

---

## **ANIMAL WELFARE CHARTER**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report invites Members to consider the scope of the proposed Charter and to determine the Sub-Committee's programme of work.

### **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Following a motion put forward by Councillors Mrs M S Vince, Mrs M J Webster and former Councillor Mrs M A Weir, Council has previously agreed that an Animal Welfare Charter should be drafted.

- 2.2 In presenting the motion, the view was expressed that

- a welfare charter would spell out this Council's continuing commitment to animal welfare
- it should be a living document containing details of this Council's past and future policies concerning animals
- animals have a right to enjoy five basic freedoms, namely, freedom from; fear and distress; hunger and thirst; pain, disease and injury; physical discomfort and freedom to express their normal behaviour
- whilst this Council's enforcement officers already deal with many aspects of animal welfare, there is a need to improve links with other voluntary wildlife groups, especially those who specialise in particular species
- better publicity should be given to this Council's stance on animal welfare

- 2.3 This Sub-Committee has been established to consider the issues and oversee the drafting of the charter. It will report its recommendations to the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee and, in turn, to the Community Services Committee for ratification of the proposed charter. The work plan for the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee envisages this work being completed by December 2003.

- 2.4 The Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 22 July 2003 will be considering a proposal to introduce a 'scoping form' at the start of each such review in order to ensure that the terms of reference, content and process of the review are clear. Subject to this being endorsed by the Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee, a scoping document will be circulated for the Sub-Committee's consideration.

### **3 GUIDANCE ON ANIMAL WELFARE CHARTERS**

- 3.1 An early issue for the Sub-Committee to consider concerns the scope of the charter. The Council's statutory responsibilities only deal with a relatively

---

small number of licensing functions. It also undertakes some limited educational activities to promote responsible pet ownership, provides dog waste bins and, as a landowner, seeks to ensure the protection and enhancement of wildlife and habitats. The Agenda 21 Charter seeks to encourage bio-diversity and action is taken through the planning process to protect habitats.

3.2 There are, however, many other issues which could properly be included within a charter, but over which the Council has no control. Many of these were contained in a consultation carried out earlier in the year by the Government on the preparation of an animal health and welfare strategy for Great Britain. The issues include:

- animal husbandry practices on farms,
- transport of live animals,
- prevention of the spread of diseases.

3.3 These are issues which Members may consider are best dealt with by the appropriate regulatory/policy making agencies. Alternatively, the Council could put forward a statement of its beliefs in these areas within the charter, but would need to be mindful of the need to avoid statements which might conflict with the lawful status of some practices.

3.4 The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) actively encourages and supports Local Authorities to produce animal welfare charters as a way of demonstrating a Council's commitment to animal welfare. A growing number are now doing so.

3.5 Arrangements have been made for the RSPCA's Senior Local Government Adviser to attend this Sub-Committee meeting to give information on what other Local Authorities have done so far, the best process for developing a charter and pitfalls to avoid.

3.6 Having considered the advice from the RSPCA, the Sub-Committee will need to determine its programme of work, which it has already been agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should include some visits to appropriate premises. It was also agreed:

- that the suggested visits to premises should include visits to animal keepers other than recognised shelters and breeders
- that the countryside view of animal welfare should be included in drafting the charter.

#### **4 RECOMMENDATION**

4.1 It is proposed that the Sub-Committee determines the scope of the charter and its programme of work.

Graham Woolhouse  
Head of Housing, Health & Community Care

---

**Background Papers:**

Preparing an animal health and welfare strategy for Great Britain – A Consultation Document, DEFRA January 2003.

For further information please contact Graham Woolhouse on:-

Tel:- 01702 318044  
E-Mail:- [graham.woolhouse@rochford.gov.uk](mailto:graham.woolhouse@rochford.gov.uk)