



Policy and Public Initiatives Panel

Item

8

19 June 2019

Report of	Lucie Breadman Assistant Director of Communities	Author	Belinda Silkstone ☎ 282745
Title	Responsible Dog Ownership		
Wards affected	All		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Pet ownership is well recognised for the companionship, comfort and sense of wellbeing that it brings. Pet ownership has been found to decrease loneliness, isolation and depression, provide a sense of security and necessitates lifestyle changes that promote physical activity.
- 1.2 To improve our streets and local environment, Colchester Borough Council promotes and encourages positive dog ownership, whilst also tackling those antisocial behaviours such as dog fouling.

2. Action Required

- 2.1 For the Panel to note the information regarding responsible dog ownership included in the report.

3. Reason for Review

- 3.1 An online submission on responsible dog ownership was received from a member of the public, which was included in the Panel's public engagement session on 19 September 2018. This issue was adopted by the Panel at the meeting and was subsequently approved for inclusion in the Panel's Work Programme at the Cabinet meeting on 10 October 2018.

4. Background Information

Roles and Responsibilities

- 4.1 Responsibility for a dog's actions ultimately rests with the owner or, where the owner is absent, the person in control of the dog. However, Colchester Borough Council and its partners, including Essex Police, the RSPCA and other Essex local authorities (Councils) share several responsibilities, including law enforcement responsibilities in relation to the control of dogs and dog welfare.

These responsibilities are summarised below:

4.2 **The Council**

- Collection of stray dogs
- A 'duty of care' to the animals in its care i.e. collected stray dogs
- Primary responsibility for the enforcement of dog fouling legislation
- Primary responsibility for legislation relating to microchipping.

In addition to the above, the Council is also responsible for:

- The investigation and enforcement of statutory nuisances including noise from barking;
- Dogs, nuisance attributable to the manner in which animals are kept and accumulations of dogs' mess on private land; and
- The licensing of animal boarding establishments, pet shops and dog breeders.

4.3 **The Police**

- Primary responsibility for dangerous dogs including those breeds that are prohibited by the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 and any dog deemed to be out of control in a public place;
- Primary responsibility under the Guard Dogs Act 1975;
- Responsibility for dogs worrying livestock.

4.4 **The RSPCA**

- The promotion of kindness to dogs and the alleviation of suffering;
- Dogs abandoned on private property;
- Dogs in distress.

The Responsible Dog Strategy.

4.5 In 2012 the Council introduced a Responsible Dog Strategy 2012 -15. Despite extensive promotion of the strategy including two CBC-organised 'Bark in the Park' events held in Colchester Castle Park and other local events, the strategy document appended to this report as Appendix 1 remains virtually unknown.

4.6 Following discussions with dog owners, it was found that dog owners seek advice on how to look after their dogs responsibly via vets, charities rehoming centres, local dog behaviourists and social media, including Facebook groups, and did not consider the Council.

4.7 In addition, the Council online team has advised that it is exceptional for members of the public to download a pdf document and that information regarding dog ownership would be better presented in bite size chunks which are easier to read via a phone or on a tablet.

- 4.8 Therefore, with approval from the former Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities, the Strategy document was not updated.

Bark in the Park

- 4.9 Two large dog-centred events were held in Castle Park during 2013 in 2015. These excellent events were led by Animal Services. To cover the costs incurred, 'Bark in the Park' charged an entrance fee.
- 4.10 There is no capacity to host an annual event from current Council resources. If future events were deemed necessary then Colchester Events Company could be approached to see if they could oversee or find an external organiser. CBC Animal Services which consists of two officers who are responsible for both the Commercial Pest Control and the Stray Dog Service would attend the event to provide advice on dog-related matters.
- 4.11 To provide information and advice to dog owners to enable and support compliance with the law, Animal Services continues to promote responsible dog ownership at CBH, Zone Team organised events, Police-led activities and events such as Street Weeks. These events are **free** and open to all residents to attend.

Promoting Responsible Dog Ownership

- 4.12 Whilst the Strategy has expired, it is still relevant, and the Council continues to promote responsible dog ownership and many of the key objectives included in the strategy:
- To reduce the social and environmental impact of stray and abandoned dogs on our communities,
 - To work with partners and communities to ensure that stray dogs are reunited with their owners or re-homed as swiftly as possible,
 - To reduce the incidence of dog fouling,
 - To raise awareness of the legal responsibilities associated with dog ownership and breeding,
 - To provide information and advice to dog owners to enable and support compliance with the law.

Stray Dog Collection

- 4.13 Stray and abandoned dogs have a negative impact on the Environment through indiscriminate fouling and anti-social behaviour.
- 4.14 The Council operates a stray dog collection service to ensure that stray dogs collected are reunited with their owners or re-homed as swiftly as possible
- 4.15 The number of stray dogs collected by the Council has fallen over recent years:
In 2014 - **148**, 2015 – **125**, 2016 – **125**, 2017 – **126**, 2018 – **61** and to-date in 2019 – **16**

Free Dog Microchipping Service

- 4.16 The Council continues to operate a free dog microchipping service to all the Borough's residents. Microchipping of dogs can be carried out either at the dog's home or at one of the free events attended by the Animal Services Team.
- 4.17 Free microchipping supports Responsible Dog Ownership by ensuring that cost is not a barrier to having a dog microchipped. A dog that is correctly microchipped ensures that if it does stray it can be promptly reunited with their owner/s.

Dog Fouling

- 4.18 Allowing your dog to foul in a public place is antisocial. CBC's Zone Teams regularly patrol areas of the Borough, educating and enforcing upon the dog walkers the requirement for them to clear up after their pets. A Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) was renewed in Oct 2018 for a two-year period. This allows authorised CBC Officers to issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) of £100 to offenders. It is anticipated that this Order will need to be further extended.
- 4.19 In the past two years Zone Wardens have issued a total of 23 FPNs to members of the public who have either failed to clear up after their animal or breached a similar PSPO that is in force at Colchester Rugby Club.
- 4.20 CBC encourages members of the public to report dog fouling to us on line via <https://www.colchester.gov.uk/our-community/services/?action=Report>

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 It is recommended that the Council website is updated to include a responsible dog ownership page to provide dog owners with information on responsible dog ownership and compliance with the law.
- 5.2 For the Animal Services Team to continue to support the free CBC Zone Team events, 'CBH Make a Difference Days' and Police-led events.
- 5.3 For CBC to continue to provide a free dog microchipping service.

6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 6.1 The Equality Impact Assessments for responsible dog ownership can be found [here](#).
- 6.2 There are no particular Human Rights, Equality or Diversity Implications.

7. Strategic Plan References

- 7.1 Responsible Dog Ownership supports the Council's [Strategic Plan 2018 -21](#) by promoting and improving Colchester and its Environment.

8. Consultation

- 8.1 The Policy and Public Initiatives Panel carried out a public survey to provide guidance to the panel's priorities for the coming year. The results can be found [here](#).

9. Publicity Considerations

- 9.1 The Council promotes responsible dog ownership at various events throughout the year.

10. Financial implications

- 10.1 None

11. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 Responsible dog ownership has a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of the Borough's residents and visitors.
- 11.2 There are no community safety implications.

12. Health and Safety Implications

- 12.1 None

13. Risk management Implications

- 13.1 None

14. Appendices

- 14.1 Appendix 1 - CBC Responsible Dog Owners Strategy