

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO HEALTH & HOUSING COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No. 6

meeting date: THURSDAY, 19 JANUARY 2017
title: DOG WARDEN ENFORCEMENT SERVICE
submitted by: MARSHAL SCOTT – CHIEF EXECUTIVE
principal author: HEATHER COAR – HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To outline the proposed changes and adopt the Dog Welfare Policy to the Dog Warden service that are required to provide greater enforcement activity and address major anti-social behaviour issues in the borough.
- 1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:
 - Community Objectives – To promote stronger more confident and more active communities throughout the borough.
 - Corporate Priorities – To provide a high quality environment, keeping land clear of litter and refuse and reducing incidents of dog fouling.
 - Other Considerations – None.
- 1.3 The key drive is for the service changes proposed are clear remit from Elected Members and feedback from residents to see more enforcement in a local community. This has to be achieved within existing resources because the current financial position of the Council means that there is no additional funding available.
- 1.4 This report provides details of the proposed changes to the service. This will include the responsibilities of the existing posts of the Dog Wardens within the changes being made to the service delivery to ensure that resources can be dedicated to enforcement.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Dog fouling has been highlighted as a significant anti-social behaviour problem in the borough during public meetings and via Elected Members and residents. The demand for enforcement has been escalated. In some local communities it is claimed to be the number one anti-social behaviour problem they have.

3. RATIONALE FOR CHANGE

- 3.1 All services are continually under review and changes are made when the need is identified. A commitment has been made to the Council, following a review of Environmental Health Services, that the service will be as efficient as possible and demonstrate value for money. The need to focus the Dog Warden Service on enforcement and a statutory responsibility to deal with dangerous dogs has been clearly evidence by recent feedback from Members. This is the key driver for the service delivery. Working arrangement changes promoted in this report will allow the service to be more flexible and responsive to the changing needs.

- 3.2 The Dog Warden Service currently operates with two part-time members of staff who have previously focussed on welfare education and enforcement.
- 3.3 A clear remit has been provided by Elected Members and feedback through the local community that the service must focus on enforcement as a top priority.
- 3.4 To achieve this with existing resources and maximise the enforcement capacity, all welfare and educational responsibilities will be minimised, and the service will dedicate itself to the statutory duties of dealing with dangerous and stray dogs, and enforcement activity.
- 3.5 In order to further maximise the enforcement capacity of the dog warden staff, the Housing Environmental Health Officer will be responsible for the day-to-day co-ordination and prioritisation of service activities. This will require close co-ordination and regular briefings with the Dog Warden operatives and the Head of Service.
- 3.6 There is a need to overhaul the services, fees and charges and the public information resources used by the team, which will be undertaken in the near future.
- 3.7 A copy of the Dog Warden Policy is included in Appendix 1. This standardises the working practices of the Dog Wardens to ensure consistency.
- 3.8 The proposed changes to procedures include:
- automated letters sent out via the Environmental Health Administrator. This will allow Dog Wardens to undertake greater enforcement duties in routine patrols;
 - the standardisation of letters and procedures will mean there is a consistent approach adopted by the Dog Wardens these will also ensure that there is a clear enforcement trail should further enforcement action be taken.
- 3.9 Committee is therefore requested to approve the Dog Warden Policy with immediate effect.
- 3.10 It is believed appropriate for the recommendations to be submitted to Health and Housing Committee for approval to ensure local transparency and accountability.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:
- Resources – There are no imminent implications but Committee is asked to recognise the ongoing demands on the service.
 - Technical, Environmental and Legal – There are no technical, environmental and legal implications.
 - Political – This document confirms the Council's intended service provision in relation to this statutory function.
 - Reputation – This document meets the Council's obligations in relation to producing a transparent and accountable documentation.

- Equality & Diversity – None.

5 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

- 5.1 Approve Ribble Valley Borough Council's Dog Warden Policy for implementation with immediate effect.
- 5.2 Reconfirm the continuing priority of the Dog Warden Service for the Environmental Health Service provision.

HEATHER COAR
HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

For further information please ask for Heather Coar, extension 4466.

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DOG WARDEN POLICY

Introduction

The Council's Dog Warden Service exists to promote responsible dog ownership, including raising standards of dog welfare amongst the Borough's dog owners, securing high standards of dog welfare within premises licensed to sell and board dogs, ensuring that dogs are not allowed to roam unattended and decreasing the level of dog fouling in the Borough's streets and parks.

Education

The Dog Welfare Service will use a variety of educative approaches to encourage responsible dog ownership. Approaches will include:

- Publishing and distributing advisory information;
- Utilising the Council's website as a source of information;
- Educational talks to schools and community groups;
- Participating in both dog specific and broader community promotional events;
- Direct one-to-one educational approaches to individual dog owners.

Stray Dogs

The Dog Warden Service will use a mix of approaches to minimise the number of dogs roaming unattended within the Borough. Enforcement action will be the principal approach to controlling stray dogs. Approaches will include:

- Patrols of the Borough's streets, parks and public open spaces to pick up unattended dogs;
- Response to individual requests from the public to pick up stray dogs;
- Collection of stray dogs received by the Police;
- Educational work to inform dog owners of the problems caused by allowing dogs to roam and of the risks this poses to the welfare of their dogs;
- Encouragement of owners to microchip their dogs including the provision of a microchipping service at no charge.

On seizing a stray dog, the Dog Wardens will normally attempt to return the dog to its owner, provided that the dog has not previously been seized in the preceding 12 months. Dogs that are not returned to their owners will be impounded with the Council's kennel contractor. Owners may then claim their dog on payment of the current release fee. Dogs not claimed after the presented statutory period will pass into the ownership of the Council whereon the Council will then transfer ownership to the RSPCA.

Dog Fouling

The Dog Warden Service will use a mix of approaches to decrease the level of dog fouling on the Borough's streets and parks. Enforcement action will be the principal approach to reducing dog fouling. Approaches will include:

- Issue of fixed penalty notices for owners failing to clean up after their dog;
- Creation of 10 Dog Watch Areas to prioritise patrolling, enforcement and education work in areas which have the greatest problem with dog fouling;
- Patrols of the Borough's streets, parks and public open spaces to target enforcement action;
- Educational work to inform dog owners of the need to prevent dog fouling;
- Work in partnership with other Council departments and external bodies to enforce and educate on dog fouling.

Dog Waste Bins

The dog waste bin collection service is delivered as part of the Environmental health service and covers public land across the whole of the Council area.

There is currently no charge for the dog waste bin collection service. The service aim is to empty all dog waste bins across the borough area at least once a week with some higher use bins being emptied more frequently. Replacement dog waste bins will be installed as and when necessary providing the parish council meet the cost of replacement. No new additional dog waste bins will be installed, but less well used bins can be moved to higher demand areas. In adverse weather conditions, (i.e. snow and ice) every effort will be made to collect all dog waste bins but only those that can be reached with a vehicle.

Dog Welfare Licensing

The Environmental Health Service will use all appropriate licensing legislation to secure high standards of dog welfare in those premises licensed to sell, breed and board dogs.