

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Executive Director of Corporate Services

Corporate & Efficient Governance Committee: 24 June 2009

Subject: Provision of Facilities for the Detention of Stray Dogs

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Committee approval to accept a new partnership arrangement between the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SSPCA) and West Dunbartonshire Council for the provision of kennel facilities and services for the detention of stray dogs collected by the Environmental Health Section.

2. Background

- 2.1 West Dunbartonshire Council has a statutory duty in terms of Section 149 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 for the control of stray dogs. The Environmental Health Section provides a dog control service in fulfilment of this duty and utilises the SSPCA facility at Milton to board stray dogs seized by them.
- 2.2 The authority has worked in conjunction with the SSPCA since 1996. In October 2007 the SSPCA wrote to local authorities to advise them that due to increasing costs they could no longer afford to provide this service from 1 May 2009. Consequently the Council was required to seek alternative arrangements.
- 2.3 A number of meetings were held with other affected authorities including Glasgow City Council, East Dunbartonshire Council, Renfrewshire Council, North Lanarkshire Council, East Renfrewshire Council, South Lanarkshire Council and Strathclyde Police. A joint options appraisal exercise was undertaken and a number of options were identified including building a new kennelling facility; utilising local private kennels; building on to the existing SSPCA kennels in Milton, Bothwell and Cardonald.
- 2.4 All private kennel owners in the West Dunbartonshire area were contacted regarding the possibility of them providing kennelling facilities for stray dogs. The vast majority were not interested as it would interfere with their existing kennels. Only one note of interest was expressed however no indicative costs were provided and officers do not feel that the comprehensive service provided by SSPCA was readily available at this facility.
- 2.5 On 14 January 2009 the Tendering Committee approved that a tendering exercise be undertaken to engage the services of private kennels.

- 2.6 However, the SSPCA engaged in further discussions with the partner local authorities and Strathclyde Police and offered to continue with the stray dogs kennelling services. The tendering exercise was suspended during the discussion as all options were still being explored.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1 West Dunbartonshire Council is required to fulfil the statutory obligation of dealing with stray dogs. The dogs must be kept for at least 7 days to allow the owner to reclaim their dog. Costs for this kennelling are recoverable from the owner. The Council may also impose a £25 fine on the dog owner.
- 3.2 The proposed new arrangement with SSPCA includes:
- All stray dogs shall be kennelled for up to seven days. If after this period the dog remains unclaimed the responsibility for the dog shall be transferred to the SSPCA;
 - Veterinary services shall be provided to all stray dogs to ensure basic health and welfare;
 - All dogs will be micro-chipped before being re-homed or returned to owners;
 - The SSPCA will maintain a register of stray dogs on behalf of the Council.
 - This contract arrangement will extend for a period of 10 years although it may be terminated by either party by giving a 2 year period of notice.
- 3.3 The SSPCA have advised that in order for them to adequately cover their costs stray dogs they will need to apply a one off charge of £250 for every stray dog which the authority lodge with them. Officers will look at all ways to minimise the lodging of dogs at Milton.
- 3.4 All authorities have agreed in principle that a daily rate of £13.50 will be collected by the SSPCA from re-claiming owners as the SSPCA are not willing to collect the full costs applied to Councils from dog owners. This is in addition to a £25 vet fee and the £25 statutory fine which the SSPCA will also collect. A member of the public will therefore require to pay £63.50 for the return of the dog and a further £13.50 every day thereafter.
- 3.5 Any money recovered from a re-claiming owner will be deducted from the £250 charge levied against the Council.
- 3.6 It would be up to each individual Council to decide whether or not to attempt to recover the full costs of boarding thereafter from a re-claiming owner.

4. Personnel Issues

- 4.1 There are no personnel issues.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 Additional funds of £25,000 were allocated during the budget setting for this statutory function for 2009/10 financial year.

- 5.2 It is estimated that the full annual cost of kennel provision for this Council utilising the SSPCA as a provider and based on the current average of 150 dogs seized per year will be met from current budgets.

6. Risk Analysis

- 6.1 The Council will be unable to fulfil its statutory functions in terms of Section 149 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 if they cannot secure kennelling facilities for stray dogs from 1 September 2009.

7. Conclusions & Officers Recommendations

- 7.1 The current arrangement for the detention of stray dogs seized by the Council shall cease from 31 August 2009.
- 7.2 Facilities for the detention of stray dogs require being available for use from 1 September 2009.
- 7.3 A number of options have been investigated and considered. The only practical and effective option given the timescales involved is to continue the work with the SSPCA and accept the new charges and conditions of contract.
- 7.4 It is recommended that the committee approve the new arrangement with the SSPCA.
- 7.5 The Committee are also required to determine whether the full cost recovery of £250 should be sought from re-claiming dog owners in order to minimise the costs borne by the Council.

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Date: 24 June 2009

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Appendices: Appendix 1: Proposed new contract of SSPCA for
Kennelling Stray dogs for West Dunbartonshire Council.

Background Papers: Copy of Tendering Committee Report 14 January 2009.

Wards Affected: All

