



Haringey Council *

Agenda item:

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON 1st DECEMBER 2008

Report Title. **SCRUTINY REVIEW OF ANIMAL WELFARE IN HARINGEY**

Report authorised by **Chair of the Review Panel**

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Wards(s) affected - ALL

Report for: Non Key

1. Purpose of the report (That is, the decision required)

1.1 For the Committee to consider and agree the Terms of Reference of the review.

2. Introduction

2.1 The Scrutiny Review of Animal Welfare has been commissioned by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of its programme of works for 2008/2009.

3. State link(s) with Council Plan Priorities and actions and /or other Strategies:

3.1 Creating a Better Haringey: cleaner, greener and safer

4. Recommendations

That the scope and terms of reference of the review be approved

5. Reason for recommendation(s)

5.1

6. Other options considered

N/A

7. Summary

- 7.1 Britain is a nation of animal lovers, and the amount of legislation around animal welfare would seem to back this up. England was one of the first countries in the world to introduce animal welfare legislation, way back in 1822. Two years later, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was established to enforce the new legislation. It was subsequently upgraded to a Royal Society (the RSPCA) in 1840.
- 7.2 There have been dozens of pieces of animal welfare legislation in the 170 years since then. One of the most recent and wide-ranging was the Animal Welfare Act 2006, which came into effect in April 2007.
- 7.3 But behind the well meaning legislation hides a more uncertain reality. Deliberate cruelty towards both wildlife and companion animals is still rife. Animal welfare can be compromised as a result of ignorance and deliberate cruelty. The RSPCA received 1.2 million cruelty complaints in 2006, of which 122,000 resulted in full investigations – up from 105,000 in 2003.
- 7.4 Approximately three and a half million London households own a pet; however animal welfare in London not only concerns the capital's companion animals, but also the welfare aspects surrounding London's diverse and precious wildlife.
- 7.5 Many of London's pets have not been microchipped or neutered. This can result in unwanted animals being dumped on the streets and unmarked pets not being returned to owners.

The Mayor's Animal Welfare Framework

- 7.6 In 2004 the Mayor of London provided the first ever regional framework for animal welfare in England. The framework is about duties and obligations towards the welfare of animals in London and beyond. It shows how the Greater London Authority will play a significant role in responding to the changing nature of animal welfare.

The Animal Welfare Act

- 7.7 The Animal Welfare Act 2006, which came into force in England in April 2007, is the most significant piece of animal welfare legislation for nearly a century.
- 7.8 The aim is to reduce animal suffering by enabling preventative action to be taken before suffering occurs, rather than the previous system which only enabled action to be taken after the event.
- 7.9 The Act aims to improve animal welfare generally by imposing a duty of care on those responsible for looking after animals to do all that is reasonable to ensure their welfare.

What is the Duty of Care?

- 7.10 The Act places a duty on people who are responsible for animals to ensure that the welfare needs of their animals are met. The vast majority of pet owners take proper care of their animals but there are some, whilst not being deliberately cruel to their animals, nevertheless, fail to meet their animals' basic welfare needs. This duty of care does not mean that it will be an offence to fail to take the dog for a walk one day, but if it kept in a cage in a house and never taken for a walk, that would be failing to meet the welfare needs of the dog. The duty of care also means that people will need to ensure that their animals are given an adequate and appropriate diet.
- 7.11 People responsible for the care of an animal must provide for its basic needs. These needs include:
1. To provide a suitable environment (where it lives).
 2. To provide a suitable diet (what it eats and drinks).
 3. To ensure the animal is able to behave normally.
 4. To house it either with or apart from other animals, (whatever is best for that particular animal).
 5. To protect it from pain, suffering, injury and disease. (It is the first time that such requirements have been introduced for non-farmed animals)
- 7.12 The Act has also raised the age limit at which you can buy a pet, from 12 years old to 16 years, and you can only win a pet as a prize if you are at least 16 years old.

Penalties

- 7.13 The Act has updated and clarified the definition of offences such as causing unnecessary suffering to an animal, or organizing an animal fight. It has introduced considerably stronger penalties for persistent offenders and has eliminated most of the loopholes of the previous system. Offenders can be banned from owning animals; fined up to £20,000; and sent to prison for a maximum of 51 weeks.
- 7.14 Whilst there are new powers available to local authorities inspectors in the act in relation to animal welfare, the onus is on local authorities to use these.

RSPCA and local authorities working together

- 7.15 Local authorities play a major role in safeguarding the welfare of animals. Not only are they responsible for enforcing major pieces of animal welfare legislation but they also have wide-ranging discretionary powers.
- 7.16 There is enormous scope for the RSPCA and local authorities to work more closely together. At a local level, the RSPCA inspectors and regional staff are encouraged to develop good working relationships with animal welfare officers and dog wardens. Local government officers works with national organisations and local authorities to ensure animal welfare is a priority.
- 7.17 Many local authorities carry out invaluable work that has directly benefited the welfare of local animals. Some initiatives can also result in long-term efficiency savings.
- 7.18 Increasingly, people want and expect their local authority to have a responsible attitude towards the care of animals. Many authorities are discovering the benefits of using animal welfare as a way of engaging with their local communities. Joint schemes with residents groups and animal welfare charities and animal friendly policies can improve and benefit local neighbourhoods.

HARINGEY CONTEXT

- 7.19 The Council currently has no designated Animal Warden and as the Metropolitan Police no longer has responsibility to take stray dogs; this review will give members the opportunity to look in depth at the Council's policy and delivery of Animal Welfare.

THE SCRUTINY REVIEW

Community Animal Welfare Footprints [CAWF]

- 7.20 Community Animal Welfare Footprints is a voluntary scheme developed by the RSPCA to celebrate local authorities that have tried a different approach to improving animal welfare. This may be related to the services covered by the footprints or could be in a different area.
- 7.21 There are three awards for different sections of local government. Local Authorities that meet the requirements of an individual footprint will receive a certificate commemorating their achievements.
- 7.22 The four elements of the footprint could provide the panel with the framework for developing an Animal Welfare Policy for Haringey and it is proposed that the Scrutiny Review focuses on these areas to establish a level of good practice.

Proposed terms of reference:

- 7.23 Proposed terms of reference of the review are:
- 7.24 To carry out a complete review of the Council's policy and delivery of animal welfare and controlled legislation. The Panel agreed that the review should cover the four components of Community Animal Welfare Footprints [CAWF] as follows:

Stray Dogs Footprints:

Covers policies that ensure stray dog welfare during the collection and kennelling processes, proactive work to educate owners, and preventative measures to reduce straying and long-term strays.

Housing Footprints

Includes the provision of a positive and clear policy on pet ownership and proactive work to educate the public about animal welfare related issues.

Contingency Planning Footprint

Covers policies, procedures and exercises within contingency plans that deal with companion animals, both domestic and commercially owned, as well as advice for preparedness.

Animal Welfare Principles Footprint:

This is concerned with policies that improve and promote animal welfare through a clear animal welfare charter and the use of tools, i.e. the council website to promote issues and educate.

Equal Opportunities

- 7.25 The proposed policy will aim to work alongside all sectors of the community to improve services for all pet owners and to promote higher standards of animal welfare across the borough. Irresponsible dog ownership not only affects the welfare of animals but affect the wider community who use and enjoy open spaces, dog owners walking in public places who do not clean up after their pets often curtail the enjoyment of others, particularly children, wheelchair users, the elderly and blind people. Encouraging responsible pet ownership will help to address these problems.

Value for money

- 7.26 Scrutiny can collate a breadth of data which can aid a more informed decision-making process for the Cabinet and senior officers in the development of a Council Wide policy on Animal Welfare. The review will consider the cost implications for relevant recommendations.

Panel Membership

- 7.27 The following members will form the Review Panel:

Cllr Ray Dodds (Chair)
Cllr Ron Aitken
Cllr Matt Davies
Cllr Jayanti Patel

External Advice

- 7.28 In order to help inform the deliberations of the Panel, efforts are currently being made to appoint an external adviser to the Panel. Such a person will not be a member of the Panel but will provide independent impartial advice. They will need to have extensive knowledge of issues concerned with local authority's corporate strategies as well as an awareness of current issues and best practice – the budget for this is limited.

Timescale

- 7.29 It is anticipated that the Review will be completed in December 2008.

8. Chief Financial Officer Comments

- 8.1 To be considered during the course of the review.

9. Head of Legal Services Comments

9.1 To be considered during the course of the review.

10. Head of Procurement Comments

10.1 N/A

11. Equalities and Community Cohesion Comments

11.1 To be considered during the course of the review

12. Consultation

12.1 To be considered during the course of the review.

13. Service Financial Comments

13.1 To be considered during the course of the review.

14. Use of appendices /Tables and photographs

14.1 N/A

15. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

15.1

- a. Overview and Scrutiny Committee work plan