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**TO: INFRASTRUCTURE, LAND AND ENVIRONMENT POLICY BOARD**

**ON: 29 MAY 2019**

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**REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITIES, HOUSING AND PLANNING**

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**HEADING: VOLUNTARY PROFESSIONAL DOG WALKING SCHEME**

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**1. Summary**

- 1.1 At the Infrastructure, Land and Environment Policy Board on 30 May 2018 Members considered a report on Dog Fouling: Requirement to carry bags/Licensing of Dog Walkers. At this time, Members requested that a further report be brought back to this Policy Board giving consideration to establishing a voluntary registration scheme for Dog Walkers.
- 1.2 Legislation, relating to the care and impact of dogs in communities, is broadly similar across the UK. At the current time, the main legislation is the Dog Fouling (Scotland) Act 2003, and the Control of Dogs (Scotland) Act 2010 which aims to ensure that dogs should be under control in public places and not present a danger/nuisance.
- 1.3 An individual who is paid to look after dogs in their home, kennels or other premises requires a licence from the Local Authority. There are guidelines to secure the safety and welfare of the dogs, limiting the number of dogs permitted at any one time, ensuring dogs are well fed, adequately exercised and protected from disease.
- 1.4 Trading Standards and Licensing currently enforce the Animal Boarding Establishments Act 1963 which requires this license to be granted before a private dwelling can board dogs for a monetary fee. This license requires renewal annually and conditions are held in statute, the conditions that can be imposed do not address dog walking or dog fouling.
- 1.5 At the current time, there is therefore no legislation for the licensing of dog walking companies and therefore no provision for enforcement that can be undertaken by local authorities. Unlike Animal Boarding, dog walkers do not require a license and are not subject to any regulations monitoring their activities.

- 1.6 Scotland has seen a rapid increase over the last few years in dog walking businesses and this is also the picture within Renfrewshire. This has coincided with an increase in complaints regarding the management and operation of such businesses.
- 1.7 Renfrewshire Council's Community Safety Partnership would like to provide reassurance to dog owners who use these businesses, that they are compliant with fundamental good practice principles. It is believed that the wider public would also benefit from recognising Renfrewshire Council is taking active measures to seek to monitor activity and support best practice in this area.
- 1.8 To this end, Communities and Public Protection are proposing to introduce a voluntary scheme where professional dog walkers can register and show that they are going above basic legal requirements. It is hoped that a register will improve the public perception of local dog walking companies, reassure pet owners that their dogs are being treated well whilst on these walks and demonstrate Renfrewshire Council's commitment to raising standards in this regard.
- 1.9 The Community Safety Partnership propose to secure agreement from these businesses in relation to:
- The number of dogs walked at any one time
  - The provision of appropriate insurance
  - The suitability of any Vehicle used to transport the dogs
  - Dog fouling being removed and disposed of accordingly
  - Appropriate areas being used to exercise the dogs
- 1.10 The scheme will operate in a similar manner to the responsible dog owners pledge and include the professional dog walker signing up to adhere to similar best practice. Registered dog walkers could potentially be included as part of the Council's Trusted Traders Scheme.
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## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Infrastructure, Land and Environment Policy Board:
- (i) agrees to introduce a voluntary dog walking scheme for professional dog walkers; and
  - (ii) requests a further progress report detailing the terms and operation of the scheme as outlined in this report be brought back to a future Board Meeting.
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### **3. Proposed voluntary professional dog walking scheme**

- 3.1 It is proposed that Renfrewshire Council liaise with all professional dog walkers within the Renfrewshire boundary. Work has been undertaken so far and there are currently believed to be over 40 professional dog walkers in Renfrewshire.
- 3.2 Renfrewshire Council will look to set minimum standards for professional walkers to adhere to, thus ensuring these exceed legal expectations. If they meet the criteria, Renfrewshire Council will advertise these companies on a register, showing they have been checked by the Council and that they have agreed to adhere to the best practice set out in the scheme for Professional Dog Walkers. Renfrewshire Council will advertise the register on the Council website. Consideration will be given to linking the scheme to the Trusted Traders Scheme with a fee to cover the administration of the scheme charged in line with the Trusted Traders Scheme.
- 3.3 A targeted marketing campaign will raise the profile of the initiative and ensure brand recognition. Registered walkers will likely be trusted by pet owners, the wider public will be reassured that recognised dog walkers will adhere to the principles of the initiative. Pet owners would be able to make a considered choice following a check on the Council website.
- 3.4 Van stickers and arm bands will identify participating dog walkers to further increase brand recognition and ensure compliance.
- 3.5 Evidence or reports of non-compliance will be investigated. Where repeated non-compliances are noted, the business may be removed from the register. Animal Wardens are employed within the Community Safety Partnership and already manage issues relating to stray dogs and the control of dogs. They will play a fundamental role in this initiative approaching registered dog walkers while out in Renfrewshire, promoting the scheme and ensuring compliance with the terms of the scheme by registered businesses.

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### **Implications of the Report**

1. **Financial** – There is potential for the Council to set a fee for the implementation and running of the scheme in line with the Trusted Trader Scheme.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – None
3. **Community Planning**  
  
**Renfrewshire is Well** – By introducing a voluntary scheme, this will improve the cleanliness, safety and feeling of wellbeing amongst communities.
4. **Legal** – None
5. **Property/Assets** – None

**6. Information Technology – None**

**7. Equality & Human Rights**

- (a) 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. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website

**8. Health & Safety – None**

**9. Procurement – None**

**10. Risk – None**

**11. Privacy Impact – None**

**12. CoSLA Policy Position – Not applicable**

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### **List of Background Papers**

- (a) Dog Fouling; Requirement to Carry Bags/Licensing of Dog Walkers – Infrastructure, Land and Environment Policy Board, 30 May 2018.

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OR  
15 May 2019

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