

**To: Greener Renfrewshire Thematic Board**

**On: 30 January 2017**

**Report by:**

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**Heading:**

Renfrewshire Responsible Dog Ownership Strategy

**1. Summary**

- 1.1 At the Renfrewshire Council Environment Policy Board on 18 May 2016, elected members agreed to note an update on Renfrewshire's Strategy for Responsible Dog Ownership and requested a final strategy and approach for rolling out the strategy be brought back for approval to a future meeting of the Environment Policy Board.
- 1.2 The proposed strategy, as set out in Appendix 1 of this report, recognises that the significant majority of dog owners are very responsible, ensuring that their dog is kept under proper control and that having a dog can be a hugely rewarding experience, but also recognising that owning a dog comes with responsibilities. Across Scotland there continues to be a persistent minority of dog owners who adversely affect communities through their lack of control over their dogs' behaviour. As well as causing welfare issues for their pet, irresponsible dog owners allow their dogs to cause a nuisance or even a danger to others.
- 1.3 The introduction of new Legislation in 2016 requires dog owners to have their dogs microchipped, and increases fine levels from £40 to £80 for dog fouling. This new legislation provided the opportunity for a review of the Council's procedures in relation to dog control. A key outcome of this review being the proposal of a strategy for promoting responsible dog ownership which brings together separate education, communication and enforcement campaigns into a single approach to promote and support responsible dog ownership in the area.

## 2. **Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Greener Renfrewshire Thematic Board note the contents of the Renfrewshire Responsible Dog Ownership Strategy, which was approved by Renfrewshire Council's Environment Policy Board In November 2016.

## 3. **Background**

- 3.1 Following a motion raised at the full Renfrewshire Council on 25 June 2015, a review of responsible dog ownership in Renfrewshire was undertaken and a report presented to the Renfrewshire Council Environment Policy Board on 18 May 2016. The report noted a number of legislative changes introduced by the Scottish Government aimed at responding to the issue of dog fouling and highlighted the priority areas for the development of a Renfrewshire Promoting Responsible Dog Ownership Strategy. It was agreed that progress updates on the development and implementation of a responsible dog ownership strategy should be provided to future meetings of the Renfrewshire Environment Policy Board. This subsequent report sought approval for the strategy and set out a timeline for its implementation.

## 4. **The Local and National Landscape**

- 4.1 Renfrewshire Council's Community Resources provides the community with a wide variety of services to all householders and businesses across Renfrewshire including: the management of waste and street cleaning services; provision of parks and cemeteries; the protection of public health and regulation of business premises. However, a significant number of complaints are received annually that relate to Dog Fouling and in this Renfrewshire is not unique.
- 4.2 Across Scotland, dog control issues and especially dog fouling are major contributors to anti-social behaviour. In recent research into public attitudes to littering carried out by Keep Scotland Beautiful, almost 7 in 10 people rated dog fouling as the item on our streets, parks and beaches that bothered them most, with around 9 million dogs in the UK, producing over 1,000 tonnes of excrement per day, it's easy to see why dog fouling can be a problem.
- 4.3 Significant work has been undertaken in Renfrewshire in recent years to tackle dog fouling and irresponsible dog ownership including a number of separate high profile dog fouling campaigns, the use of enforcement officers to tackle dog control and dog fouling issues in hotspot locations; and education regarding responsible dog ownership. The proposed responsible dog ownership strategy learns the lessons of these campaigns and

interventions and seeks to bring successful elements together in a planned and co-ordinated manner with input from relevant key stakeholders and the public.

- 4.4 Some progress has been made. During 2015/16, there were a total of 825 complaints received in Renfrewshire in relation to Dog Fouling - this represents a 28% reduction in comparison to the corresponding total for 2014/15. This has been achieved through a number of successful actions including targeted patrolling and enforcement, and is further demonstrated by the reducing annual trend in associated issues e.g. stray dogs - reduced by 40% between 2014/15 and 2015/16; dogs barking - reduced by 38% during the same period; and lost dogs, which reduced by 35% over the same period. The number of fixed penalty notices has reduced over the last number of years, reflecting the increase in high visibility patrols undertaken by Renfrewshire Wardens on a daily basis.
- 4.5 Since May 2016, officers within the Renfrewshire Community Safety Partnership have carried out consultation with relevant internal & external stakeholders (including Renfrewshire Wardens, Police Scotland, Street Scene, the Dogs Trust, Keep Scotland Beautiful and Housing Providers) in order to develop a responsible dog ownership strategy that is able to tackle the priorities for each partner organisation and the wider community.
- 4.6 The proposed strategy focuses on 4 priorities which were highlighted by the consultation with stakeholders, namely:
- **Enhanced partnership working** to promote closer partnership working between key partners such as Housing Providers, Police and Dog Charities;
  - **Promoting responsible behaviours** with a programme of key messages and expectations supported by bespoke publicity campaigns developed to highlight dog control issues;
  - **Tackling persistent offenders and improved enforcement** with new policies/practices established to make enforcement of offenders and pursuit of non-payment of fines easier
  - **Tackling out of control dogs** with a particular focus on those that represent a danger to the public or nuisance to the wider community
- 4.7 The strategy is focused on the delivery of a number of key outcomes:
- Increased awareness among dog owners and the general public regarding the responsibilities of dog ownership and control.

- A reduction in the number of stray dogs or dogs under investigation that are not microchipped.
  - An increase in the number of Dog Owners who adhere to the Responsible Dog Ownership Pledge
  - An increase in the number of dogs in Council rented properties that are microchipped.
  - A reduction in the number of complaints regarding dog control issues.
  - A reduction in the number of dog owners who fail to pick up after their dogs
  - An increase in the number of Fixed Penalty Notices issued for dog fouling.
- 3.8 If approved the strategy will run throughout 2017 with 3 key phases, Phase 1: Initial Communications and Enforcement Activities, Phase 2: Partnership Engagements, Phase 3: Targeted Campaigns and Enforcement. A review of the strategy will be undertaken from December 2017 to March 2018, the aim of which is to determine the success of the approach and the key priorities for 2018-2019.
- 3.9 Specific communications materials will be produced based on the Keep Scotland Beautiful 'Watching You' Campaign and will incorporate, posters, large moveable banners, bin stickers and leaflets and Information Packs.
- 3.10 As part of the implementation roll out both Community Resources and Development & Housing Services are working together to ensure that tenants are reminded of their responsibilities regarding dog ownership and that nuisance dogs will not be tolerated in Council properties. To emphasise this tenants seeking permission to have a dog will be asked to adhere to the Responsible Dog Ownership Pledge and this will be rolled out across other Registered Social Landlords in Renfrewshire.
- 3.11 The proposed Responsible Dog Ownership Pledge is attached as Appendix 2 to this report.
- 3.12 Whilst enforcement will always take place where people are identified as breaking the law, after the initial launch of the strategy there will be a series of targeted enforcement and capacity building campaigns in specific hot-spot locations using a range of methods to identify persistent offenders whilst at the same time continuing a campaign of education across schools and communities in Renfrewshire.

3.13 The strategy will be dynamic and will continue to evolve and respond to new approaches and consultation will continue with our key stakeholders to ensure that responsible dog ownership is promoted and irresponsible dog ownership is tackled across Renfrewshire.

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## Renfrewshire's Strategy for Responsible Dog Ownership

- 1.1 This strategy is focused on the delivery of a number of key outcomes:
- Increased awareness among dog owners and the general public regarding the responsibilities of dog ownership and control.
  - A reduction in the number of stray dogs or dogs under investigation that are not microchipped.
  - An increase in the number of Dog Owners who adhere to the Responsible Dog Ownership Pledge
  - An increase in the number of dogs in Council rented properties that are microchipped.
  - A reduction in the number of complaints regarding dog control issues.
  - A reduction in the number of dog owners who fail to pick up after their dogs
  - An increase in the number of Fixed Penalty Notices issued for dog fouling.
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 The Renfrewshire Community Safety Partnership plays an active role in educating and informing the public of the issues associated with dog control and will continue to work in partnership to help change behaviours around dog control. As part of this we will build on the successes of previous local initiatives whilst adopting approaches which have had success elsewhere. The key aim of this strategy is to promote responsible dog ownership whilst promoting pride in Renfrewshire, highlighting the role that dog owners play in keeping our streets, parks and communities safe and clean. In Paisley we will also tie in with City of Culture messages whenever possible to highlight the role that our dog owners play in keeping Paisley safe and clean.
- 1.4 This strategy will tackle issues surrounding dog control which affect our communities including: dangerous and nuisance dogs, dog fouling; dog barking; and stray dogs; as well as supporting our dog owners in caring for their pets. It focuses on delivering 4 key factors:

- **Enhanced partnership working** to promote closer partnership working between key partners such as housing providers, Police and Dog Charities;
- **Promoting responsible behaviours** with a programme of key messages and expectations supported by bespoke publicity campaigns developed to highlight dog control issues;
- **Tackling persistent offenders and improved enforcement** with new policies/practices established to make enforcement of offenders and pursuit of non-payment of fines easier
- **Tackling out of control dogs** with a particular focus on those that represent a danger to the public or nuisance to the wider community.

1.5 Implementation of this strategy will be undertaken over 3 key phases.

### **Phase 1: Initial Communications and Enforcement Activities**

1.6 Phase 1 will run from December 2016 to April 2017 and will promote the message to the public about what is acceptable dog control. The placing of posters and mobile banners will be carried out in a targeted way in hotspot locations determined by statistical analysis of complaints received and/or local knowledge:

- Launch of this strategy in December with enhanced communications regarding dog control issues. Using festive messages to reinforce the need for all new and existing family pets (cats and dogs) to be microchipped.
- Use of striking posters, first used by Keep Britain Tidy, with hard-hitting messages and trademarked 'glow in the dark' eyes in hotspot locations to help influence the behaviour of those dog owners who currently don't do the right thing. These posters were piloted in partnership with Keep Scotland Beautiful and the NFU Scotland and their use more than halved the incidence of dog fouling recorded over the duration of the pilot.
- Production of a Renfrewshire's Strategy for Responsible Dog Ownership and distribution to the public, community groups, housing providers and dog owners. This will also be made available on line.
- Production of a condensed information leaflet promoting responsible dog ownership will be available on line and as a hard copy for distribution to the public.
- Development of a detailed year round communication plan which will deliver key dog control messages including, using our parks and public spaces responsibly, problems with dog control on agricultural land, dog control in play parks and sports grounds, microchipping dogs, and dog bag litter.

- The 'Any Bin Will Do' message will continue to be promoted using social media and bin stickers.
- Social media will be used to highlight when a stray has been uplifted ensuring the best chance of a speedy return to its owner.

### **Phase 2: Partnership Engagements**

1.7 Phase 2 of the strategy will run from February 2017 to June 2017. As part of the strategy there is an ongoing commitment from each of the key stakeholders: Community Resources; housing providers; Police Scotland; Dogs Charities; NFU and The Forestry Commission, to work together as a partnership to tackle the problem in Renfrewshire and a number of opportunities to work in partnership have been highlighted, including;

- Supporting housing providers (public and private) in promoting responsible dog ownership amongst their tenants.
- Working with Police Scotland through the Renfrewshire Rural Tasking Group and with the NFU, Forestry Commission and other landowners who are affected by dog control issues.
- Emphasising that nuisance dogs will not be tolerated in Council rented property and promotion of the Responsible Dog Ownership Pledge to tenants seeking permission for a dog. This initiative strives to remind tenants seeking permission for dogs of the conditions of their Tenancy Agreement and how this could be impacted through lack of control over their dog. To reinforce this message tenants seeking permission for dogs will be asked to adhere to the Responsible Dog Ownership Pledge, and as an incentive those who sign up will receive a Responsible Owner Welcome pack.
- In association with housing providers, posters will be erected in communal areas to encourage responsible dog ownership and promoting the opportunity for dog owning tenants to sign up to the Responsible Dog Ownership Pledge.
- Articles will be published in tenant newsletters promoting the strategy.
- Revising Renfrewshire Council's webpage to ensure that local residents can access dog ownership messages and know how to report incidents of dog related antisocial behaviour.
- Working with the Forestry Commission Scotland and the NFU to deliver publicity materials to support farmers who are affected by dog control issues.
- Supporting animal charities including Dogs Trust, SSPCA and PDSA in the delivery of their education programmes.

### **Phase 3 Targeted Campaigns and Enforcement**

1.8 Phase 3 will run from April 2017 to March 2018 when the overall outcomes of the strategy will be reviewed. Within this phase, in addition to the work undertaken and ongoing in Phases 1 and 2, key hotspot locations identified will be targeted for focused interventions. Key priorities during Phase 3 will include:

- Identification of hotspot locations utilising statistical information.
- Use of social media to highlight issues in key areas.
- Targeted activities in each hotspot lasting 2-4 weeks.
- Wardens will consider a range of measures to promote responsible dog ownership in hotspot locations which may include: low visibility enforcement patrols of hotspot locations, issuing Fixed Penalty Notices to offenders, reporting repeat offenders to the Procurator Fiscal, use of CCTV for targeted interventions; use of DVLA information to trace offenders, erection of temporary 'Watching You' signage or similar, use of 'Any Bins Will Do' stickers on bins and engaging with key partners.
- Wardens will issue warning letters to those suspected of failing to pick up within their communities and will leaflet drop areas where dog control is reported as being an issue asking for the support of the community to catch offenders.
- Large moveable banners for key locations, such as, school play grounds, parks, sports fields and children's play parks will also be used together with 'Any Bin Will Do' stickers. Use of these communication materials will only be considered in hotspot locations as over use of any visual media can reduce the impact of the message.
- Launch of Responsible Owners 'Selfie' Gallery which will use social media to encourage dog owners to sign up to the Responsible Dog Ownership Pledge.
- Relaunch of the 'Don't Put Up with It' campaign designed to encourage the public to report those in their community who are causing issues through a lack of control of their dog.
- Delivery of a workshop at Safe Kids 2017 designed to raise awareness with Primary 6 youths regarding dog control issues and to encourage them to sign up to the Pledge.
- Microchipping will be promoted with Community Resources supporting PDSA and other animal charities in delivering local surgeries to dog owners where microchipping may be offered free of charge.

### **Tackling persistent offenders and improved enforcement**

1.9 Throughout implementation of the strategy there will be a focus on tackling persistent offenders. The Renfrewshire Community Safety Partnership will identify hotspot locations for dog control issues in Renfrewshire. Intelligence led interventions will be developed, focusing on specific dog control or welfare

issues that affect urban and rural communities such as nuisance dogs, aggressive dogs, banned breeds, dog fouling, organised dog fighting, illegal dog dealing/breeding, noisy dogs and neglected dogs. Our communities will be encouraged to share with any information that they have in this regard;

- Bins will be provided in areas of most need but there is an expectation that dog owners will take responsibility for bagged dog waste and its removal in places where bins are not available or they may face an £80 littering fine.
- Failure to pick up after a dog will result in a Fixed Penalty Notice of £80 being imposed for first time offenders. Those who have been previously issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice may be reported to the Procurator Fiscal who can issue a higher fine.
- As part of the strategy, a review of the Enforcement Procedure will be undertaken with consideration being given to the use of reliable witness statements, targeted enforcement of hot spot areas, consideration of low visibility or plain clothes enforcement, the use of CCTV for targeted campaigns, use of DVLA information as appropriate and information sharing between partners to allow follow up on microchipping requirements.
- Where a dog is out of control and it is causing reasonable fear and alarm to others, wardens may issue a Dog Control Notice. This will set conditions which the owner must comply with such as; ensuring that the dog is kept on a lead, wears a muzzle, receives training, microchipping and so on.
- Procedures will be improved to ensure that non-payment of fines is robustly pursued.
- Dog owners will be encouraged to get their dog micro-chipped. Failure to do so will result in animal wardens issuing owners with a Notice which if not adhered to may result in a report being sent to the Procurator Fiscal and a fine of up to £500 being imposed. Wardens and Housing providers will share information to assist compliance.
- An SSPCA education programme will be undertaken with Council employees, police and housing providers to ensure that all persons entering the homes of dog owners are aware of what they should do when they are suspicious that a dog or other animal is being neglected/abused.
- We will continue to work with partners such as Police Scotland and SSPCA to deal with dangerous dogs. Information relating to dangerous dogs in rented accommodation will be shared with the housing provider, to ensure that other tenants are appropriately protected. We will continue to highlight issues relating to dangerous

dogs so that members and the general public know how to report any concerns they may have.

## **2. Measuring Success**

2.1 Community Resources will produce regular updates to local area committees and partners on the success of this strategy. We will:

- Analyse dog control complaints;
- Increase enforcement activities;
- Ensure wide distribution of communications materials and measure social media responses;
- Measure uptake of the Responsible Dog Ownership Pledge;
- Support partners to deliver microchipping services; and
- Measure use of bins in key locations to ensure they are correctly positioned.

2.2 Key success measures will include:

- Increased awareness among dog owners and the general public regarding the responsibilities of dog ownership and control.
  - A reduction in the number of stray dogs or dogs under investigation that are not microchipped.
  - An increase in the number of Dog Owners who adhere to the Responsible Dog Ownership Pledge.
  - An increase in the number of dogs in Council rented properties that are microchipped.
  - A reduction in the number of complaints regarding dog control issues.
  - A reduction in the number of dog owners who fail to pick up after their dogs.
  - An initial increase and subsequent reduction in the number of Fixed Penalty Notices issued for dog fouling.
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## Appendix 2

### Responsible Dog Ownership Pledge

I understand that owning and looking after a dog comes with responsibilities not only to ensure the welfare of the dog but also to ensure that the behaviour of the dog does not adversely impact on others. I am a responsible dog owner and agree to the following:

- I will look after my dog ensuring that it is well cared for.
- I will not keep a dog without permission of my housing provider.
- I understand that not everyone is comfortable around dogs and will not assume that it is ok for my dog to approach others without their consent.
- I will not allow my dog to bark excessively or cause a nuisance to others.
- I will not allow my dog to use communal areas for exercise or as a doggie WC.
- I will always pick up after my dog and will bin the bagged dog waste.
- I understand that dog faeces can be dangerous as it may carry the *Toxicara* parasite which can cause blindness.
- I will keep my dog under proper control and supervised at all times.
- I understand that by law all dogs over 8 weeks old must be micro-chipped.
- I will not keep a dog that is a banned breed under The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.
- I will not breed dogs at my residence without my Housing Providers permission.
- I will not provide a dog minding service for others without my Housing Providers permission.
- I will make arrangements with another person to ensure that my dog is looked after in my absence e.g. holiday or hospital stay.

I understand that if my dog causes a nuisance or a disturbance, my housing provider can withdraw permission for me to have a dog and I may be required to rehouse my dog.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Dog Type and Breed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Dog Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Dog Age:** \_\_\_\_\_