

<b>Item No.</b> 14.	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 21 June 2011	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Cabinet
<b>Report title:</b>		"A responsible approach" - Southwark Dog Strategy 2011 – 14	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All	
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>		Councillor Richard Livingstone Finance, Resources and Community Safety	

## **FOREWORD - RICHARD LIVINGSTONE, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY**

Dog ownership brings joy and companionship to many Southwark residents. But there is a minority of dog owners who behave irresponsibly and the level of concern in the community relating to anti-social and aggressive behaviour involving dogs has been increasing. "A responsible approach", the Southwark Dog Strategy for 2011 to 2014 seeks to address these concerns.

This strategy has two strands. The first is to promote responsible dog ownership. The second is to address dog-related anti-social behaviour and dogs that are dangerously out of control. This second section includes our progress on Dog Control Orders and steps to address canine damage to trees, dog fouling and stray dogs. I am asking the Cabinet to consider and agree this strategy.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That the Cabinet agrees "A responsible approach" - Southwark Dog Strategy 2011 – 14 and its recommendations.
2. That the Cabinet notes the possible future changes in the national policy environment as per the Home Office's current consultation on anti social behaviour (ASB) tool-kits "more effective responses to anti social behaviour- a consultation" and instructs officers to return with a further report when the national guidance is issued.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

3. In the last five years London hospitals have seen admissions for dog bites increase by 79 per cent according to the Greater London Authority (GLA). Between 2004 and 2008 dog fights increased twelve fold, according to figures from the Royal Society for the Protection of Animals (RSCPA).
4. Metropolitan Police seizures of dangerous dogs have witnessed a 24 fold increase in six years, from 43 in 2003 to over 1000 in 2009.
5. Within Southwark there continues to be a high level of public concern surrounding irresponsible ownership of dogs, and the consequences, including dog fouling, strays and antisocial and aggressive behaviour. Issues with antisocial dogs and dog fouling were listed as the second greatest concern of residents in the 2008

Southwark Place Survey. This strategy has been produced as a result of these concerns.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

### **Local context**

6. Tackling the nuisance caused by dogs formed part of the administration commitments.

### **National context**

7. In February 2011 the Home Office launched 'More effective responses to antisocial behaviour - a consultation'. They are consulting on proposals to streamline the toolkit used to tackle anti-social behaviour.
8. This consultation could impact on current legislation used to deal with dog related anti social behaviour i.e. it may repeal any existing Dog Control Orders. The consultation ends in May 2011 and outcomes are expected in Summer 2011.
9. Officers will return to Cabinet with an update in relation to the national policy context and available toolkit e.g. powers to enable a full decision to be taken on the possible implementation of a borough wide order.

### **The Southwark approach**

10. A Safer Southwark Partnership Action Group was formed in April 2010 for the purpose of creating a multi agency partnership to deal with dog related issues in a more efficient, effective and more targeted way as well as identifying possible improvements to service delivery. This group consists of (from the local authority) community safety, housing, parks, waste management, and communications. It also includes the Metropolitan Police, RSPCA, Battersea Dogs and Cats Home, Groundwork London and various voluntary agencies.
11. The work undertaken by this group has been highlighted as best practice by the Greater London Authority. Achievements in 2010 – 2011 includes:
  - 480 dog fouling operations across the borough
  - Over 20 dog events in housing estates and parks
  - 240 dogs micro-chipped
  - A media and communication strategy

This three year Strategy builds on the above best practice.

12. In June 2010 Southwark Police and Southwark Council set up Borough Action for Responsible Canines so that incidents of dangerous dogs and dogs dangerously out of control could be tackled in a more effective way.
13. A key achievement so far is the development an escalation process. The process is a warning letter, home visit carried out to provide information, advice and guidance, an anti social behaviour intervention e.g. acceptable behaviour contract (ABC). If these are not heeded this could lead to seizure of dogs and prosecution.

## **Governance**

14. The Safer Southwark Partnership (SSP) will oversee the delivery of the strategy, with performance management undertaken by the Anti Social Behaviour Strategic Group, a sub group of the SSP.

## **“A responsible approach”- Southwark Dog Strategy 2011 – 14: Key Recommendations**

15. This draft strategy outlines how Southwark plans to continue to deliver and build upon current services that promote the value of dogs and encourages responsible ownership across Southwark. There are two key areas the strategy will strive to deliver against:
  - Encouraging responsible dog ownership
  - Tackling dog related anti social behaviour (ASB) and dogs dangerously out of control.
16. For both key areas the strategy outlines current service provision across the partnership and sets out proposals to improve services. Further detail is outlined in Appendix 1.
17. Tackling dog related ASB and dogs dangerously out of control is made up of five thematic areas for action. These themes are:
  - Borough wide orders
  - Dog fouling
  - Dogs damaging trees
  - Stray dogs provision
  - Borough Action for Responsible Canines
18. New partnership activity contained within the Strategy 2011 – 14 which will tackle ASB and promote responsible dog ownership includes:
  - Placement of awareness raising stickers in relation to dog fouling on all waste bins across Southwark by August 2011
  - Working with Friends of Parks to develop dog owner networks to identify and report dog damaged trees
  - Notices put by dog damaged trees to highlight awareness of the consequences
  - Developing and delivering a partnership communications strategy to encourage responsible dog ownership, lead by the DAG partnership.

## **Policy implications**

19. This strategy is aligned to existing policy frameworks, including the Safer Southwark Partnership’s statutory rolling action plan and the violent crime strategy 2010 - 2015.

## **Community impact statement**

20. Within Southwark there continues to be a high level of public concern surrounding irresponsible ownership of dogs, and the consequences, including dog fouling, strays, antisocial and aggressive behaviour. Issues with antisocial dogs and dog fouling were listed as the second greatest concern of residents in the 2008 Southwark Place Survey. The strategy 2011 – 14 will address

concerns of the community.

### **Resource implications**

21. The costs associated with delivering “encouraging responsible dog ownership”, are activities which are already being delivered or scheduled to be delivered. By agreement of the departments and divisions involved, delivery of these will be met from existing resources.
22. There may be associated costs related to delivering a borough wide dog control order. A further report will be provided once the outcome of the Home Office’s current consultation on anti social behaviour (ASB) toolkits ‘More effective responses to antisocial behaviour - a consultation’ has been released.

### **Consultation**

23. The strategy has been produced in partnership with all relevant departments in order to ensure that the document and the recommendations within are realistic, deliverable and achievable.
24. In November 2010 Southwark Council undertook a borough wide public consultation to establish whether or not there was a need and a desire to introduce DCO regulations for:
  - Failing to remove dog fouling (fouling of land by dogs order) - all public land borough wide.
  - Not putting and keeping a dog on a lead when asked to by an authorised officer (dogs to be placed on a lead when requested by an authorised officer) - all public land borough wide.
  - Permitting a dog to enter an area from which it is excluded (dogs exclusion order) - specific areas only i.e. gated children's play areas.
25. Officers will include the findings of this consultation in the updated report to Cabinet for decision in summer 2011.

### **SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS**

#### **Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance (SH0311)**

26. This report recommends that the Cabinet Member agrees the Dog Strategy 2011-14 and further recommends how the strategy will be delivered bearing in mind national policy changes. At this stage the Cabinet Member is not being asked to allocate any resources in respect of the strategy as these have already been allocated however, if changes in national policy and the consultation responses require an increase in resource allocation, then the Cabinet Member may at a later stage be asked to do so in a separate report.
27. The background to this report is adequately summarised in paragraphs 3-5 of this report and the attached Strategy outlines how Southwark plans to address the issues raised in those paragraphs.

28. Under Part 3D, paragraph 6 of the Constitution the Cabinet Member has the authority to agree statutory and other strategies in relation to their areas of responsibility except where they relate to cross cutting issues. Under paragraph 7 of Part 3D the Cabinet Member has the authority to agree significant policy issues in relation to their area of responsibility. Further under paragraph 15 of Part 3D the Cabinet Member has the power to promote effective partnerships between the Council and other agencies and bodies affecting the community in relation to their area of responsibility. The Strategy would safely fall within this category as the Strategy is being operationally delivered by the Southwark Dog Action Group which is a multi-agency partnership and is being further overseen by the Safer Southwark Partnership.

**Finance Director (SB03/11)**

29. This report recommends that the cabinet member agrees the dog strategy 2011-14 and indicates that the costs currently identified can be met within existing resources.

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

<b>Background Papers</b>	<b>Held At</b>	<b>Contact</b>
Dog Control Order (DCO) borough wide consultation Individual Decision Maker (IDM) report	160 Tooley Street, SE1 2TZ	Nicola Morris, Safer Southwark Partnership Team, Tel: 02075250802
DCO borough wide consultation evaluation report	160 Tooley Street, SE1 2TZ	Nicola Morris, Safer Southwark Partnership Team, Tel: 02075250802

**APPENDICES**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Title</b>
Appendix 1	"A responsible approach" – Southwark Dog Strategy 2011 – 14

## AUDIT TRAIL

<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Richard Livingstone, Finance, Resources and Community Safety	
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Gill Davies, Strategic Director of Environment	
<b>Report Author</b>	Jonathon Toy, Head of Community Safety and Enforcement	
<b>Version</b>	Final	
<b>Dated</b>	9 June 2011	
<b>Key Decision?</b>	Yes	
<b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER</b>		
<b>Officer Title</b>	<b>Comments Sought</b>	<b>Comments included</b>
Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	Yes	Yes
Finance Director	Yes	Yes
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional/Community Council/Scrutiny Team</b>	9 June 2011	