

FINANCE AND PROCUREMENT PORTFOLIO DECISION SCHEDULE



Thursday 22 September 2011

at 10.00 am

in Committee Room B, Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Councillor R Payne, Cabinet Member responsible for Finance and Procurement will consider the following items.

1. KEY DECISIONS

No items.

2. OTHER ITEMS REQUIRING DECISION

No items

3. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

- 3.1 Social Media Promotions of Stray Dog Rehoming Service – *Assistant Director (Neighbourhood Services)*

4. REPORTS FROM OVERVIEW OF SCRUTINY FORUMS

No items

5. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) (VARIATION) ORDER 2006

EXEMPT ITEMS

Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it

involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs referred to below of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006

6. EXEMPT KEY DECISIONS

No items

7. OTHER EXEMPT ITEMS REQUIRING DECISION

- 7.1 Briarfields Paddock and Former Ambulance Station Briarfields (para 3) – *Assistant Director (Resources)*
- 7.2 Market Hotel (Para 3) – *Assistant Director (Resources)*
- 7.3 Land at Central Park (para 3) – *Assistant Director (Resources)*
- 7.4 The Link 6-8 Lealholm Road (para 3) – *Assistant Director (Resources)*
- 7.5 Hartlepool Credit Union (para 3) – *Chief Finance Officer and Chief Solicitor*

FINANCE AND PROCUREMENT PORTFOLIO

Report to Portfolio Holder

22nd September 2011



Report of: Assistant Director (Neighbourhood Services)

Subject: SOCIAL MEDIA PROMOTIONS OF STRAY
DOG REHOMING SERVICE

SUMMARY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide the Portfolio Holder with information regarding the use of social media to promote the Council's stray dog rehoming service.

2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

- Background to the Dog Warden Service
- Proposals
- Risk Implications
- Financial Considerations
- Legal Considerations
- Equality and Diversity Considerations
- Staff Considerations
- Recommendations
- Reasons for recommendations

3. RELEVANCE TO PORTFOLIO MEMBER

Portfolio Holder has responsibility for Waste and Environmental Services.

4. TYPE OF DECISION

That the Portfolio holder notes the content of the report and the benefits of undertaking this social media campaign both to the Council and to the public.

5. DECISION MAKING ROUTE

None – for information

6. DECISION(S) REQUIRED

None – for information.

Report of: Assistant Director (Neighbourhood Services)

Subject: SOCIAL MEDIA PROMOTIONS OF STRAY
DOG REHOMING SERVICE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide the Portfolio Holder with information regarding the use of social media to promote the Council's stray dog rehoming service.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Dog Warden Service

The dog warden service is delivered by the Waste and Environmental Services Section. Part of the service involves the rehoming of stray dogs collected by a contractor on behalf of the Council. Collected dogs are held by the Council for a statutory period of 7 days to allow their owners chance to reclaim them. However, if they remain unclaimed after this period then they are offered for adoption.

- 2.2 Currently the rehoming service is promoted in a variety of ways including via the Council's website, posters distributed fortnightly to local vets and pet shops and via roadshow events. There are regular features on the dogs available for adoption in the local press and in the Council's Hartbeat magazine.

- 2.3 Currently Middlesbrough and Darlington Councils are the only councils to be using Facebook to promote their dog warden service; however other organisations using the site include Dogs Trust, the RSPCA and Deerness Kennels in Durham. The format for all these pages is similar and the proposal for Hartlepool Council's dog warden service page outlined in item 3 follows this format.

- 2.4 At present the dog warden service collects around 350 stray dogs per year. Of these dogs the majority are rehomed but the proportion of dogs returned to their original owners is relatively low (less than 10%). Of the dogs that are rehomed almost all are currently rehomed outside the local area as awareness of the rehoming service amongst Hartlepool residents is quite low.

3. PROPOSALS

- 3.1 The following proposal outlines the running of a social media promotional campaign to raise the profile of the rehoming service and increase the numbers of dogs rehomed. The campaign will act as a pilot for potential future social media promotions.
- 3.2 The Facebook page will be maintained and updated by the admin team within the Waste and Environmental Services Section. A “camera phone” has been obtained from CICT to allow the kennels staff to photograph the dogs immediately upon collection and email the photos either direct to the Facebook page or to the admin team who will upload them to the page.
- 3.3 Each photo will be accompanied by a unique reference number and a brief description of the dog, including colour, sex, breed (if known) and the date it will become available for adoption. Information will also be given on the site about how to contact the kennels and arrange a visit to see the dogs.
- 3.4 This will allow users to check to see if their lost dog has been posted on the site. This will be particularly useful out of hours when a member of the public would otherwise not be able to report a lost dog until the Contact Centre reopened. In addition, users can also post their own photos of lost dogs on the site which can be checked against any new dogs collected by the dog warden which could help to reunite a lost dog with its owner more quickly.
- 3.5 There have also been instances on other council’s pages where members of the public have recognised a dog that has been posted by the dog warden service, which would enable the council to identify and contact the owner if required.
- 3.6 The Facebook pages will also provide a new arena for the Council to publicise information to the public. This could include information on micro chipping surgeries, neutering campaigns, enforcement action and any other responsible dog ownership messages which may be appropriate.
- 3.7 Hartlepool Council is committed to maintaining standards of animal welfare, but kennelling can be a distressing experience for dogs. A further benefit of using social media to increase the range of resources for promoting the rehoming service is that reducing the amount of time dogs spend at the kennels will reduce distress to the animals.

- 3.8 In order to make the most effective use of the Facebook page it needs to be supervised and updated regularly. This would ensure that any inappropriate content posted by the public could be removed as quickly as possible as well as ensuring that the information remained fresh and relevant. This role will be shared by the Environmental Projects Officer and the Waste and Environmental Services admin team.
- 3.9 As well as updating the site time will also have to be set aside to raise and maintain the site's profile. This stage is important in order for the public to know about and visit the page. Facebook has various functions to allow users to do this including generating a web address for the site (e.g. www.facebook.com/hartlepooldogs) which can be used on leaflets, etc. Facebook also has functions to measure the number and types of visitor to the site which will assist in the monitoring and evaluation of the pilot project.
- 3.10 The Facebook page is intended to work in conjunction with, rather than replace, other promotional materials and resources including the Lost and Found Dogs page of the Council's website, regular updates in the local press and attendance at community events. It will form part of an overarching promotional strategy for the dog warden service.

4. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 As with all social media promotions there is a risk that if the content is not kept up to date then it will become ineffective as users don't bother to check the site. This means that a level of commitment will be required to generate and monitor content.
- 4.2 There is also a risk with any site that allows user-generated content, such as Facebook, that some members of the public may take the opportunity to post inappropriate content. By monitoring the site frequently and removing any inappropriate content this should not become a problem. This is balanced by the fact that this kind of media allows the Council to engage with service users in a more interactive way and can be used to consult with users as well as pass on information to them.

5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 There will be no additional costs incurred from delivering the social media campaign as the staff time required to maintain and develop the site will be undertaken as part of the general role of the Environmental Projects Officer and also by the Waste and

Environmental Services Section's admin team. This cost will be absorbed within the section's existing budgets.

- 5.2 Additional costs are minimal as the site is free to access and run and there is no subscription charge. A camera phone has been provided for the contractor delivering the dog warden service as part of the costs of that service.
- 5.3 In addition, there is also a potential cost saving from this project in terms of reduced kennelling fees. By reuniting dogs with their owners or rehoming them more quickly the dogs will spend fewer days in the kennels which will reduce the fee paid by the Council.

6. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 The Facebook pages will be subject to the same legal considerations as any other form of marketing resource.
- 6.2 Hartlepool Council also has a statutory duty to provide a dog warden service and this social media campaign will assist in the delivery of this service.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 The Facebook page will be freely available and accessible to anyone with an internet connection.

8. STAFF CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 The maintenance and development of the site will be undertaken by existing members of staff within the Waste and Environmental Services section.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That the Portfolio holder notes the content of the report and the benefits of undertaking this social media campaign both to the Council and to the public.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is a potential saving to be made from reducing the daily kennelling costs for stray dogs if they can be reunited with their owners or rehomed more quickly

- Lost dogs could be reunited with their owners more quickly reducing the distress to families caused by losing a pet
- Stray dogs can be reunited with their owners or rehomed more quickly reducing distress to the animals

11. CONTACT OFFICER

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12. CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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