

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

8 JULY 2014

REVIEW OF THE ANIMAL WELFARE SERVICE

REPORT OF HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND LICENSING

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RECENT REFERENCES:

CAB2423(HSG) Housing Revenue Account – 2013/14 Rent Setting and Budget/Business Plan Options – 10 December 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Since the summer of 2010 the Dog Warden and Animal Welfare Service has been delivered predominantly by a single full time equivalent, covering the whole of Winchester City Council's substantial 255 square mile jurisdiction.

Having a single officer operating in such a large District has presented many logistical difficulties in meeting the demands of the service from members of the public, the Parishes and other internal departments. In particular in responding to the collection of stray dogs, the increasing need to investigate cases of animal welfare and responding to complaints of dog fouling. It has also placed additional burdens with the Environmental Health Service, including over qualified officers on occasion, having to respond to call outs to collect strays.

This report seeks to review how the Council will deliver the wider Dog Warden and Animal Welfare Service, so that it can meet current and future demands.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 That approval is given to the findings of this review and specifically for:
 - (i) the deletion of the 'Animal Welfare Officer' Post Reference 935;
 - (ii) the creation of a 'Senior Animal Welfare Officer Post (est. Scale 5 subject to job evaluation);
 - (iii) the creation of a new 'Animal Welfare officer' post (est. Scale 4 subject to job evaluation).

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DETAIL:

1 Background

- 1.1 Prior to the early summer of 2010, Winchester City Council employed two Animal Welfare Officers to cover the needs of District, including the collection and re homing of strays, the policing of fouling hot spots, dealing with dangerous dogs and the inspection of licensed animal boarding and other 'animal establishments'.
- 1.2 Since the service offered up one of these posts as part of the 2010/11 round of budget savings, the Council has operated with a single Dog Warden, whose role not only included the traditional reactive roles of the collection and re-homing of strays, but expanded to respond to complaints of dangerous dogs, animal welfare investigations and the proactive support of Housing Services on animal related issues in their housing stock.
- 1.3 Subsequent to a job evaluation of the then existing remaining Animal Welfare Officer post, it was re-graded to a Scale 4 post, in recognition of the additional duties they were expected to cover.
- 1.4 However due to increasing expectations by the public as evidenced by legislative changes brought about by Central Government, combined with the size and profile of the District, concerns have been raised as to the Environmental Health Service's ability to meeting current and future demands.

2 Current Challenges

Stray Dogs

- 2.1 Operating with a single Animal Welfare Officer has presented the Animal Welfare Service with a number of logistical difficulties. By far and a way the most unpredictable and reactive service statutorily offered by Winchester City Council is that of responding to the collection of stray dogs. There is no way of predicting when a stray will require collection on any given day or at any given time. With sheer size of the District, the need to collect the stray, deliver it to the designated stray dog handling facility and often to re-home the animal, means that the post is required to cover significant distances and spend considerable periods of time driving.

- 2.2 As the Animal Welfare post also has the responsibility of inspecting Animal Boarding Establishments, Horse Riding Establishments, Pet Shops, dealing with Dangerous Dogs with the Police and investigating claims of animal cruelty, having to react to this unpredictable aspect of strays, often presents management difficulties. This is especially the case during periods of Animal Welfare Officer absence and sickness.
- 2.3 In order to try and address these logistical challenges, in consultation with the Head of Community Safety and the Assistant Director for Environment (as was), the Head of Environmental Protection sought the assistance of the then Neighbourhood Wardens to offer cover in the absence of the Animal Welfare Officer.
- 2.4 This arrangement has enjoyed varying success in the last two years, insofar as the level of support the Community Safety Team has been able to provide. The arrangement from the perspective of the Community Safety Service has always been on a 'when resources allow' basis and in a significant proportion of instances when the Animal Welfare Officer has been unavailable to respond to a stray, the Community Safety Team has also been unable to respond. This has necessitated that other over qualified Environmental Health personnel, including the Head of Service have had to respond by collecting stray dogs and that in these instances this does not represent efficient or effective working.

Dog Fouling

- 2.5 In operating the Animal Welfare Service with just one full time equivalent, it has necessitated a robust triage approach towards the delivery of its statutory duties. The Service has had to focus on the operation of its stray dog collection and re-homing service, as well as its licensing function, to the detriment of its non statutory role of investigating and enforcing against dog fouling. Dog fouling consistently remains in the top ten concerns of residents in national polls and the residents of the Winchester District are typical of this trend.
- 2.6 Recently the Head of Environmental Health was called to attend a Southern Parishes meeting held in Bishops Waltham when dog fouling was high on the agenda of concern. Regular complaints come in from many Parish Councils, with regards dog fouling and the need for proactive enforcement against repeat offenders. It has been noted that under the current establishment the Environmental Health Team has struggled to offer a professional service in response.
- 2.7 It is anticipated that the Anti Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Bill, will be enacted later this year giving local authorities new powers to deal with dog fouling. Winchester City Council needs to be in a position to implement and proactively enforce these provisions and it is unlikely that we will be able to do so with the current resources.

Animal Welfare

- 2.8 Since 2007, The Animal Welfare Act 2006 has empowered Local Authorities to investigate cases of animal cruelty and Winchester City Council has taken a proactive role in doing so within its jurisdiction. It has in the last 18 months successfully secured two prosecutions for animal cruelty in cases involving its own housing tenants and this has served to raise awareness and the need for joint working between Environmental Health and Housing Services. This has attracted the highly coveted and rarely given Silver 'Paw print Award' from the RSPCA.
- 2.9 Animal Welfare investigations are very time consuming and require an additional level of expertise on the part of the investigating officer, which on these occasions was provided in support by other highly qualified Environmental Health Staff.
- 2.10 If Winchester City Council wishes to remain a county, if not regional leader in the delivery of Animal Welfare investigations, then this work must be suitably recognised within the Environmental Health Service's establishment.

Animal Licensing

- 2.11 As a large primarily rural District, Winchester City Council boasts numerous Animal Boarding Establishments, Dog Breeders, Pet Shops and Horse Riding Establishments. It also unusually hosts two Zoos, one of which is significant in size and which is of regional importance.
- 2.12 Whilst the current service provides for the inspection and licensing of these establishments, the zoos in particular Marwell, are handled by senior professional officers within the service, more out of necessity as there is a lack of capacity to cover this work within the single post that is the Animal welfare Service, as it stands.

Other Duties

- 2.13 The current Animal Welfare duties include the investigation of dog on dog attacks and dog on human attacks. Again these investigations can be time consuming and involve liaison with the Police and RSPCA.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 In view of the above, there are a number of issues any proposal to restructure the service needs to consider:
- a. The current establishment dealing with Animal Welfare is currently insufficient to adequately meet the needs and expectations of the public and the City/Parish Councils;
 - b. That any proposals to increase resource must meet with the Community Strategy of being an efficient and effective council;

- c. That the full remit of Winchester City Council's duties under the Animal Welfare work programme can be met now and in the future under these proposals;
- d. That any proposals assist with and do not increase the burdens on the Environmental Health Manager (Environmental Protection).

3.2 The proposals are therefore as follows, that:

- a. the animal Welfare Officer Post reference 935 be deleted. Although on the establishment this post is currently vacant;
- b. a Senior Animal Welfare Officer post be created. This post will be responsible for the delivery of all of the Animal Welfare Service which in addition to those duties already mentioned, will include the following:
 - investigation of, including case preparation to a legal standard, all animal welfare related cases,
 - providing all support as necessary to Housing Services on all matters relating to Animal Welfare;
 - direct liaison with City and Parish Councillors on all animal welfare, dog fouling and dog waste collection,
 - the investigation of animal related nuisance including noise from barking dogs; and
 - the management of a subordinate Animal Welfare Officer.

This post will require job evaluation and it expected to attract Grade 5 remuneration.

- c. An new Animal Welfare Officer post be created to report into the Senior Animal Welfare post and which will be responsible for in the main the reactive nature of the service i.e. the collection and homing of stray and the implementation of the Council's dog fouling procedure including the investigation and gathering of evidence as necessary.

3.3 These proposals it is believed will meet the expectations as outlined in points a – d above.

4 COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND PORTFOLIO PLANS (RELEVANCE TO):

- 4.1 These proposals are relevant to the efficient and effective delivery of the Council's animal welfare statutory duties and roles in maintaining a high quality environment to be enjoyed by the citizens of the district.
- 4.2 In addition these proposals will provide the Council with the ability to appropriately respond to future demands set by central government not least of which the provisions soon to be enacted by the Anti Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2104.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 Appendix 1 sets out the financial implications of these proposals. At the point of drafting this report, both positions were subject to job evaluation and so their grades are yet to be determined. However for the purposes of this report the following assumptions have been made. Assuming a Scale 5 and a Scale 4 post are determined by the job evaluation process, then there will be an estimated initial cost to the general fund of £20,578 for this current financial year, with a £36,399 cost in the year 2015/16 rising to a cost of £40,828 in 2018/19, assuming both posts are appointed at mid-point.
- 5.2 Sufficient funding has already been identified in consultation with the Assistant Director (Chief Housing Officer), who has set aside a budget of £40k to fund work provided by the Environmental Health Service on behalf of Housing Landlord Services. This funding was agreed under CAB2423(HSG) 10th December 2012.
- 5.3 Furthermore, although an additional vehicle will be required to enable the second post to operate within the District, Environmental Health already provides for the lease of this vehicle within its budgets. This vehicle is currently used by Community Safety under the arrangements outlined in paragraph 2.3 above, so it will need to be returned to Environmental Health
- 5.4 For the purposes of this report, it is therefore not anticipated that additional money will need to be sourced from the General fund.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 6.1 There are no risk management issues identified.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None.

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1: Animal Welfare Service Review – Budget Sheet 1

Appendix 1 - Scale 3 and Scale 5

Environmental Health - Animal Welfare Service Review

Salary Incl. On-Costs

		Financial Year				2014/15 7mths	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	Top of Grade 2018/19
		Post	FTE	Grade	SCP	£	£	£	£	£
Existing Budget	Animal Welfare Officer - vacant	935	1.0000	4	26	15,863	28,412	29,667	31,190	32,593
			<u>1.0000</u>			<u>15,863</u>	<u>28,412</u>	<u>29,667</u>	<u>31,190</u>	<u>32,593</u>
Proposed Budget	Animal Welfare Officer Dog Warden	new	1.0000	5	34	20,578	36,399	37,767	39,246	40,828
		new	1.0000	3	18	12,144	21,852	22,915	24,024	24,922
			<u>2.0000</u>			<u>32,722</u>	<u>58,251</u>	<u>60,682</u>	<u>63,270</u>	<u>65,750</u>
General Fund Cost / (Savings) BEFORE One Off Costs			1.0000			16,859	29,839	31,015	32,080	33,157
Redundancy / Severance / Other Costs & (Other Savings)						0				
TOTAL COST / (SAVINGS) incl. one-off			1.0000			16,859	29,839	31,015	32,080	33,157

Assumptions

Existing staffing costed at budgeted 14/15 salary points

All new posts budgeted at mid point and assumed in WCC pension scheme, unless specifically noted

Salary costs include on costs, with 1% year on year inflation increase, and incremental progression where applicable

To be confirmed

Appendix 2 - Scale 4 and Scale 5

Environmental Health - Animal Welfare Service Review

					Salary Incl. On-Costs					
Financial Year					2014/15 7mths	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	Top of Grade 2018/19	
Post	FTE	Grade	SCP		£	£	£	£	£	
Existing Budget	Animal Welfare Officer - vacant	935	1.0000	4	26	15,863	28,412	29,667	31,190	32,593
			<u>1.0000</u>			<u>15,863</u>	<u>28,412</u>	<u>29,667</u>	<u>31,190</u>	<u>32,593</u>
Proposed Budget	Animal Welfare Officer Dog Warden	new	1.0000	5	34	20,578	36,399	37,767	39,246	40,828
		new	1.0000	4	26	15,863	28,412	29,667	31,190	32,593
			<u>2.0000</u>			<u>36,441</u>	<u>64,811</u>	<u>67,434</u>	<u>70,436</u>	<u>73,421</u>
General Fund Cost / (Savings) BEFORE One Off Costs		1.0000				20,578	36,399	37,767	39,246	40,828
Redundancy / Severance / Other Costs & (Other Savings)					0					
TOTAL COST / (SAVINGS) incl. one-off		1.0000				20,578	36,399	37,767	39,246	40,828

Assumptions

Existing staffing costed at budgeted 14/15 salary points

All new posts budgeted at mid point and assumed in WCC pension scheme, unless specifically noted

Salary costs include on costs, with 1% year on year inflation increase, and incremental progression where applicable

To be confirmed