



Animal Welfare Charter

February 2006



This Animal Welfare Charter is intended to be a living document and as such will be reviewed periodically. It was first published in February 2005 with the first review undertaken in February 2006.

If you have any comments or suggestions to make with regard to this document, please telephone 01702 318045 or email environmental.health@rochford.gov.uk .

If you would like a copy of this document in larger print, braille or another language, please telephone 01702 318045

Animal Welfare Charter

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 aim to 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.

Council Policies

Blood Sports

It is Council Policy that hunting is not allowed on Council owned land.

Circuses, Performances, Exhibitions and Displays of Animals

Having regard to the District Councils 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 District 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.

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. The Council encourages other private premises or landowners to follow this lead.

Horse, Pony and Donkey Rides

Anyone offering pony rides on Council land must meet strict conditions as laid down by the council. The Council encourages other landowners to apply similar strict conditions.

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. 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 local animal welfare organisations in their efforts 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. It is a licence condition of pet shops within the district, that pet care leaflets or other similar written instructions must be made available to customers free of charge at the time of purchase and that proper advice on the care of the animal must be given. Once the pet has been acquired, responsible pet ownership should include means of identifying the owner of the animal (e.g. 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. Pet owners are encouraged to control their animals properly to avoid the possibility of them causing annoyance or distress to members of the public or other animals.

Animal Hoarding

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 consider carefully whether they have adequate, suitable facilities, sufficient knowledge and resources to care properly 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.

Pets In Council Accommodation

The Council allows tenants to have pets in permanent Council accommodation. If a tenant owns a pet animal when they need to be moved into temporary accommodation, the Council will attempt to place them with a housing provider that allows pets in their properties. However, tenants who are currently in temporary accommodation shall not acquire a pet (or replace one that has died) as this may prevent them from moving to permanent accommodation as some 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 allowing tenants to have pets.

Pets in Sheltered Housing Schemes

- (1) That scheme managers and tenants of communal sheltered accommodation be not allowed to keep pets, save with the prior written approval of the Council; each application for approval to be at the absolute discretion of the Council and to be considered on its individual merits having regard in particular to the suitability of the accommodation, the nature and size of the pet and the interests of its other tenants.
- (2) That pet owning applicants on the Sheltered Housing Register will be considered for tenancies of the following units:-
 - 2 x bungalows at The Lavers.
 - 12 x flats at Chignal House.
 - 14 x flats at Francis Cottee Lodge.
 - 4 x bungalows at Spa Court. (HRHM).

Pet Sitting Services

The Council encourages responsible pet ownership and recommends that pet owners use only licenced boarding establishments or, if using pet sitting services, take up references, visit the service provider and contact animal welfare organisations for advice and recommendation 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. In line with the RSPCA, the Council does not oppose an animal being tethered for short periods, e.g. 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. The Council would wish to remind owners that a tethered horse requires adequate feed and particularly water.

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:-

- **The control of animals released into the wild**

The Council is concerned at the potential threat to British wildlife, pets and people by the release of non-native animals into the wild. Expert advice should be sought so that the appropriate control should be taken.

- **Traps and Snares**

The Council is opposed to the use of traps and snares. Where traps and snares are employed, the Council encourages the government to strengthen legislation so as 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 intended for food should be killed humanely.
3. Unhooking a fish humanely and safely is one of the most important skills for an angler to learn. 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 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.

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.

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.

- **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 (01702 318045)

- **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, the 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 no harm to the flora and fauna in the district. Members of the public should check for an up to date list of authorised

pesticides (information can be found at www.pesticides.gov.uk - 01904 4557750).

- **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, therefore the Council strongly recommends that all litter is disposed of safely in the facilities that it provides for this purpose throughout the district.

- **Guns**

The Council does not permit guns on any Council owned public open space, woodlands, parks or country parks.

Experiments on Living Animals

The Council encourages the Government to look into the use of alternative methods of research not involving animals. The Council also recognises that it is irresponsible and not in the interests of the animal for laboratory animals to be released into the wild where it may not be able to fend for itself.

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 believes that the live export of 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 regards to the enforcing of speed restrictions of vehicles transporting live animals and requests that enforcement be more rigorously applied.

Animal Cruelty

Those dealing with children or vulnerable adults who have suffered physical and/or mental abuse, recognise that there is a link between animal and 'people' cruelty. Indeed, a protocol exists between social services staff and the RSPCA in some local authority areas, whereby there is an exchange of information, and careful monitoring of those will follow.

This Council believes that there should be a requirement on local authorities to establish and operate such a protocol, and that police forces should also be part of such agreements, so that every effort can be made to prevent cruelty wherever it might arise.

The Council encourages the Government to support all research by other agencies on the link between animal/child and vulnerable adult abuse 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 should aim 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 regularly updates the information it provides to promote animal welfare through articles in Rochford District Matters and by maintaining pages on the Councils website www.rochford.gov.uk. It provides information on animal welfare legislation, advice and links to useful related websites.