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**To: ENVIRONMENT POLICY BOARD**

**On: 18 May 2016**

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**Report by: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES**

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**Heading: Promoting Responsible Dog Ownership in Renfrewshire**

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**1. Summary**

- 1.1 Council on 25 June 2015 commended the high standards of dog control, as seen in working dogs (for blind and deaf dog owners) and recommended that all dog owners in Renfrewshire should seek to achieve a similar standard of control. The motion highlighted dog fouling as a matter of real concern for the residents of the east end of Paisley and proposed the implementation of the advice of Dogs for the Disabled and Guide Dogs for the Blind as proper practice for all dog owners.
- 1.2 In order to address this, Community Resources have carried out a review of current activities in relation to dog ownership issues and identified what further actions can be taken promote responsible dog ownership in Renfrewshire. The review has identified that the issue of dog fouling is not restricted to the east end of Paisley or indeed Renfrewshire but is an issue which is a concern across Scotland. The Council has been working alongside the Scottish Government to respond to this national issue and have responded to consultations on key legislative changes which have been introduced and are highlighted at section 1.6 below.
- 1.3 As part of the review Community Resources have developed a strategy which will identify best practice for all dog owners, whilst recognising that the standard of training which assistance dogs receive is unlikely to be achieved by all dog owners.

- 1.4 It is recognised that the significant majority of dog owners are very responsible, ensuring that their dog is kept under proper control. Having a dog can be a hugely rewarding experience but owning a dog comes with responsibilities. A persistent minority of dog owners continue to affect communities by their lack control over their dog's behaviour. As well as causing welfare issues for their pet, irresponsible dog owners can affect communities through dog fouling, and allowing their dogs to cause nuisance to others.
- 1.5 Whilst it is recognised that dog fouling is an issue nationally, significant work has been undertaken in Renfrewshire in recent years to tackle dog fouling and irresponsible dog ownership. This has included a number of high profile dog fouling campaigns, the use of enforcement officers to tackle dog control and dog fouling issues in hotspot locations, education regarding responsible dog ownership undertaken in schools and provision of a microchipping service.
- 1.6 In addition to the local context there have also been legislative changes which came into effect from April 2016 with the introduction of a higher fine level for dog fouling, of £80. The legislation also introduced the requirement for all dog owners with dogs over the age of 8 weeks old to have their pets microchipped and their details registered and kept up to date on an approved database. Wardens can issue owners with a Notice requiring them to get their dog chipped and failure to do so may result in a report being sent to the Procurator Fiscal and fine of up to £500 being imposed.
- 1.7 In order to develop a co-ordinated response to the issue it is recognised that a local strategy requires to be implemented which ensures that responsible dog owners are supported and that those who cause issues within their communities are effectively tackled. The proposed strategy will be rolled out Renfrewshire wide in 2016-2017, with a performance review carried out to determine the effectiveness of the Strategy and further actions required.
- 1.8 The strategy has been produced in partnership with relevant services to ensure that the document and recommendations within are realistic, deliverable and achievable. There are 5 priority areas the strategy will strive to deliver against:
- Enhance partnership working,
  - Promote responsible dog ownership in Renfrewshire,
  - Tackle persistent offenders,
  - Improve enforcement procedures, and
  - Tackle Dog's dangerously out of control

- 1.9 For each priority area the strategy will outline service provision across the partnership and detail what the partnership will strive to deliver in 2016/17. The strategy outlines how Renfrewshire's Community Safety Partnership will deliver services which promote the value of dogs and encourage responsible ownership across Renfrewshire.
- 1.10 A booklet is currently being prepared which will summarise the key points within the strategy and this will be available for distribution to members, community groups, housing providers and dog owners in the near future.
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## **2. Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Environment Policy Board:

- 2.1 Notes the legislative amendments introduced by the Scottish Government in April 2016 aimed at responding to this issue which occurs across Scotland:
- Increased fixed penalty notice fines for dog fouling offences from £40 to £80, and
  - Introduction of a requirement for owners to microchip all dogs over 8 weeks old from 6 April 2016,
- 2.2 Notes progress set out in Section 3, on the development of a Promoting Responsible Dog Ownership Strategy and the intention to work with the Scottish Government and other national agencies to develop improved regulatory and enforcement procedures,
- 2.3 Agrees the priority areas, detailed at 1.8, for the Promoting Responsible Dog Ownership in Renfrewshire Strategy.
- 2.3 Requests that further reports are brought back to the Policy Board to provide progress updates with implementation of the Strategy.
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## **3. Background**

- 3.1 Evidence from national and local research continues to highlight that the impact of dog fouling is one of the most important environmental issues affecting communities.

3.2 The Renfrewshire Community Safety Partnership plays an active role in educating and informing the public of the issues associated with dog control. The following are examples of some of the ongoing initiatives:

- “Any Bin Will Do campaign” - This was utilised when the use of bespoke dog bins was removed and public were allowed to dispose of bagged dog waste in any council bin.
- “Do Your Bit” Dog Fouling Campaign - This was rolled out in several hotspot locations. It involved, street cleaning, increased Warden visibility, distribution of communication materials and enforcement.

3.3 Failure to pick up after your dog is an offence under the Dog Fouling (Scotland) Act 2003 (as amended). Community Safety Wardens, can issue a Fixed Penalty Notice to the offender. In addition to enforcement work the wardens regularly engage with the public to highlight the issue and its impact on communities. The legislative changes to the Dog Fouling (Fixed Penalty) (Scotland) Order 2016 with the Fixed Penalty Fine level increasing from £40 to £80 in April 2016 will assist in highlighting the importance of the issue across Renfrewshire. As well as the fixed penalty, the Scottish Government is also considering how to develop a more robust system to tackle the issue of collecting unpaid penalties, half of which currently go unpaid across Scotland.

3.4 In Renfrewshire a working group of key partners (Community Safety Partnership, Keep Scotland Beautiful, SSPCA and Housing Providers) was established in order to tackle this problem in the most effective manner. The working group have been developing a Renfrewshire wide strategy to allow a co-ordinated and proactive response to dealing with irresponsible dog ownership across the area.

3.5 As part of the development of the strategy a number opportunities to work in partnership have been highlighted, including;

- Working with housing providers to develop a dog ownership agreement that tenants would use when requesting permission to keep a pet. The agreement would ensure that owners understand their responsibility to keep dogs under proper control,
- Liaising with the private sector to promote the new micro chipping requirement. Events will be throughout 2016/17 where microchipping will be available free to dog owners,

- Co-ordinated communications with partners such as Keep Scotland Beautiful to ensure that key messages are delivered to Renfrewshire communities. Resources will include posters, moveable banners and updated website content.

3.8 As part of the strategy, a review of the Enforcement Procedure in relation to dog fouling offences will be undertaken. This will involve working with the Scottish Government to consider improvements that may include the use of witnessed evidence, targeted enforcement of hot spot areas, consideration of plain clothes enforcement, the deployment of mobile CCTV for detection. Part of this review will also include existing and proposed debt recovery procedures in relation to unpaid Fixed Penalty Notices.

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### **Implications of the Report**

1. **Financial** – none
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – none
3. **Community Planning**  
A Greener Renfrewshire – The introduction of a new strategy promoting Responsible Dog Ownership will help to ensure that Renfrewshire continues to be a clean and attractive location, providing a healthy, inviting and pleasant environment in which to live, work and do business.
4. **Legal** – Legal Services have been consulted for their views in relation to wording for an Agreement for tenants and further consultation will be required in relation to any proposed changes to enforcement procedures.
5. **Property/Assets**-none
6. **Information Technology** - none
7. **Equality & Human Rights** - The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report.

8. **Health & Safety** – none
9. **Procurement** – none
10. **Risk** – none
11. **Privacy Impact** - none

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**List of Background Papers - None**

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