

**MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW - ANIMAL WELFARE
MONDAY, 24 NOVEMBER 2008**

Councillors Aitken and Dodds

Observer None

Apologies Councillors Davies and Patel

LC1. URGENT BUSINESS

None submitted

**LC2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY, IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THIS
AGENDA**

None submitted

LC3. ANIMAL WELFARE IN HARINGEY - EVIDENCE FOR THE REVIEW:

ANIMAL WELFARE IN HARINGEY WOOD GREEN ANIMAL SHELTERS

Linda Cattle, Head of Policy (Animal Welfare) from Wood Green Animal Shelters attended the meeting to discuss the work of the organisation. We noted that the Charity began its work in a small house in North London over 80 years ago; this became too small for the work of the organisation. A small pig farm in Hertfordshire was purchased in 1954 to take on the increasing amount of dogs and cats being brought in and provided the charity with improved facilities to house the animals. Eventually in 1984 52 acres of farmland was bought in Godmanchester to expand further the work of the animal welfare organisation. All three of the Wood Green sites have grown and developed enormously over the last 80 years and have helped to set national standards in animal welfare across the Country.

- The Charity has three Shelters - Godmanchester, Haydon and London.
- Do not receive government or lottery funding and delays on the support of the public.
- The Godmanchester shelter is one of the largest re-homing centres in Europe
- Approximately 5,000 animals are taken in each year - 75% are brought in by people no longer able to cope or where their circumstances has changed.
- It costs £16,000 per day to run the Shelters.
- All animals brought in are seen by veterinary staff at a cost of £165 per animal - last year 20,000 animals were seen.
- The cost of providing food shelter and home costs on average £335 per cat, £648 per dog, £850 per field animal and £45 per small animal.
- 95% of animals brought in are successfully rehoused.
- Wood Green's Pet Alert Scheme will care for pets if something happened to their owners.
- The fostering care scheme has placed approximately 166 dogs, 111 cats into temporary short-term accommodation.
- The organisation produces an e-newsletter as a cost-effective means of communicating current news.

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The shelter is presented with unwanted animals for a variety of reasons including:

- Financial issues
- Change in family circumstances.

The charity has developed educational strategies aimed at the under 16s and from age 16 to adults.

The 2007 figures indicate that the RSPCA have reported an increase in the number of convictions for cruelty to dogs and cats, suggesting that animals are becoming throw away items and the commitments ill thought through.

The shelter deals with approximately 6 dog fights per week in Haringey this is evidenced by the number of dogs and types of injuries sustained.

It appears that the profile of pet ownership has changed and the link about lifestyle choices and correct pet selection is underdeveloped.

- Whilst general awareness about the issues of pet ownership is increasing, the link about lifestyle choices and correct pet selection is undeveloped.
- There is an increasing lack of opportunity to interact with certain animals, including companion animals.
- Negative messages from the media on dog ownership are creating an avoidance culture on certain breeds and, more broadly, dogs generally. These messages are reinforced by media led councils who react by introducing by laws prohibiting or limiting of public areas to pet owners.

The charity believes that an inclusive education programme is needed in order to promote positive values regarding companion animals and the responsibility of pet care to both current pet owners and those on the periphery of pet ownership in the near future.

Areas for consideration:

- Chipping of animals on housing estates.
- Ensuring maximum size and weight
- Most residents with issues on Lordship Lane either don't speak English or are illiterate.
- Policy for animals on allotments.
- Need for an Animal Warden rather than a Dog Warden.
- Possible use of tenants groups
- Offering block insurance policies for estates for use with a charity.
- There was a lack of statistics and record on animal bites as these are not recorded by hospitals.

Wood Green Animal Shelters future strategies include:

- Education bus in parks

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- Community Learning
- Education aimed at the under 16s
- Education aimed at the over 16s and adults.

Harm to animals - an aspect of domestic violence

The organisation also works with charities to foster animals in domestic violence environment. Anyone who has worked in the Domestic Violence field knows of cases where a victim chose to remain with a batterer rather than abandon a beloved pet, because so many DV Shelters will not allow those fleeing a violent situation to bring their pets with them.

Recent statistics are showing that links between animal abuse and domestic violence exist. And pets are found to be one of the common denominators in family violence. Evidence is mounting that animal abuse is frequently embedded in families scarred by domestic violence and child maltreatment, and often predicts the potential for other violent acts. A 1983 study (USA) found that 60% of pet owning families meeting the criteria for child abuse and neglect also had abused or neglected pets. Conversely, a British study by the RSPCA found that 83% of families with a history of animal abuse had been identified by social services as at-risk for child abuse or neglect.

- Are battered women in domestic violence shelters forced to chose between their personal safety and that of the pets they left behind when they fled?
- What policies and procedures do enlightened shelters employ to deal with the issue of pet abuse by batterers as a means of manipulation?
- What assistance can be provided?
- What are the psychological ramifications of pet abuse in a domestic violence context?

The fostering scheme employed by the organisation is also very popular for people going into hospital or into care. This would be a short term commitment and is taken up mainly by retired people who don't want long term commitment to a pet; homes are checked to ensure suitable environment; the maximum stay for the animal is usually two weeks. In these circumstances food and vet bills are paid.

The shelter is also considering fostering to children homes and homes for the elderly and are encouraging private landlords to allow pets in rented accommodation.

All authorities in Cambridgeshire have dog wardens which has reduced the number of strays and the shelter is assisting them in drafting a Animal Welfare Charter.

Secondment opportunities

In response to a question from members query about the possibility of seconding a warden from the charity to work in Haringey, it was noted that there was no merit in pursuing a secondment as this was a very high risk and dangerous job.

Dog fighting

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Despite animal baiting having been prohibited for over a century, reports of dog fighting to the RSPCA have increased significantly since 2004. This activity either involves a number of people coming together to pit one fighting dog against another, with large amounts of money being placed as bets on the outcome of the fight, or less organized fights in places such as public parks.

The organisation deals with approximately 6 dog fights per week in Haringey this is evidenced by the number of dogs brought into the centre and the types of injuries sustained.

LC4. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS -

The next meeting will be held on Friday 28 November 2008 @ 4pm The RSPCA will give evidence for the review.

LC5. URGENT BUSINESS:

There were no items of urgent business

Cllr Ray Dodds

Chair