

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
11 JANUARY 2017

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold CH7 6NA on Wednesday, 11 January 2017

PRESENT: Councillor Ray Hughes (Chairman)

Councillors: Haydn Bateman, Chris Dolphin, Ian Dunbar, David Evans, Veronica Gay, Cindy Hinds, Colin Legg, Brian Lloyd, Richard Lloyd, and Paul Shotton

SUBSTITUTES: Councillor Andy Dunbobbin (for Glenys Diskin)

APOLOGIES: Councillors Ann Minshull, Sara Parker and Councillor Derek Butler, Cabinet Member for Economic Development

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Arnold Woolley

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Bernie Attridge, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor Kevin Jones, Cabinet Member for Waste Strategy, Public Protection and Leisure, Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation), Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator, and Civil Parking and Environmental Enforcement Manager

IN ATTENDANCE: Environment Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Committee Officer

At the start of the meeting feedback was circulated on the workshop held on Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) – dog Control, Dog Fouling and DNA. The Chairman allowed a short recess to enable Members to consider the information provided.

48. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

There were no declarations of interest.

49. MINUTES

That the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

50. PILOT DOG DNA SCHEME AND THE INTRODUCTION OF DOG CONTROL PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDERS

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) introduced the report to provide an update on the possible introduction of a pilot dog DNA scheme in the County and Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO) Dog Control and Dog Fouling.

The Chief Officer provided background information and referred to the all member workshop which had been held on 5 January 2017 to highlight the prohibition options available and seek views on the introduction of a pilot dog

DNA scheme and PSPOs. He advised that the existing Dog Control Order only requires owners to remove their dog's waste from public areas, however, the creation of a PSPO provides an opportunity for enforcement against other designated offences, such as exclusion of dogs from a defined area or keeping dogs on leads on certain classifications of open space at all times, for example children's play areas, marked sports pitches and other formal recreation areas.

The Chief Officer introduced Gerwyn Davies, Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator, and Ruth Cartwright, Civil Parking and Environmental Enforcement Manager, to the meeting. The Officers gave a joint presentation which covered the following main points:

- Dog DNA
 - background
 - Where has it been used
 - Benefits
 - Dis-benefits
 - How would a pilot scheme work
- Enforcement options
 - Background
 - PSPO options
 - Prohibition options
 - Land classifications
- Other options for consideration

The Chairman thanked Officers for their presentations.

Councillor Paul Shotton expressed a number of concerns around the proposal to introduce a pilot dog DNA scheme. He felt that the cost to the owner for registration and to the Council for testing was prohibitive and raised further concerns around the cost of administration and enforcement.

Councillor David Evans also commented on the financial implications of the Scheme which had not been detailed in the report. He asked when feedback would be provided from the pilot areas in Barking and Dagenham where the Scheme had been trialled. Councillor Evans said there was a need for full consultation and engagement with the general public before the Scheme was introduced to ensure a willingness for voluntary registration. He also asked what timeframes were being considered for the pilot scheme and the enforcement arrangements. The Facilitator explained that further feedback on the results of the pilot scheme in Barking and Dagenham were awaited and would be provided to the Committee as soon as received.

During discussion Councillors Richard Lloyd and Chris Dolphin reiterated the concerns which had been expressed around the financial implications of the Scheme and the need for the results of the trial in other areas to be known in advance. Members commented on the need to promote social awareness and responsible dog ownership through alternative options and public engagement.

Councillor Brian Lloyd asked if there would be sufficient enforcement officers to meet the Schemes demands and address the number of complaints of dog fouling raised by the general public. He also referred to the issue of dog

fouling in Town Centres and need to provide adequate signage to inform dog owners of the consequences of dog fouling in public areas. Councillor Bernie Attridge responded to the concerns raised around adequate resources and gave an assurance that specific 'problem' areas would be closely monitored. He agreed that a review of 'signs' was required and that there was a need for a consistent stance throughout the County.

Councillor Veronica Gay referred to the schemes undertaken elsewhere and cited the dog licensing scheme in Northern Ireland as an example. She cited the benefits of introducing the Scheme and the number of fixed penalty notices which had been issued to date. Councillor Gay and Councillor Cindy Hinds stated that the issue of dog fouling was a problem which needed to be addressed nationally.

Councillor Kevin Jones agreed with the views expressed by Members that there were too many "unknowns" at present around dog DNA testing to take the Scheme forward and that the Authority should concentrate its resources on the introduction of dog control PSPOs as detailed in the report. Councillor Jones also reminded the Committee of the outcome of the workshop where the majority of Members had not supported a pilot dog DNA scheme at the present time.

The Chair expressed concerns around the need to keep dogs under control at all times around children and that dogs should be kept on a lead near children's play areas. The Anti Social Behaviour Coordinator referred to the North Wales Lead initiative regarding dangerous dogs and agreed to provide further information to the Committee on this.

Following a suggestion from Councillor Ian Dunbar it was agreed that further consideration would be given to the training of appropriate officers, for example park rangers, to enable them to undertake enforcement duties as and when necessary.

Members expressed concerns around the number of dogs that 'dog walkers' had under their control in public spaces. Following discussion around the recommendation for restricting the number of dogs and the views expressed by Members for and against this suggestion, Councillor Bernie Attridge assured the Committee that the Cabinet would be seeking further clarification on this matter.

In response to a question from Councillor Andy Dunbobbin regarding consultation with relevant stakeholders, the Chief Officer confirmed that a full consultation would be required prior to moving forward with the introduction of implementation of the dog control PSPOs.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee recognised the work carried out by the Dog DNA Task and Finish Group but do not recommend that the Authority proceeds with a Dog DNA Scheme at the present time;

- (b) That the Committee recommends Cabinet approve the implementation of a Dog Control Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) for specific offences on designated classifications of open space; and
- (c) That Cabinet give consideration to training appropriate Offices to enable them to undertake enforcement duties.

51. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME (ENVIRONMENT)

The Facilitator presented the current Forward Work Programme for consideration.

Councillor Chris Dolphin referred to the item on Planning Enforcement Policy which was to be considered at the meeting of the Committee to be held on 8 March 2017. In response to a request from Councillor Dolphin, Councillor Bernie Attridge agreed to provide a breakdown of the Planning enforcement cases at the present time to the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Work Programme be agreed.

52. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 12.20 pm)

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Chairman