

		<b>AGENDA ITEM NO.</b>	
<b>Report Cover Sheet</b>			
<b>Name of Meeting:</b>		Executive	
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>		11 <sup>th</sup> February 2008	
<b>Report Title:</b>		Dog Warden Service	
<b>Summary of report:</b>		To approve response to removal of Police involvement with stray dogs.	
<b>For Further Information Please Contact (report author):</b>		Paul Briggs	
<b>Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Policy Framework:</b>		No	
<b>Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budgetary framework:</b>		No	
<b>Wards of the District directly affected by this decision:</b>		All	
<b>Key Decision?</b>		No	
<b>Included within the Forward Plan?</b>		Yes	
<b>Is the report Private &amp; Confidential</b>		No	
<b>Background Papers:</b>		Dog Warden Service Report – Environment and Economic Policy Committee – September 2007	
<b>Consultation Undertaken</b>			
<b>Consultees</b>	<b>Yes/ No</b>	<b>Who</b>	
Other Committees	No		
Ward Councillors	No		
Portfolio Holders		Cllr Kinson	
Other Councillors	No		
Warwick District Council recognised Trades Unions	No		
Other Warwick District Council Service Areas	No		
Project partners	No		
Parish/Town Council	No		
Highways Authority	No		
Residents	No		
Citizens Panel	No		
Other consultees	No		

## Officer Approval

With regard to officer approval all reports must be approved by the report authors relevant director, Finance Services and Legal Services.

Officer Approval	Date	Name
Relevant Director(s)	4.1.08	Mary Hawkins
Chief Executive		
CMT	17.1.08	
Section 151 Officer		
Legal	16.1.08	Mike Snow
Finance	16.1.08	Simon Best
Final Decision?		Yes
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		

## 1.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 To seek approval to continue to provide the existing dog warden service in the light of legislative amendments which affect responsibilities for dealing with stray dogs.

## 2.0 REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION .

- 2.1 The Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act 2005, section 68, which removes the responsibility of the police to deal with stray dogs, leaving sole responsibility under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 with Local Authorities, comes into effect on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2008.
- 2.2 The consequences for local authorities are, at this time, difficult to assess but there is likely to be an increase in the number of strays dealt with by this Council which will impact on the Dog Warden Service in the following way: -
- Increase in dogs taken to kennels – plus potential for the existing kennel capacity being exceeded.
  - Increased kennelling costs
  - Increase in number of dogs being returned to owner
  - Increase in number of dogs being re-homed after the statutory 7 days\* (strays must be held for a minimum 7 days after being picked up before being re-homed)
  - Potential need for outside “office hours” provision.
  - Potential need for additional Dog Warden(s) – the increase in strays may increase the need for additional staff even if “out of hours” service is not required.
- 2.3 Guidance issued by DEFRA in October 2007 advises that Local authorities are not expected to provide an “out of hours collection service” but **“where practical”** to provide a place to which a stray dog can be taken and accepted into local authority care. The guidance goes on to advise that the “place” need not be local authority managed kennels – i.e. may be commercial or charity operated kennels.
- 2.4 In early summer 2007, written enquiries were made of all the privately run kennels in the district, to see if any were prepared to discuss a contract to accept strays. No interest was received excluding the kennels currently contracted to provide the current service.
- 2.5 Following receipt of the guidance, the aforementioned “contracted” kennels were contacted enquiring if they were prepared to accept dogs direct from the public. Their response was in the negative. Any such “place” would need to be publicised on the Council Website, Police Stations etc. The kennel owners were unhappy at their premises being identified to the public due to the possible aggravation to their staff by owners demanding their dogs back and the need to provide an extended service – up to 24/7. A similar enquiry with The Dogs Trust (formerly Canine Defence League) received a similar reply.
- 2.6 The Council has no premises, occupied outside office hours, which would be suitable to provide kennels, partially due to the proximity of residential premises. If such a location was available there would be a capital expense of creating

kennels to the required “national” standard, together with staff costs of operating such a facility 24/7.

- 2.7 The Police have been unable to provide any accurate figures for the number of dogs that they receive annually. Estimates range from an increase of 50% of current strays handled by Warwick to more than 100%. (Current average figures are around 90 strays per year taken in by WDC)

### **3.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 Discussions have been held with the other authorities in Warwickshire & Coventry, all of whom face the same problem and who lack any suitable kennelling accommodation. Dog warden services vary across districts, some being in-house and others, as at Warwick District, are contracted via Animal Wardens Ltd. When this change of legislation was first suggested in 2004, Animal Wardens offered to provide an out of hours service for Warwickshire, as they do to the local authorities in Hampshire, for around £40,000 per year - the WDC contribution being around £14,000. In summary they would expect the existing wardens to be “on call” on a rota, respond to a call from the public via the Animal Wardens “call centre” in Bolton. Any stray collected would be taken to kennels contracted to Animal Wardens (yet to be identified) with transfer to the local authority the following working day – the Council possibly being responsible for collecting the stray from the Animal Wardens kennels. Such an arrangement could have implications with respect to the on call dog warden being available to work the following day.
- 3.2 The local authorities in Warwickshire are currently taking the common view that it is not practical to provide places within their districts to receive stray dogs. Each authority will continue to collect strays from the public inside office hours and “search” for reported “roaming strays”, as present, within office hours. Any change in demand for the service (increase in strays handled) and the demand or consequences of not having an out of hours service / facility will be monitored and if additional arrangements are required, the matter will be examined to see if a joint or individual solution is required.
- 3.3 The existing three year contract for the Dog Warden Service for Warwick District ends on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008. Tendering for a new contract is problematic due to the unknown nature of future service requirements, and therefore it has been agreed with Animal Wardens that the existing contract will be extended for up to 12 months.

### **4.0 BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK**

- 4.1 In the draft Revenue Support Grant settlement for 2008/2009 there is a sum of £8,600 to reflect the additional burden that this legislative change will bring this is being added to the existing budget. This money will be required to pay for the anticipated increased kenneling costs. There is also a potential that the Dog Warden contract costs will increase. The financial position will continue to be monitored throughout the year.