

Title of Report: Animal Welfare	Officer Presenting: Director Health and Community Author: Head of Health and Community Wellbeing
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1. Purpose of Report/Recommendations

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update members on the levels of activity in the Animal Welfare Service within the Derry City and District Council area.

2. Background

- 2.1 Under the Welfare of Animals Act (NI) 2011 (2011 Act) a person who is responsible for an animal must ensure that its needs are met, and it is an offence to fail to take reasonable steps to ensure its welfare. Animal Welfare Officers investigate complaints and can use their statutory powers to take a range of actions including giving advice, issuing legally binding Improvement Notices, taking animals into their possession and prosecution.

Communication with Public

- 2.2 The NI Direct website includes to include all relevant information for the public in relation to Animal Welfare (Appendix 1).

Council delivery structures and operating model

- 2.3 The Animal Welfare structure consists of 4 sub-regions and Belfast City Council with Fermanagh and Omagh District Council (FODC) being the Regional Lead Council.
- 2.4 From 1st April 2018, FODC on behalf of the Western Region has received over 947 animal welfare calls and carried out 1384 inspections, 368 of which were carried out in the Derry city and Strabane District Council area. It was noted that there was 38 calls received in Derry city and Strabane District Council area that were not Animal Welfare Cases and were referred to other agencies.

Period 01/04/2018-22/11/2018	NI	Western Region	Derry City and Strabane
No. of Calls received to date	4221	947	267
No. of Referrals other agencies	590	157	38
No. of Animal welfare cases	3631	790	229

No. of AWO Inspection visits	6282	1384	368
No. of Improvement Notices served	94	12	1
No. of Cases of Animals seized	70	7	3
No. of prosecutions	29	2	0

- 2.5 Over the past 6 years, Councils have received over 38,295 animal welfare calls, carried out over 51,310 inspection visits (9119 in Western Region) and served over 1,312 Improvement Notices. They have also successfully prosecuted 128 animal welfare cases, and there are a substantial number of animal welfare cases (over 122) being considered for potential prosecution.
- 2.6 It should be noted that over 146,386 animals have been seen by Animal Welfare Officers (32,061 in Western region) which includes 75,866 dogs, 14,054 cats and 39,628 equines.

3. Key Issues

Joint Annual Statistical Report

- 3.1 The review of the implementation of the 2011 Act in 2015, recommended that Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) should publish an annual report setting out information in relation to the animal welfare service. Responsibility for the enforcement of the 2011 Act has been conferred on three enforcement agencies; DAERA, Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and local Councils.
- 3.2 DEARA has produced a second statistical bulletin, using information provided by the three enforcement bodies and detailing the range and level of animal welfare activities during 2017 (Appendix 2).
- 3.3 The information compares 2016 to 2017 statistics and demonstrates the increased workload and need of an Animal Welfare service with calls, visits, improvement notices and seizures having all increased from 2016 to 2017. For example, the number of Improvement Notices issued in Councils has gone up 22%, number of Disposal Orders obtained via the Courts gone up 107% and the total number of animals seized has gone up 91%.

Guidelines on Buying a Puppy

- 3.4 In an effort to reduce unwanted pups and dogs DAERA have now issued guidelines on buying a puppy and what to consider (Appendix 3). The Guidelines advise prospective purchasers that deciding whether to get a puppy or dog is a

big decision and hence important to give it proper thought and to carry out some research. The Guidelines highlight that anyone who decides to get a dog becomes responsible for that animal and will need to be fully aware of the legal requirements of owning a dog.

3.5 The Guide sets out information on

- the importance of research, before deciding to buy a puppy/dog;
- finding the right dog breed;
- deciding where to get your new puppy/dog;
- finding a healthy, happy dog;
- collecting your new dog and bringing it home;
- helping your new dog settle-in to its new home; and
- understanding dog behaviour.

The Guide also highlights the responsibilities that dog owners have, regarding:

- licensing the dog;
- keeping the dog under proper control; and
- meeting the welfare needs of the dog.

Memorandums of Understanding

3.6 At a regional level a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been developed following on from the recent information sharing protocol for Animal Welfare Enforcement. The purpose of the MOU is to establish an agreed framework between Councils, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and the PSNI regarding enforcement of the 2011 Act. The MOU sets out the Animal Welfare enforcement responsibilities for each party and reporting arrangements including;

- Clarifying the general roles and responsibilities of each Party;
- Setting out in general terms the specific types of animal that each Party has responsibility for under the 2011 Act.
- Setting out in general terms the basis of an information sharing protocol between the parties for the purposes of enforcement under the 2011 Act.
- Setting out the review, dispute and termination arrangements.

- 3.7 The MOU outlines the basis upon which the PSNI, DAERA and the Lead Councils will work together in relation to the enforcement of Animal Welfare under the Welfare of Animals Act (NI) 2011. It is hoped that key agencies will be able to provide support in relation to cases being investigated by Lead Councils in relation to Animal Welfare including the protection of Animal Welfare officers in the performance of their functions under Welfare of Animals Act (NI) 2011.
- 3.8 The MOU will be between the PSNI, DAERA and FODC, as the Regional Lead Council in relation to the enforcement of the Welfare of Animals Act (NI) 2011. The Regional Lead Council has a coordinating role with all Councils for matters relating to this MOU (Appendix 4).

4. Financial, Equality, Legal, HR, Improvement and other Implications

Financial

- 4.1 DAERA has previously advised a maximum of £1.25m resource funding to be available to Councils to fulfil the statutory enforcement obligations arising from the Welfare of Animals (Northern Ireland) Act 2011.
- 4.2 DAERA has confirmed an additional £68K capital funding in the 2018/19 financial year for the purchase and fit-out of four Animal Welfare Officer Vehicles for the region, originally scheduled for 2019/20 financial year with FODC to undertake a procurement process to purchase a replacement van for the western region.

Legal Services

- 4.3 Legal Services support to the Animal Welfare function across all Councils has been provided by Belfast City Council Legal Services Department since the introduction of the Welfare of Animals Act (NI) 2011.
- 4.4 The existing Service Level agreement is now due for renewal and this continuation of Service has been endorsed previously by the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE). The Service Level Agreement sets out the range of legal services to be delivered by Belfast City Council Legal Services, the expected performance in delivery of such services and the charging of the services to the Service User.
- 4.5 The Service Level Agreement also sets out a range of response times and this is monitored by FODC as the Lead council and the Animal Welfare Project Board.

Human Resources

- 4.6 Currently FODC employ an Animal Welfare Manager, two Animal Officers and two administrative staff. Support of Animal Welfare Officers from other regions is provided to the Western Region when required.

5. Recommendations

That Members are asked to note:

- a) The level of activity in relation to Animal Welfare within the Derry City and Strabane District Council area.
- b) Statistics provided in Annual Animal Welfare Service Delivery - Statistical Bulletin 2017.
- c) Guidelines in relation to buying a puppy.
- d) Memorandum of Understanding between Councils, PSNI and DAERA.

Background Papers

Appendix 1 [NI Direct Animal Welfare](#)

Appendix 2 [Animal Welfare Service Delivery Statistical Bulletin 2017](#)

Appendix 3 [DEARA Guidelines to buying a puppy.](#)

Appendix 4 MOU between Councils, PSNI and DAERA