

Animal Welfare Charter Sub-Committee – 25 May 2004

Minutes of the meeting of the **Animal Welfare Charter Sub-Committee** held on **25 May 2004** 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

OFFICERS PRESENT

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

22 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 April 2004 were approved as a correct record, subject to it being noted that, with respect to chopping down trees, it is against the law to disturb nesting wild birds.

Matters Arising

The Council would introduce a new licensing category, of home boarding for dogs and cats, which would have reduced fees in comparison to those for commercial boarding premises. This would need to be carefully monitored, as there was currently no legislation controlling this type of animal boarding.

23 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 and of having subscribed to PETA.

Cllr Mrs M J Webster declared a personal interest by virtue of being a member of and either subscribing or donating to 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, 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.

24 ANIMAL WELFARE CHARTER

The Chairman welcomed the Head of Revenue and Housing Management to the meeting.

The Council has, for some years, accepted tenants with small pets and caged birds in sheltered housing schemes; tenants with pets had to sign and agree to pet owning tenants' contract conditions. This system has worked well since April 1999.

The results of a tenants' survey conducted in 1999 revealed that tenants did not want larger pets like cats and dogs in sheltered housing schemes. Of the 12 current sheltered housing schemes across the District, Goodmans in Great Wakering and Romney House in Rochford had the most marginal result in this survey. It was the general consensus of the Sub-Committee, therefore, that there would be merit in a letter being sent to the residents of these 2 schemes explaining the reasons why the Council was exploring the possibility of allowing larger pets, such as dogs and cats, into the schemes, and asking the tenants for their views. In tandem with this, the wardens of the outstanding 10 schemes should be asked whether there might be support from residents in their schemes for the introduction of larger pets into the accommodation. It was also agreed that officers would find out from Anchor Housing Association what arrangements were made for pets within their sheltered schemes.

During debate, it was also felt that consideration should be given to the possibility of making available ground floor flats to elderly pet owners as part of the work being undertaken on the review of elderly tenants' housing needs.

On 31 March 2004, out of 206 residents on the housing register, 19 owned either dogs or cats. Some of the 19 residents were on the deferred list, which allowed them the option of remaining on the register to accrue points but did not, at this stage, want to be made an offer of accommodation. .

Only a very small percentage of tenants in sheltered accommodation fell into an emergency health situation that would require them to be hospitalised and therefore unable to look after their pets. During debate it was considered that there might be merit in approaching the Dengie Project or Boy Scouts/Girl Guides to explore the possibility of help being given in looking after pets in sheltered accommodation in cases where owners were hospitalised at short notice.

Resolved

- (1) That a letter be sent to the residents of the Goodmans and Romney House sheltered schemes asking their views on the introduction of larger pets into the sheltered accommodation.
- (2) That the wardens of the other 10 sheltered housing schemes be asked whether there was likely to be support from tenants for the introduction

of larger pets into the sheltered accommodation.

- (3) That officers find out from Anchor Housing Association what arrangements were made for pets within their sheltered schemes. (HRHM)

25 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ANIMAL CRUELTY AND OTHER CRIME

The Sub-Committee discussed the issue of proven links between animal cruelty and serious crime. The Police were well aware of the correlation between animal cruelty and serious crime. During debate, there was a general consensus that the key indicators for recorded crime should include animal cruelty and that the Police should be asked to ensure that all their staff are made aware of the links between animal cruelty and serious crimes and that instances of animal cruelty should be reported to the Police.

Members were also of the view that an article by the RSPCA should be included in *Rochford District Matters* giving instructions on responsible pet ownership and on the importance of reporting all instances of animal cruelty.

Resolved

That the RSPCA be asked to write an article for *Rochford District Matters* containing instructions on responsible pet ownership and outlining the importance of reporting all instances of animal cruelty.

And further **Recommended**

- (1) That a letter be sent to the Home Office requesting that animal cruelty be included in the key indicators for recorded crime.
- (2) That the Police be asked to ensure that all staff are made aware of the links between animal cruelty and serious crime and that reported instances of animal cruelty be recorded by them. (HHHCC)

26 DRAFT ANIMAL WELFARE CHARTER

The Sub-Committee considered the first draft of the Council's Animal Welfare Charter. During debate, Members agreed that it was important that the Charter should not express opinion, but should provide a statement of the Council's position with respect to animal welfare, while at the same time providing details of the Council's statutory duties and policies concerning animals. A series of amendments to the draft were accordingly agreed by Members.

During debate, Members considered that further conditions should be applied to tenants with respect to the keeping of pets on Council premises, as part of the stock options appraisal process.

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With respect to fireworks, Members noted that the RSPCA had written asking this Authority to support its campaign that the noise level for fireworks available for private use by the public be reduced to 95dB. The deadline for communicating with the Government was 2 July 2004. Members unanimously agreed that a letter should be written to the responsible Government Minister in support of this campaign.

Resolved

That a letter be sent to the Consumer Affairs Minister asking that the noise level for fireworks available for private use by the public be reduced to 95dB.
(HHHCC)

The meeting commenced at 2.30 pm and adjourned at 4.45 pm.

The meeting would re-convene at 2.30 pm on 1 June 2004.

Chairman

Date