

DRAFT ANIMAL WELFARE CHARTER

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Members are asked to consider a first draft of the Council's Animal Welfare Charter, which is appended to this report.

2 DRAFT CHARTER

- 2.1 The aim of the draft Animal Welfare Charter is to provide a statement of this Council's position with respect to animal welfare and to make recommendations to residents relating to the treatment and care of animals. The draft Charter also provides details of the Council's statutory duties and policies concerning animals.

3 RECOMMENDATION

It is proposed that the Sub-Committee considers the first draft of the Council's Animal Welfare Charter and makes any necessary comments.

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Background Papers:

Previous Animal Welfare Charter Sub-Committee Minutes

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APPENDIX

ANIMAL WELFARE CHARTER (FIRST DRAFT)

The Council supports the view that all animals have a right to life free from cruel treatment and unnecessary suffering.

It recognises that animals are capable of feeling, capable of enjoying a state of well being and equally capable of suffering and therefore considers animals have the right to enjoy five basic freedoms:

- Freedom from fear and distress
- Freedom from hunger and thirst
- Freedom from pain, disease and injury
- Freedom from unnecessary constraint
- Freedom from physical discomfort

This charter does not cover every aspect of animal welfare, but it does detail those areas that the Council considers important and where it feels it can have some influence as a responsible and representative public body.

The Council supports all current animal welfare legislation and requests that members of parliament support any legislation that will improve animal welfare conditions.

Statutory Duties

The Council has a statutory duty to licence certain establishments within the district, these being:

- Pets Shops
- Dog Breeding Establishments
- Dog and Cat Boarding Establishments
- Riding Establishments
- Owners of Dangerous Wild Animals

The Council will continue to ensure that a qualified Veterinary Surgeon and the Council animal welfare officer inspect these premises and that the conditions of such premises shall be in line with the published guidance and model licence conditions. It will carry out annual inspections when licences are granted or renewed and unannounced inspections to ensure that the licence conditions are being adhered to.

Council Policies

Circuses

It is Council policy not to allow performances by exotic animals on any Council land or premises.

Giving Animals as prizes

It is Council policy that the conditions for hiring or letting any of the Councils facilities – premises or land – shall include a clause specifically banning the provision of live creatures, animals or fish, as prizes.

Pony Rides

Anyone offering pony rides on Council land must meet strict conditions as laid down by the Council.

Domestic and Captive Animals

Dogs

The Council liaises with other organisations to promote responsible dog ownership by

- providing dogs faeces bins
- promoting animal health education on dogs faeces bins and within all Council operated car parks
- promoting animal welfare by distributing animal welfare leaflets from Council reception areas and placing advice on the Council Website

Stray Dogs

The Council has a contract with a local kennel, with a 24-hour call out service, for the collection of stray dogs. It is Council policy to re-home unclaimed stray dogs, unless there is veterinary advice to the contrary.

Pets in Council Accommodation

The Council allows tenants to have pets in Council Accommodation and that in certain circumstances where the occupation is only temporary and the acquisition of larger domestic pets might prejudice future housing allocations. The Council will

work with other social housing providers in the district to try to harmonise lettings policies regarding pets.

Pets in Sheltered Housing Schemes

The Council accepts tenants with small pets and caged birds in sheltered housing schemes. Specialist dogs (Guide dogs, Hearing dogs and Assistance dogs, including retired specialist dogs) are accepted in sheltered housing schemes.

Dangerous Wild Animals

The Council discourages the sale and keeping of animals listed on the schedule of the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 and other dangerous and/or exotic animals.

Wildlife

The Council supports measures to conserve wildlife and in particular draws attention to the following:-

Blood Sports

The Council is opposed to all blood sports (excluding Angling) on Council owned land and considers that there should be a similar ban nationally and the existing legislation should be extended and strengthened so as to ensure that all animals are given adequate protection so that only humane methods are used to control wildlife where this is strictly necessary.

Angling

The Council recommends that anglers follow the code of practice based on the recommendations of the Medway report. The key recommendations being:-

1. The use of double and treble hooks should be kept to a minimum. These should be avoided entirely when the intention is to return the catch alive to the water.
2. Fish that have swallowed the hook and those intended for food should be killed humanely before any effort is made to unhook them.
3. All anglers should be equipped with, and use, disgorgers.

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4. Employment of the pike-gag should take fully into account the size of the fish for which it is used,
 5. Barbless hooks should be favoured.
 6. Holding periods in keep-nets should be as brief as possible.

Pest Control

The Council promotes and supports the use of safe and humane methods of pest control only. It provides a free rodent control service to householders to ensure that professional and safe treatment is readily available.

Parks/Open Spaces

The Council makes minimum use of pesticides in all Council controlled public open spaces and encourages the introduction of wildlife and fauna into these areas.

Experiments on Living Animals

The Council opposes experiments carried out on animals and calls on the Government to look into the use of alternative methods of research not involving animals.

Factory Farming

The Council regrets the use of Intensive/Factory Farming and considers that there should be more research into the need for this type of farming and requests that Members of Parliament support any legislation that will improve animal welfare conditions

Transport of Food Animals

The Council supports a ban on the live export of all food animals.

The Council supports the role of Trading Standards in enforcing roadside checks of livestock in transit to ensure compliance with legislation designed to protect animal welfare.

Council Purchasing/Education

Meals

The Council will endeavour to use cruelty-free, animal-friendly produce at all Council run functions or where it has an influence. In addition to this at least one vegetarian alternative will appear on all menus and vegan food will be made available on request.

Fireworks

The Council supports the introduction and enforcement of legislation designed to minimise the distress caused to animals by the use of fireworks.

Publicity

The Council will undertake to promote animal welfare issues by way of publishing informative and educational articles in Rochford District Matters and on the Council website.