

Briefing Note

Title: Dog Control in Wolverhampton

Prepared by: Shaun Walker

Date: 19/2/2018

Intended audience:	Internal <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Partner organisation <input type="checkbox"/>	Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Confidential <input type="checkbox"/>
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1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To provide an over-arching report on dog control in Wolverhampton and to specifically address a number of questions raised previously.

2.0 Background and context

2.1 City of Wolverhampton Council has several key responsibilities relating to animals in general and dogs in particular. These range from animal welfare and disease control to public safety. In 2017 Chair of the Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel requested Dog Control Enforcement to be an item on the scrutiny agenda. The Chair requested a number of questions to be answered in the report, these were as follows:

- Outline of the service provided by the Council including number of staff
- A summary of the main legislation
- Are there any changes to the legislation and performance measures for the service expected?
- How does Wolverhampton's enforcement policy compare to other neighbouring authorities?
- An annual breakdown of the income received by the service through fines / fixed penalty notices (last three years)
- Details of any Orders in place across Wolverhampton and how well they are working?
- How does the Council communicate details about the services the Council offers such as advice on reporting noisy or stray dogs?
- Any new initiatives planned for the foreseeable future?

3.0 Proposal/Options

3.1 Outline of the service provided by the Council including number of staff

The Public Protection service sits within City Environment and is comprised of both Commercial and Residential teams.

The functions relating to dog control falls under the remit of the Residential group. In total there are eleven officers that deal with a wide range of service request each year totalling around 6,000 separate requests for service.

A relatively small number of these relate to dog control with fly tipping and vehicle abandonment investigations currently making up the greatest volume. For around ten years, our stray dog warden service has been outsourced to a private provider and for the last 2 years the majority of dog fouling enforcement patrols have been carried out by Kingdom Security.

In 2015 we also entered in a shared service arrangement with Staffordshire Animal Health to discharge certain important but niche areas of activity relating to livestock disease control and investigation into illegal puppy imports.

All other activities are delivered in-house and this mix of service delivery methods works well and is thought to be cost effective.

4.0 A summary of the main legislation used by the Council

4.1 Nuisance Dogs – Community Protection Notices

The grounds to use these new powers is persistent and unreasonable conduct which is having a detrimental effect on the quality of life for those in the locality.

This power is used by the Council to deal with dogs that frequently roam onto other property and cause nuisance. It is also used where accumulations of dog faeces are not removed from private gardens to such an extent that it impacts on neighboring residents.

4.2 Stray Dogs

Sections 149 & 150 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 places a duty on local authorities to seize and detain stray dogs from public places. A person claiming to be the owner of a seized dog is not entitled to have the dog returned unless he pays all the expenses incurred by reason of its detention.

The new microchipping legislation and use of social media to advertise lost / stray dogs has resulted in fewer call-outs for the dog warden with a commensurate reduction in the Council stray dog budget.

4.3 Microchipping

Microchipping of Dogs (England) Regulations 2015 made it compulsory for all dogs over the age of 8 weeks in England to be fitted with microchips from 6 April 2016. Dogs now need to be microchipped and registered with their keepers' contact details and all keepers, including breeders, must keep these details up to date.

If a dog without a microchip comes to the Councils attention, its keeper is routinely served with a notice requiring the dog to be microchipped.

4.4 Dog Fouling / Dogs on Lead and certain Dog Prohibitions

In October 2017, the previous Dog Control Orders from 2007 lapsed and became the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) 2017. Following widespread public consultation in the Summer/Autumn of 2017 including groups representing the dogs and dog walkers, the previous restrictions remained largely unchanged.

The PSPO came before this Scrutiny Panel before becoming law. A breach of the PSPO can result in the issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) amounting to £80 which is a small increase on the previous FPN of £75 for dog fouling related offences.

5.0 Changes to the legislation and performance measures for the service

The last significant change to affect Wolverhampton was the 2017 PSPO and there are no other significant changes to the legislation on the horizon. A key performance measure for the dog wardens is speed of response and this is not expected to change.

6.0 The scale of the problems faced in Wolverhampton and any Hotspot areas and issues

Reports of dog fouling have decreased by around 44% during the last 6 years from 488 in 2009/2010 to 272 in 2016/2017. Over the last 3 years the reports of nuisance dogs have seen a 32% reduction from 101 to 69 and the dogs reported for collection by the warden has seen a 30% reduction since 2015; from 470 to 325.

In terms of hot spot areas, the primary data we hold has been kindly provided by Environmental Services and is shown in the table below for 2017/18. This information is routinely provided to our enforcement team to conduct patrols.

Ward	No. of dog fouling incidents
St Peter's	28
Bilston East	19
Ettingshall	19
Graiseley	13
Penn	10
Fallings Park	6
Park	8
Bilston North	6
Bushbury South and Low Hill	6
Wednesfield South	7
Oxley	7
East Park	4
Tettenhall Regis	4
Merry Hill	6
Spring Vale	3
Blakenhall	4
Tettenhall Wightwick	2
Bushbury North	3
Heath Town	2
Wednesfield North	0

7.0 Wolverhampton's enforcement policy compared to other neighbouring authorities

The Black country local authorities produced a combined enforcement and service standards policy in 2016 which is attached.

8.0 An annual breakdown of the income received by the service through fines / fixed penalty notices (last three years).

2015: £375
 2016: £2550
 2017: £225

9.0 Details of any Orders in place across Wolverhampton and how well they are working

The 2017 Dog Control PSPO is attached. In terms of dog prohibitions from certain vulnerable areas and the requirement to have dogs on leads, the Council is not aware of any issues arising that have required enforcement action. The dog fouling offence has

been around for well over 20 years and targeted enforcement patrols and awareness raising campaigns appear to be having a positive impact judging by the number of service requests recorded in paragraph 6.0.

10.0 Communicating details about the services the Council offers

Our main communication platform is the web where people can report a whole range of dog related matters including: strays, noise, cruelty, dog breeding, pet shops selling dogs. There are also links to the PSPO, our enforcement policy and Kennel Club, Dogs Trust and RSPCA websites for more detailed information. We also use twitter and Facebook to promote activities and stories of interest. Traditional methods of communication are also permitted.

11.0 Initiatives planned for the foreseeable future

In 2017 the Council collaborated with the Dogs Trust, RSPCA, Sunnyside Kennels and Wolverhampton College to run an event in West Park promoting responsible dog ownership. A number of microchips were fitted at no cost to the owner or the Council and the Dogs Trust donated 50 vouchers to be used for neutering and spaying. The event was well received and we look to repeat it in 2018