



Report of the Director of Environments and Neighbourhoods

Executive Board

Date: 3 December 2008

Subject: Pets in council houses

Electoral Wards Affected:

all

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call In

Not Eligible for Call In

(Details contained in the report)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report follows a deputation made to Full Council by the Cats Protection League on 10 September 2008. This deputation gave an update of actions which had taken place since a previous deputation of 1 November 2006. It gave case studies of some of the problems that Cats Protection have dealt with, and the problems that these have caused for the individuals and cats concerned, as well as neighbours and others on the estate. It also made suggestions for further actions to take place in the future.

1. Purpose Of This Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to give details of the deputation to Full Council made by Cats Protection, and the actions which have taken place since the previous deputation. It will also give information on the further actions requested by the second deputation.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 At the September 2008 Council meeting, the Cats Protection League made a delegation to highlight some of the problems caused by neglected and unneutered cats in council houses. This followed an earlier delegation made in November 2006 on the same issues, in particular, concerns about the enforcement of the pets clause in the tenancy agreement. It outlined progress which had been made since

the earlier report, and further actions which they would like to see in the future to continue to address the problem.

3.0 Main Issues

- 3.1 As a result of the 2006 delegation, the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Housing met with representatives from Cats' Protection in December 2006, and agreed a number of actions. The actions included a revision and expansion of the council's Pets Policy, including reference to the Dangerous Dogs Act of 1991; greater enforcement of this; the Arm's Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) and the Leeds Tenants' Federation promoting animal welfare, and partnership working between ALMOs and animal charities.
- 3.2 Many of the actions that Cats Protection proposed in their deputation, and which were approved by Executive Board, have taken place. These include:
- The clause on pets in the council's Tenancy Agreement has also been revised, now stating that tenants must not keep illegal animals, and that action can be taken against them if they breach the clause. This could include the court granting a possession order.
 - Cats Protection have developed partnerships with ALMOs, placed articles in their newsletters and posters and leaflets in housing offices; and also attended some tenants' events. Through this, they have given information about the neutering scheme that they run. Cats Protection have neutered over 2,000 cats.
 - The council's Pets Policy has been revised and made more robust. It raises awareness of the dogs which are illegal under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, for both ALMO staff and tenants.
- 3.3 In their second deputation, Cats Protection proposed holding a joint workshop to develop partnership working further. This workshop took place in October 2008. Representatives from the ALMOs, Belle Isle Tenant Management Organisation, Strategic Landlord, Regeneration Special Projects, the Health and Environmental Action Service noise nuisance section, the Leeds Tenants' Federation, Leeds Federated Housing Association and a number of animal charities attended. From this workshop, Cats Protection agreed to develop partnerships with ALMOs, Environments and Neighbourhoods, ALMOs, and other animal charities to work on the following actions:
- Greater enforcement of the new Pets Policy and clause in the new Tenancy Agreement
 - Continuing and expanding the work already undertaken
 - Placing further articles in ALMO and Leeds Tenants' Federation newsletters, leaflets in housing offices, and having a greater presence at tenants' events
 - To keep records of tenants known to have caused problems in the past, and monitor them to make sure that the problems do not arise again
 - Cats Protection to give talks at Tenants Committee Group
 - To look into recruiting animal lovers on the estate to volunteer to look out for potential problems and report them where necessary

- To look into data protection issues to see what information sharing can be done between agencies
- To consider revising procedures for dealing with flea infestation in empty properties
- Using visits to new tenants to ensure that they are aware of the pets policy, and check that they are not breaching it

4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance

4.1 Tenants are now bound by the new pets policy, and the expanded clause in the tenancy agreement, which came into force in February 2008. The main points of the pets policy are:

- To inform tenants that they must have permission to keep a pet, the sorts of properties which may be unsuitable for pets, and which animals are allowed / not allowed
- To outline the responsibilities of pet ownership
- To give tenants advice on what they can do if they experience problems with other people's pets
- To make it clear that guide dogs and support dogs are allowed.

5.0 Legal And Resource Implications

5.1 No legal implications

5.2 Small resource implications for actions undertaken by ALMOs from their management fees.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 That Executive Board note the contents of the report.

Background Papers

Pets in Council Houses Policy – Deputation report – Executive Board, January 2006
 Deputation to Council – November 06
 Deputation to Council – September 2008