

 Executive 15th October 2008		Agenda Item No.
Dog Warden Service – Responsibility for strays - Update		
For further information about this report please contact		Paul Briggs Divisional EHO (Env Protection) Direct 01926 456714 e-mail paul.briggs@warwickdc.gov.uk
Service Area		Environmental Health
Wards of the District directly affected		All
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006		No
Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number		Executive – 11 th February 2008 minute 876 Env & Econ Policy – Sept 07 min 394
Background Papers		above

Contrary to the policy framework:	No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	No
Key Decision?	No
Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)	No

Officer/Councillor Approval		
With regard to officer approval all reports <i>must</i> be approved by the report authors relevant director, Finance, Legal Services and the relevant Portfolio Holder(s).		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Relevant Director	27-08-08	Mary Hawkins
Chief Executive		
CMT	06-10-08	
Section 151 Officer		
Legal	27-08-08	Simon Best
Finance	27-08-08	Mike Snow
Portfolio Holder(s)	27-08-08	Michael Kinson
Consultation Undertaken		
Please insert details of any consultation undertaken with regard to this report.		
Final Decision?		Yes
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report reviews the first 5 months of the consequences of the local authority having sole responsibility for dealing with stray dogs, since the removal of police involvement on 6th April 2008.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the report be noted and that a twelve month contract be negotiated with the existing service provider from 1st April 2009 to enable additional monitoring of the consequences of the afore mentioned change of responsibility – for a full 12 month period.

3. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The minimum period that a potential service provider would expect for such a contract would be 3 to 5 years. It would be premature to commit the Council to such a contract when the requirements are, as yet, unclear and hence inappropriate to go out to tender.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTION CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The Council could seek tenders for a 12 month contract or longer but, as stated above, this may be impractical. The “lead in time for tendering etc is a minimum of 4 months)
- 4.2 An “in house” service is not practical unless cover for sickness and holidays can be provided. A shared service with adjoining authorities is not practical , at this point in time, due to the geographic area of this authority and adjoining authorities and the small number of dog wardens employed – mainly one per authority, some by contract and some “in house”.

5. BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK

- 5.1 It is anticipated that an extension of the existing contract can be met within existing budgets. The budget was only increased by £8,500 by way of the Revenue Support Grant for 2008/9 to reflect the additional burden, including additional kenneling costs.

6. POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 6.1 Dealing with strays is a mandatory function of the Council.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 The responsibility to collect strays became solely the responsibility of local authorities on 6th April 2008.
- 7.2 Guidance from Defra indicated that local authorities were not expected to provide a “collection service” outside office hours but, if possible, should provide a place where the public could take strays outside office hours.
- 7.3 The report to Executive in February 2008 concluded that Warwick District Council does not have suitable premises which could receive strays and no private or

public facility could be found for this purpose. It was therefore agreed to only operate an “in office hours service” , as had operated prior to the afore mentioned date and to review the situation during the year. Note The September 2007 report to Environment & Economic Policy Committee gives full details of the scope and history of the Dog Warden Service in Warwick district.

- 7.4 Comparison of figures indicate little change in requests for service from the public, strays collected etc between the first 5 months of this year and against last year.

	1 st April – 26 th August 07	1 st April – 26 th August 08
Request for service (RFS) relating to stray dogs	89	103
Dogs collected by WDC	44	42
Returned direct to owner	19	6
Returned to owner via kennels	16	18
Re-homed after 7 days in kennels	9	17
Other	-	1

	2004 – 05	2005 – 06	2006 – 07	2007 - 08
RFS stray dogs	169	146	239	213
Dog collected by WDC	92	85	91	103

- 7.5 All the Councils in Warwickshire are providing similar services with Dog Wardens employed office hours Monday to Friday. Two Councils, North Warwickshire & Nuneaton and Bedworth have kennels who are prepared to receive dogs for limited times on Saturday and Sunday, although it must be said that the kennels are not convenient for the public, one being outside the Council’s own district boundary and the other just within the boundary. The other Councils are also monitoring the situation over the first 12 month period.
- 7.6 Locally and unofficially, some vets practices have continued to accept strays picked up by the public, in their areas, to be collected by the dog warden on the first opportunity. Where it has been practical, the public have kept strays “overnight” for collection by the warden.
- 7.7 The present arrangements have only raised occasional complaint. The police have occasionally accepted one or two strays like the vets, but have raised their concern again due to the lack of formal arrangements. One vet’s practice has objected to the cost to them but have continued to accept the occasional “stray” and the public did object to the lack of arrangements when a stray died of diabetes through lack of medication – this could have been avoided if the owner had had the dog micro chipped and if the dog had a collar and tag on .