

## **DRAFT ANIMAL WELFARE CHARTER**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Members are asked to consider a final 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 agrees the final draft of the Council's Animal Welfare Charter.

G P Woolhouse

Head of Housing, Health and Community Care

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#### **Background Papers:**

Previous Animal Welfare Charter Sub-Committee Minutes

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**APPENDIX**

**ANIMAL WELFARE CHARTER (THIRD 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 (Including Home Boarding)
- 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 will 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.

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**Council Policies**

**Circuses**

It is Council policy not to allow performances, exhibitions or display of 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 Council's facilities – premises or land – shall include a clause specifically banning the provision of live creatures, animals or fish, as prizes.

**Horse, Pony and Donkey 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 dog faeces bins
- promoting animal health education on dog 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. All dogs will be thoroughly checked for identification in an attempt to return the dog to its owner. It is Council policy to re-home all unclaimed stray dogs after seven days, unless there is veterinary advice to the contrary.

**Puppy Farming**

The Council opposes puppy farming and supports the RSPCA in recommending that prospective dog owners purchase only puppies that are seen with their mothers. The Council would also encourage residents to consider homing a rescue dog rather than a puppy, in an effort to reduce the population of unwanted dogs.

**Cats**

The Council encourages residents to be responsible cat owners and supports the local Cat Protection League in its effort to educate and assist cat owners.

**Responsible Pet Ownership**

The Council strongly advises that anyone thinking of getting a pet should have good knowledge and /or take professional advice on the care of such animals before getting the pet. Once the pet has been acquired, responsible pet ownership should

include means of identifying the owner of the animal (eg, micro-chipping), consideration to neutering the animal to prevent unwanted pregnancies, regular health checks, including vaccinations, where required, and the safe and hygienic disposal of all animal waste.

#### **Pets in Council Accommodation**

The Council allows tenants to have pets in permanent Council accommodation. If a tenant owns a domestic animal when they are moved into temporary accommodation, that is acceptable. However, tenants who are currently in temporary accommodation may not acquire a pet (or replace one that has died) as this may prevent them from being placed in permanent accommodation, as some social landlords and housing associations do not allow pets in their properties. The Council will work with other social housing providers in the District to try to harmonise lettings policies regarding pets, with the aim of increasing pet ownership.

#### **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. The Council will attempt to satisfy the requirements of tenants within sheltered housing schemes regarding the keeping of cats and dogs, by continually monitoring the wishes of both current and prospective tenants.

#### **Pet Sitting Services**

The Council encourages responsible pet ownership and recommends that pet owners use only licensed boarding establishments or reputable pet sitting services when required.

#### **Horses**

The Council supports the introduction of the Horse Passports Regulations (England) 2004. The Council also supports the Protection Against Cruel Tethering Act 1988 and will not allow the long term tethering of horses or ponies, in an open environment, on any land, owned or managed by the Council.

#### **Dangerous Wild Animals**

The Council recommends that if people are selling or keeping animals listed on the schedule of the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 and other dangerous and/or exotic animals, they should have specialist knowledge and/or seek professional advice on the care of these animals, as some of these animals can grow very large, live for a long time and can be a threat to life. The Council encourages the Government to increase the number of animals listed on the schedule of Dangerous Wild Animals and supports the rigorous enforcement of current legislation.

### **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 that 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.

#### **Traps and Snares**

The Council is opposed to the use of illegal traps and snares. Where legal traps and snares are employed, the Council encourages the Government to strengthen the legislation and enforcement of such legislation in an effort to reduce the suffering of the target species and the capture of non-target species.

#### **Bats**

The Council supports legislation that protects bats and their roosts

#### **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.
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.

The Council considers it essential that fishing tackle is safely disposed of to prevent injury to both domestic and wild animals and that undersized fish should be returned to the water as quickly as possible.

#### **Pest control**

The Council promotes and supports the use of safe and humane methods of pest control only. The Council encourages householders to seek professional advice on pest control, rather than over the counter preparations, to prevent harm to non-target species, humans and the environment. It provides a free rodent control service to householders to ensure that a professional and safe treatment is readily available.

### **Pigeons**

Overpopulation of pigeons in built up areas can cause health and safety problems. The Council encourages the safe and hygienic disposal of all waste, especially fast food waste products to prevent such overpopulation. Where the pigeon population has to be controlled, only humane methods will be used.

### **Planning**

Through the delivery of the planning process, Rochford District Council is committed to using the mechanisms in the planning system to ensure that animals, plants and their habitats are afforded the appropriate level of protection in accordance with their protected status.

### **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 by sympathetic management and the display of notices explaining this type of management to visitors. Weed control is by approved methods only. The expansion of such areas within the District is an ongoing project.

### **Pesticides**

The Council encourages householders to use only authorised pesticides that will do minimal harm to the flora and fauna in the District.

### **Litter**

Litter is not only unsightly, but much of it, such as multi-pack plastic can ties, tin cans and plastic bags, can cause harm to both domestic and wild animals. The Council therefore strongly recommends that all litter is disposed of safely.

### **Experiments on Living Animals**

The Council would encourage the Government to look into the use of alternative methods of research not involving animals, but if such research is absolutely necessary, it should be kept to the bare minimum.

### **Factory Farming**

The Council regrets the use of Intensive/Factory Farming and would seek that a kinder approach to farming be adopted and requests that Members of Parliament support any legislation that will improve animal welfare conditions. The Council encourages consumers to check Food Labelling very carefully and to seek assistance from store managers if they are unsure of their meaning in an effort to encourage a kinder approach to farming.

### **Transport of Food Animals**

The Council feels that the live export of all food animals is not necessary and that the slaughter of animals should take place as close to where they are reared as possible.

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.

The Council supports Police action with regard to the enforcement of speed restrictions of vehicles transporting live animals.

### **Animal Cruelty**

The Council recognises that there is a link between animal cruelty and serious crime and encourages the Government to support all research by other agencies on this link in an effort to reduce both animal cruelty and serious crime.

### **Council Purchasing/Education**

#### **Meals**

It is the personal choice of a person to eat meat or not. 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 such as the Licensing of shops selling fireworks, the limit of hours that fireworks are permitted to be used and limiting the permitted noise level to 95dB to minimise the distress caused to animals by the use of such 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 of [www.rochford.gov.uk](http://www.rochford.gov.uk).