

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

24TH NOVEMBER 2016

PROVISION OF DOG KENNELING ARRANGEMENTS FOR RHONDDA CYNON TAF- PROGRESS UPDATE

REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR, PUBLIC HEALTH & PROTECTION IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR J. ROSSER

AUTHOR(s): Louise Davies, Head of Environmental Health, Trading
Standards and Community Safety

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to outline the progress made with Hope Rescue Animal Charity in respect of the provision of dog kennelling within the County Borough and to seek a decision in relation to the future provision of dog kennelling arrangements for Rhondda Cynon Taf.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Consider the progress made by Hope Rescue Animal Charity in securing a kennelling facility in Rhondda Cynon Taf and consider the proposal they have submitted to provide enhanced kennelling facilities for stray dogs in the County Borough
- 2.2 Recognise the improved arrangements, including 24 hours/365 day service provided to receive stray dogs, which can all be achieved within current resources.
- 2.3 Agree the deployment of the Animal Wardens to front line service delivery to provide more enhanced dog warden services across the County
- 2.4 Authorise the Service Director, Public Health and Protection to commission Hope Rescue Animal Charity to provide the kennelling facility for Rhondda Cynon Taf.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Cabinet considered a report on the 19th July 2016 in relation to the viability of the current, in house kennelling facility operated by the Council at Dinas in Porth. At that meeting, Cabinet made the decision to retain the statutory service for animal control. The Service Director, Public Health and Protection, was directed to open dialogue with third sector organisations with respect to alternative options for the provision of dog kennelling at a location within the County Borough so that a further report could be presented to Members on this issue. Members are requested to consider the progress made with those discussions and make a determination on the potential to commission Hope Rescue Animal Charity to provide the kennelling facility within Rhondda Cynon Taf.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Dealing with stray dogs is the core activity of the Animal Control service. The Council has a statutory duty to deal with stray dogs and legislation requires that the Council makes provision to seize and detain any stray dog and charge a fee for dogs that are claimed by their owners within a statutory 7 day period. The legislation does not stipulate that the Council must have its own kennelling facility.
- 4.2 The animal shelter at Dinas is positioned directly adjacent to a Council Community Recycling Centre (CRC). There are current plans to redevelop and make improvements to the Council's CRC to relieve instances of congestion on the adjacent A4058, Cymmer Road, due to the volume of traffic trying to access the CRC site. The possible availability of adjacent land to the existing CRC at Dinas provides an opportunity as a means of reducing congestion through increasing the size of the facility and improving the current site layout.
- 4.3 The majority of local authorities in Wales use a private kennel to provide kennelling facilities for detained dogs. A scoping exercise undertaken with the Procurement Team did not identify a private kennels in RCT interested in providing the kennelling facility but there were options to utilise kennels used by neighbouring local authorities.
- 4.4 A public consultation on the future kennelling facilities for Rhondda Cynon Taf took place from the 6th June to the 4th July 2016 and the outcomes of that consultation were reported to Cabinet in July 2016. One of the key themes to emerge from that consultation was concern about the travel distances for dogs and owners of dogs if the kennelling facility was placed out of County and the impact this could have on the number of dogs being reclaimed.

- 4.5 Hope Rescue Animal Charity responded to the public consultation and indicated that they wished to secure their own kennel facility within the County Borough and work with the Council to operate the stray dog kennelling service. Hope Rescue is an established key partner of the Council and for the last three years has ensured that the number of dogs euthanized by the Council has reduced to less than 10 per annum because of their work to ensure dogs from our care are safely and appropriately re-homed.
- 4.6 Since July 2016, Officers have engaged with Hope Rescue on the development of their business proposal for a kennel in Llanharan. The Charity is in the final stages of purchasing an existing kennel business, namely Cynllan Lodge, and completion on the sale is scheduled for January 2017. The kennel has capacity for up to 80 dogs currently.
- 4.7 A detailed business plan has been submitted to the Council as part of the RCT Together Programme and an application for a grant from the Community Enabling Fund to support the service transfer is expected to be made by Hope Rescue. The business plan is comprehensive and outlines the Charity proposal to offer private as well as stray dog kennelling and to deliver a holistic animal behaviour and training service to the community. Hope Rescue has just received £134,192 grant support from the Council's Townscape Enhancement Programme and the Welsh Church Act Fund to undertake a wide scale renovation of their charity shop in Taff Street, Pontypridd. The project will support the Charity to develop a sustainable source of income which will be integral to their kennelling facility development. The Charity runs community outreach projects to keep dogs with their owners e.g. a canine respite programme for owners in crisis situations such as homelessness and fleeing domestic abuse, and supports owners in financial hardship with dog food. The business plan proposal also outlines the opportunity to create new jobs and volunteer programmes through the venture and to offer training and apprentice options in the future.
- 4.8 The Hope Rescue service proposal for kennelling stray dogs for Rhondda Cynon Taf Council will ensure adequate capacity to detain the dogs seized by Animal Control Wardens and a more accessible service than currently offered by the Council to owners who wish to reclaim their dog. In addition, there will be a 24 hours/365 day service provided to receive stray dogs. The cost of the Hope Rescue service proposal will be met by the existing budget for the Council Animal Shelter.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment screening form has been prepared for the purpose of this report. It has been found that a full report is not required at this time. The screening form can be accessed by contacting the author of the report or the Cabinet Business officer

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 6.1 Direct costs of contracting out the service to Hope Rescue are likely to be cost neutral.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 7.1 The Council has a statutory duty to deal with stray dogs (Section 149 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990). The Act requires that the Council makes provision to seize and detain any stray dog and charge a fee for dogs that are claimed by their owners within a statutory 7 day period. The statutory fee that must be charged by Council's for the seizure of dogs is set by law and is £25 per dog. The Council has discretion to charge an additional fee for the detention of any dog. Any dog that is not claimed after 7 days must be disposed of by the Council, either by selling it, giving it away or euthanising it humanely.
- 7.2 The Environmental Protection Act does not stipulate the arrangement the Council must have to detain dogs.

8. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN/OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/ SIP

- 8.1 In line with the "Living within our means" Priority, the Council needs to explore different ways of delivering services in order to ensure they are cost effective in the future. The demand for kennelling dogs at the Animal Shelter is likely to decrease in coming years and the option to commission a private provider for the kennelling requirements while maintaining an Animal Warden service, provides a cost effective solution for the future.
- 8.2 A "Place" priority of the Corporate Plan is to improve recycling rates in RCT in order to send less waste to landfill. The closure of the Animal Shelter will provide the necessary space to carry out the planned redevelopment of the Community Recycling Centre at Dinas, which in turn will aim to encourage increased rates of recycling.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The business proposal put forward by Hope Rescue Animal Charity is viable and would support a decision by Cabinet to close the existing Council Animal Shelter and to commission Hope Rescue to provide the dog kennelling within Rhondda Cynon Taf. The location of the kennels being purchased at Llanharan will be within the County Borough and this will address a key concern raised by the public during the consultation period.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee - Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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Background Papers

Cabinet Report 19th July 2016
Provision of Dog Kennelling Arrangements for Rhondda Cynon Taf

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