

Report to: Cabinet

Date: 5 February 2009

Subject: Animal Warden Service – Deferred Motion

Report of: Executive director - Environmental Services

Contact officer: Michell Woodburn 01942 827450 (2450)
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Purpose / summary: This report responds to a Council Motion of 3rd September 2008 and explains how the Environmental Services Department is discharging its extended out-of-hours stray dog function and tackling dog fouling across the Borough.

Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended: None

Recommendation / decision: Cabinet to note the report and the steps being taken to tackle the dog control issues raised by the Motion.

The decision will be made as a result of this report and will be published within 48 hours

Risks / Implications:

Financial:	N/A
Staffing:	N/A
Policy:	N/A
Equal Opportunities - Has a Diversity Impact Assessment been conducted?	N/A
Wards affected:	All

Property Implications – Does the proposal involve a reduction, addition or change to the Council’s asset base or its occupation?

No

If yes, have the property implications been agreed with the Corporate Property Officer?

Does this proposal have significant implications for the Council and the local population?

A diversity impact assessment is not necessary at this stage, however, equality and diversity implications have been considered when producing this report.

Does this proposal involve a new policy or procedure or significant changes to an existing policy or procedure?

A diversity impact assessment is not necessary at this stage, however, equality and diversity implications have been considered when producing this report.

Has the Service Director - Borough Solicitor confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council’s Constitution?

Yes *

Has the Service Director - Corporate Services confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council’s budget?

Yes *

Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council?

No *

* delete which applicable

For Cabinet reports only:

Categorisation of the report:	X
Discussion leading to a decision	
Monitoring	
Sharing for corporate understanding	

	X
Discussion	
Decision	
Information	X

Tracking/Process:

	Consultation	Ward Members	Partners
Panel	Overview & Scrutiny	Cabinet	Council
		5 February 2009	

There are no Background Papers to this Report within the meaning of Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Proper Officer Martin Kimber

Date 21 January 2009

1.0 Introduction

1.1 A Council Motion of 3rd September 2008 queried levels of service provision in relation to dog control, particularly: -

- Whether resources were adequate to deal with additional demand since statutory responsibility for the out-of-hours stray dogs function transferred from Greater Manchester Police to the Council in April 2008
- Steps being taken to tackle dog fouling across the borough, particularly educational and enforcement actions

2.0 Background:

Out-of-Hours Stray Dog Provision

2.1 In April 2008, the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 transferred the out-of-hours responsibility for stray dogs from the Police to local authorities. The Government provided £21,000 additional year on year funding to help Wigan Council meet increased costs.

2.2 Environmental Services explored a number of options to determine the best way to discharge the out-of-hours function. A proposal by the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities was the most cost effective option and provided the best level of service.

2.3 The arrangement involves a contractor acting on behalf of the Greater Manchester Councils by collecting or receiving out-of-hours strays daily until 1am. The service far exceeds minimum Defra standards and could not have been delivered in-house within budget. The proposal was submitted to Cabinet and approved in March 2008.

2.4 An 'in-house' animal warden service discharges the council's day-time stray dog statutory responsibility. It comprises of two daytime animal wardens, although one post is currently provided by a contractor. Kennelling of all seized strays for a prescribed seven day period is contracted out.

2.5 Clear service standards exist in relation to response times for both daytime and out-of-hours provision and there has been no reduction in performance. The performance of all contractors is monitored closely and current arrangements will be reviewed at year-end.

3.0 Dog Fouling

3.1 Environmental Services takes its duty to protect public health and encourage environmental responsibility very seriously.

3.2 The department's new Environmental Enforcement Strategy sets out our approach to tackle dog fouling and other environmental crimes.

- 3.3 The Strategy provides a structured service delivery and performance management framework and has three main elements: -
- Education and awareness raising
 - Improved service delivery focused on community priorities.
 - Proportionate, consistent and effective enforcement
- 3.4 The Strategy also ensures that resources are focused on local priorities. These are identified by cleanliness surveys undertaken to fulfil National Indicator 195 requirements, through customer and councillor requests, and via the PACT community engagement process. Dog fouling is currently recognised as a borough-wide priority.
- 3.5 Consequently, Neighbourhoods Division and the Environmental Education team are delivering a borough-wide dog fouling campaign during 2009. New signage will encourage owners to 'pick up' and a publicity drive will highlight that wrapped dog fouling can be put in litter bins. Free poop scoop bags continue to be available and we are trialling poop scoop bag dispensers in suitable areas. The 10 wards where dog fouling is most prevalent will receive extra attention.
- 3.6 Enforcement is primarily being undertaken by Neighbourhood Team officers and operatives and the environmental Crime Team but I have also authorised Police Community Support Officers and Estate Management Officers to issue fixed penalty notices. Any income raised through enforcement action will support further education, awareness campaigns and problem solving.
- 3.7 Measures outlined in the Strategy present new ways of working for our operational teams and our partners. A toolkit and training programme have been developed to support officers and to ensure a consistent and balanced approach, particularly in relation to enforcement.

4.0 Conclusions:

- 4.1 Environmental Services' response to stray dog and dog fouling issues form part of a robust and sustainable approach designed to encourage responsible behaviour, deter crime and improve local environmental quality, focusing on the issues that matter to our communities.
- 4.2 Members can be reassured that resources put in place to tackle dog control and other environmental priorities have increased, and are more responsive and competent than ever before, and that initiatives outlined above will help to achieve a cleaner, greener and safer borough.