

## **Animal Welfare Charter Sub-Committee – 9 February 2006**

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Minutes of the meeting of the **Animal Welfare Charter Sub-Committee** held on **9 February 2006** when there were present:-

Cllr R A Amner  
Cllr Mrs T J Capon  
Cllr Mrs S A Harper

Cllr J M Pullen  
Cllr Mrs M J Webster  
Cllr Mrs C A Weston

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

R Peacey - Safety, Food & Regulation Manager  
H Meggison - Environmental Health Assistant  
M Martin - Committee Administrator

### **1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN**

Councillor Mrs M J Webster was appointed Chairman of the Sub-Committee.

### **2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Mrs S A Harper declared a personal interest by virtue of being a member of the RSPB and EHPPS and of having made donations to IFAW, REDWINGS, AHT and ACT.

Cllr Mrs M J Webster declared a personal interest by virtue of being a member of and either subscribing or donating to the RSPB, RSPCA, PDSA, Blue Cross, IFAW, PETA, South East Essex Animal Welfare Organisation, Animal Aid, Hunt Saboteurs Association, League Against Cruel Sports, Cats Protection League, Cat Action Trust, Canine Defence League, National Trust, National Trust Rayleigh Mount Committee, Compassion in World Farming, Essex Wildlife Trust, Council for the Protection of Rural England, Council for the Protection of Rural Essex, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, Badger Protection Association, Fox Watch, Sir Francis of Assisi Group, The Cinnamon Trust, The Donkey Trust, The Brook Animal Hospital, The Vegetarian Society, The Vegan Society, The Rescuers Wildlife Centre and organisations concerning dancing bears in Pakistan and concerning bears in China.

### **3 TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Sub-Committee noted its terms of reference.

### **4 ANIMAL WELFARE CHARTER REVIEW**

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health & Community Care which invited Members to consider amendments to improve the Council's Animal Welfare Charter. Council had agreed in December 2004 that the Charter be reviewed after 12 months.

The Sub-Committee had been reconstituted to consider the changes proposed in the report to the Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 17 January 2006. Members of that Committee had agreed that issues relating in particular to angling, guidance on the long-term tethering of horses and long-standing agreements to pets at the Crown Hill bungalows, should be thoroughly explored. Recommendations would be reported back to the next meeting of the Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 14 February 2006.

Officers tabled the additional proposed amendments, which Members considered in conjunction with those which had been appended to the original officer report to the January meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

### **Circuses, Performances, Exhibitions and Displays of Animals**

Members noted that the Council could not regulate circuses on the basis of animal welfare under the Licensing Act 2003. This was only possible on the basis of issues such as public nuisance and crime and disorder.

The Sub-Committee were of the opinion that the final decision relating to the granting or refusing of applications on Council land or premises should rest with the Property, Maintenance & Highways Manager in consultation with the Chairman of the Animal Welfare Sub-Committee and the Head of Housing, Health & Community Care.

### **Recommended to the Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

- The extension to the original heading of 'Circuses', as above to cover, for example, the growing number of animal shows and police dogs.
- The deletion of the first paragraph from the original document, as advice indicated that a blanket ban was open to legal challenge.
- The insertion of the following replacement paragraph:-
  - Having regard to the Council's premises and land, either owned or managed, it is unlikely that they would be suitable for circuses, performances, exhibitions or displays of animals. However, it is Council policy that all applications to hold circuses, performances, exhibitions or displays of animals on any Council land or premises will be considered individually and the decision to grant or refuse such applications will be based on a wide range of considerations, including animal welfare.
- The Property, Maintenance & Highways Manager in consultation with the Chairman of the Animal Welfare Charter Sub-Committee and the Head of Housing, Health & Community Care will decide whether to grant or refuse applications for circuses, performances, exhibitions and displays of animals on Council land or premises.

### Responsible Pet Ownership

#### Recommended to the Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee

- The insertion of the following additional paragraph with the aim of encouraging pet owners to act responsibly.
  - Pet owners are encouraged to properly control their animals to avoid the possibility of them causing annoyance or distress to members of the public or to other animals.

### Angling

#### Recommended to the Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee

- Some re-wording and numbering from the middle of point 3 onwards, as follows:-
  - 3. .... All anglers should be equipped with disgorgers and unhooking mats and be properly trained in their use.
  - 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 addition of two new paragraphs to include reference to the existence of national and regional byelaws controlling angling and to a guidance document produced by the Environment Agency, as follows:-
  - All anglers are encouraged to ensure that they comply with national and regional byelaws relating to angling. Details of these byelaws can be found by visiting the Environment Agency website at [www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk).

The Environment Agency has produced a useful free leaflet 'Golden Rules – Angling and Wildlife' which can be obtained by contacting 08459 333111. Alternatively pages from this leaflet can be viewed on the Environment Agency website at [www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk).

### Animal Hoarding

#### Recommended to the Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee

- The addition of this new sub-heading, in view of the fact that the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) advises that the keeping of large numbers of animals is a growing problem.
- Officers report cases which come to their attention to the RSPCA. Action can be taken under the Environmental Protection Act, where issues such as public nuisance exist. Members suggested that the wording be further strengthened, as follows, and that this advice should be added to the animal welfare section of the Council's web site.
  - An increasing number of cases are coming to light nationally where individuals, including some private animal sanctuaries, keep many animals in unsuitable conditions. Anyone keeping large numbers of animals needs to carefully consider whether they have adequate suitable facilities, sufficient knowledge and resources to properly care for all the animals. Professional advice should be sought. People are encouraged to report any suspected instances of animal hoarding to the Council or the RSPCA

### Publicity

#### Recommended to the Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee

- Amend the existing paragraph to take account of the fact that the animal welfare pages of the Council's website have been extensively upgraded over the past year as follows.
  - The Council regularly updates the information it provides to promote animal welfare through articles in Rochford District Matters and by maintaining pages on the Council's website [www.rochford.gov.uk](http://www.rochford.gov.uk). It provides information on animal welfare legislation, advice and links to useful related websites.

### Pets in Sheltered Housing Schemes

Officers advised that the bungalows and flats at Crown Hill, Rayleigh, although reserved for residents aged 60 and over, no longer have a scheme manager and are therefore not defined as 'Sheltered Accommodation'. As such they fall into the category 'Pets in Council Accommodation' and the residents are therefore allowed to keep pets.

### **Recommended to the Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

- The error in the existing wording be corrected in that there are only 12 flats at Chignal House.
- The housing stock transfer process pays due regard to ensuring that tenants retain the option to keep pets in a responsible manner within sheltered accommodation.

### **Horses**

Officers advised that the RSPCA are able to carry out enforcement once it has been proved that cruel tethering has taken place.

Copies of the RSPCA's 'Good Tethering Guide' were circulated.

### **Recommended to the Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

The re-wording of this paragraph from the second sentence onwards as far as the final sentence to strengthen the guidance on the long-term tethering of horses, as follows:-

- .... The Council also supports the Protection Against Cruel Tethering Act 1988 and will not allow long term tethering, as a method of managing horses or ponies, in an open environment, on any land owned or managed by the Council. In line with the RSPCA, the Council does not oppose an animal being tethered for short periods, eg for grooming or having a short break in a journey or working period. Equally the Council would not oppose an animal being tethered in a field for a short period whilst boundary fencing was installed or repaired. ....

Members of the Sub-Committee agreed that:-

- in the light of recent articles in the local press associated with the ill treatment of horses and chickens, the review of the Charter was very timely and should be widely publicised.
- it would need to meet again from time to time as matters arise, for example, to discuss issues around the Government's animal welfare bill, once it is published.

It was further:-

### **Recommended to the Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

- (1) That once the Charter had been agreed by the Council, a press release be issued advising that the Council had strengthened its Animal Welfare Charter. Particular reference should be made to the inclusion

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of issues such as animal hoarding and tethering of horses. Appropriate photographs could be added. Reference should also be made to the animal welfare section of the Council's web site.

- (2) That the revised Charter should be circulated as widely as possible, to include veterinary surgeries, libraries, parish councils, citizens' advice bureaux, the County Council's Cabinet Member for and all Members of this Council.
- (3) That a copy of the revised Charter be sent to other local authorities, commending it to them and inviting them to consider publishing their own.
- (4) That the Sub-Committee's terms of reference be revised to allow it to meet from time to time as the need arises. (HHHCC)

The meeting commenced at 10 am and closed at 10.40 am.

Chairman .....

Date .....