/>*

