

AGENDA ITEM No.9

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT

To: ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE	Subject: Control of Dogs - Pilot Scheme in association with Strathclyde Police
From: DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES	
Date: 14th December, 1998 Ref: GC/TM	

BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The control of dogs is a sensitive issue, particularly in relation to problems caused by fouling in public places. Notwithstanding this, the Council recognises the benefits derived by many through dog ownership, principally with regard to companionship and in some cases providing a measure of security. The majority of dog owners are very responsible and keep adequate control over their pets. Unfortunately, there are some irresponsible dog owners who do not exercise sufficient control. This leads to problems of dogs attacking the public, road accidents, nuisance caused by barking and fouling of public areas. It is this last issue which is of particular concern to parents of young children because, in addition to the unpleasantness of children becoming soiled with dog faeces, a child may become exposed to health risks, chiefly toxocarosis which can lead to ophthalmic lesions causing partial blindness.
- 1.2 Statutory responsibility for dealing with persons who permit their dogs to foul designated public areas rests with the Police in terms of Section 48 of the Civic Government (Scotland) 1982. Unfortunately due to manpower shortages, the Police have to prioritise their workload and therefore it has not been possible for them to target sufficient resources to effectively tackle the dog fouling problem.

ACTION PLAN TO COMBAT DOG FOULING IN PUBLIC AREAS

- 2.1 The Council currently employs 3 dog wardens whose duties include uplifting any stray dogs they may find following a specific complaint or during a routine patrol.
- 2.2 "No Fouling" signs are affixed at points adjacent to areas which are the subject of problems due to dog fouling. It is hoped that these act as a deterrent to some irresponsible dog owners.

- 2.3 Despite these efforts the problem persists. It is therefore proposed to develop an Action Plan which will adopt a more radical approach whereby irresponsible dog owners are tackled more vigorously whilst at the same time include new initiatives to encourage responsible dog owners. It is important that any measures taken will be sensible, fair and practical. Hopefully this will receive support from the public and indeed all responsible dog owners. It is important to make it absolutely clear that this will not be an “anti-dog” campaign. The benefits of dog ownership have already been alluded to in this report. The main focus of the Plan would certainly be to effectively deal with irresponsible dog owners but a significant part will include several specific positive measures for dog owners.
- 2.4 It is proposed to launch the Action Plan as a joint initiative with the Police. This would initially take the form of a pilot scheme covering Wards 51-69 inclusive for a period of six months. Exploratory discussions have already taken place and it is proposed that a Police Officer would be accompanied by a Dog Warden on joint patrols. Any offenders would be dealt with by the Police Officer because of the current statutory position. The Dog Warden would be present for corroborative purposes. In most cases the approach would be to issue verbal warnings to “first offenders” and thereafter submit a report to the Procurator Fiscal’s Office in cases where dog owners are involved in persistent offences.
- 2.5 Specific operational details have still to be agreed in order to effectively target resources. It is also proposed to publicise the initiative in local newspapers immediately prior to the launch of the scheme, hopefully to generate support whilst at the same time give due warning to irresponsible dog owners. The pilot scheme will be assessed after a reasonable period to determine the degree of success. Clearly the opportunity would also be taken to decide whether it would be appropriate to extend the scheme to other parts of the Authority.
- 2.6 Consultations are also ongoing with other Council Departments and relevant agencies including the Community Councils. It is proposed to discuss other schemes which would form the next phase of the Action Plan. These would largely focus on positive initiatives to assist dog owners. It is proposed that the outcome of this Consultation Process would form part of a further report to Committee along with an update on the progress of the joint scheme with the Police.

RECOMMENDATION

- (i) That approval be given to proceed with the proposed pilot scheme in Wards 51-69 inclusive in association with the Police for a period of six months.
- (ii) That a follow up report is submitted in due course to update Committee on the outcome of the consultation process and the pilot scheme in six months time.

McKenzie L. Hutton