

ANIMAL WELFARE POLICY

Executive Summary

Further to the Executive meeting on 15 July 2021, it was agreed the draft Animal Welfare Responsibilities Guidance document would go out for public consultation. The draft guide has been produced for residents, which will signpost to the organisations responsible for each aspect of animal welfare and licensing.

The updated draft is attached as Appendix 1.

The aim of the public consultation was to ensure that the Council has captured all areas and to gauge what residents' key priorities are in terms of animal welfare.

The public consultation ran on the Resident Engagement HQ platform from 26 January 2022 until 22 February 2022. It was widely promoted on Woking Borough Council (WBC) social media sites, the resident e-newsletter, Planet Woking web pages and in the Woking News and Mail. An email promoting the consultation was also sent to all WBC staff and Councillors encouraging them to share their views.

The Council's Animal Welfare Responsibilities Guidance has now been revised to incorporate feedback from the consultation.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL That

the Council's revised Animal Welfare Responsibilities Guidance document be agreed.

Reasons for Decision

Reason: To promote Animal Welfare in the Borough.

The item(s) above will need to be dealt with by way of a recommendation to Council.

Background Papers: [EXE21-036 Animal Welfare Policy, 15 July 2021 Executive](#)

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The previous report to the Executive at its meeting on 15 July 2021 confirmed the responsibilities for Animal Welfare for Woking Borough Council and other partner agencies.
- 1.2 There are a wide range of existing activities and involvement relating to animal welfare within the Council, spread across a number of different service departments. Moving forward the Environmental Health team will continue to take the lead where Woking Borough Council can influence and support animal welfare.

2.0 Public Consultation

- 2.1 The public consultation asked 3 main questions to ensure all topics were covered and responses were as broad as possible. The questions asked were:
 - Have we covered everything in the Animal Welfare Responsibilities Guidance document?
 - What do you think the priorities for the Council should be regarding Animal Welfare?
 - What are your priorities regarding Animal Welfare?
- 2.2 The consultation concluded with 13 responses in total. 11 responses from residents via the Resident Engagement HQ platform and 2 direct responses from Councillors.
- 2.3 The general consensus was that all the main topics had been covered within Appendix 1. Residents were concerned about the protocol surrounding abandoned pets, such as if a tenanted property has been abandoned and the whereabouts of the resident is unknown, what extent is the housing provider responsible for meeting the needs of any abandoned pets.
- 2.4 Another point raised was regarding when a pet owner is hospitalised, the document only states what can be done about dogs that have been left on their own and not other pets such as cats, reptiles, birds etc. It was also suggested that a section should be added to the 'Dead Animal' section to ensure any dead cats are taken to the vets to be scanned for a microchip.
- 2.5 It was recommended that it would be useful to have local area alerts for avian flu in the event of a local outbreak, as many new chicken owners may not be aware of the procedures in place to handle avian flu and how to receive notifications.
- 2.6 Residents would also like a section about animal welfare in abattoirs and farms. Please note that there are currently no abattoirs in the Borough.
- 2.7 There were a number of detailed responses about what residents think the priorities of the Council should be regarding Animal Welfare. The overall response was that WBC should work proactively with other agencies (Police, RSPCA etc) to ensure people cannot become repeat offenders, as well as enforcing the Animal Welfare Act 2006 when necessary.
- 2.8 The issue of abandoned horses has been raised as a key topic. It has been suggested that in the scenario where there are horses that are illegally fly grazing, a sensitive approach offering support should be taken instead of prosecution. Another suggestion included producing a pictorial based advice sheet about fly grazing horses and how to obtain a licence through the Council.
- 2.9 Residents would also like more awareness around illegal puppy farms and would like to see a proactive response in closing them down and prosecuting the perpetrators. However, this heavily relies on the public reporting intelligence to the Council.

- 2.10 As pet ownership can be good for mental and physical health, a resident has suggested fencing off small sections of green spaces around the Borough to form 'dog parks'. This would mean that dogs can be exercised off the lead without the fear of getting lost or endangering traffic.
- 2.11 To summarise, the key priorities of most residents is to ensure that all animals should be looked after and treated in a way that ensures their welfare and safety.
- 2.12 It has been suggested that residents would like Appendix 1 to be transposed into an 'Animal FAQ's' page on the website, as PDF formats are often hard to access on a mobile device. It is understood that this would be more accessible and easier to find relevant information in an emergency.
- 2.13 It has also been suggested that a campaign could be considered for elderly and vulnerable residents to encourage them to put a plan in place for their pets should they suddenly go into care or hospital.
- 2.14 The following amendments have been completed to the Animal Welfare Responsibilities guidance document shown at Appendix 1;
- Guidance links relating to exotic pets and avian influenza have been included.
 - A further section has been added with information regarding the control and enforcement of firework displays.
 - The Dead Animals section has been updated to encourage residents to take any dogs or cats they hit to the nearest vets to be scanned for a microchip, where possible.

3.0 Corporate Strategy

- 3.1 The revised Animal Welfare Responsibilities guidance will help to achieve the corporate objectives through joint working with partners, protecting the environment and promoting health and wellbeing for all.

4.0 Implications

Finance and Risk

- 4.1 There are no finance and risk issues arising from this report.

Equalities and Human Resources

- 4.2 There are no equalities and human resources issues arising from this report.
- 4.3 Animal welfare work will continue to be met using existing resources within the Council.

Legal

- 4.4 There are no specific legal implications or risks identified in this report.

5.0 Engagement and Consultation

- 5.1 The report sets out the consultation undertaken on the draft guidance document.

REPORT ENDS