

Animal Welfare Charter Sub-Committee – 28 July 2003

Minutes of the meeting of the **Animal Welfare Charter Sub-Committee** held on **28 July 2003** when there were present:-

Cllr Mrs M J Webster (Chairman)

Cllr R A Amner
Cllr Mrs T J Capon

Cllr Mrs S A Harper
Cllr J M Pullen

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr J R F Mason.

SUBSTITUTES

Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn.

OFFICERS PRESENT

G Woolhouse - Head of Housing, Health & Community Care
H Meggison - Environmental Health Assistant
S Worthington - Committee Administrator

ALSO ATTENDING

J Tran, Local Government Campaigns Officer, RSPCA

1 TERMS OF REFERENCE

Members noted the terms of reference for this Sub-Committee and further noted that work is scheduled to be completed by Christmas.

2 ANIMAL WELFARE CHARTER

The Sub-Committee received the report of the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care inviting Members to consider the scope of the proposed Charter and to determine the Sub-Committee's programme of work.

During debate Members felt there would be merit in officers circulating to them a summary of the Council's statutory responsibilities with respect to animal welfare. Officers agreed to provide Members with this information, together with information relating to existing Council policies on licensing activities concerning animal welfare.

Officers advised that, as part of the Best Value Review of Public Regulation, Inspection & Protection, public opinion research was conducted which included a question on whether there should be public education on responsible pet ownership. A large majority responded affirmatively.

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The Sub-Committee welcomed Joceline Tran of the RSPCA to the meeting. She gave Members a presentation defining what is an Animal Welfare Charter and suggesting the areas which such a Charter should cover. A copy of her presentation is appended to these Minutes.

During debate Members noted the importance of making a clear distinction between animal rights and animal welfare. There was a general consensus that the Charter should be a living document and that education would play a key role in any Charter. Links with local, specialist agencies should, accordingly, be improved and that, indeed, there would be merit in Members visiting such organisations in order to gain a local insight into current animal welfare issues.

In response to a Member concern about battery hens, the RSPCA officer confirmed that all legislation with respect to farm animals emanates from the European Union. It was therefore not possible to implement change at a local level.

Responding to a further Member concern relating to livery stables, the RSPCA officer advised Members that the Government was currently formulating an Animal Welfare Bill, which sought to consolidate most of the existing legislation into one Bill. This included a proposal for the licensing of livery stables. Some local authorities have already finalised Animal Welfare Charters and the RSPCA officer confirmed that she would forward to Members copies of these, together with information relating to the Animal Welfare Bill.

Officers circulated a copy of a scoping form which had been designed to focus the process of drafting an Animal Welfare Charter. Members suggested additions to the scoping form with respect to inviting extra witnesses to attend future meetings of the Sub-Committee and gathering additional information and site visits. A copy of the revised form is appended to these Minutes. Members also felt that there would be merit in an item being included in the next edition of *Rochford District Matters* asking organisations in the District providing a specialist service looking after animals to contact officers with details about themselves.

Resolved

- (1) That a representative from the National Farmers Union, Essex Police and Essex Trading standards be invited to the next meeting of the Sub-Committee.
- (2) That arrangements be made for Members of the Sub-Committee to visit a local exotics rescue centre.
- (3) That an item be included in the next edition of *Rochford District Matters* inviting organisations specialising in looking after animals to contact officers with details about themselves. (HHHCC)

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Members agreed that in drafting the Animal Welfare Charter the following issues should be considered:-

- What the Council currently does with respect to animal welfare
- The role of the Council in educating the public on animal welfare
- Information about animal welfare voluntary organisations within the District
- Domestic animals: guidance; breeding advice; microchipping and neutering
- Birds, and in particular, pigeons and peacocks
- Foxes
- Culling/Airguns/Gun Clubs
- Responsible Angling
- Equine: Livery stables/Plotlands/Education around Proper Care, Stabling and tethering
- Council purchasing policies
- Council Housing Policy/Sheltered Accommodation Policy
- Dog Wardens/Police Dog Pounds
- Poison/Pest Control
- Unlawful abuse of Wildlife
- Emergency Planning: floods, fire
- Donkey and Horse Rides at Public Events
- Fireworks
- Bees/Wasps
- Bats
- Promoting wildlife along the District coastline

The meeting closed at 12.15 pm.

Chairman

Date