

Animal Licensing Forum

Wednesday 22nd November 2017
Brotherhood Hall

Present:	Steve Cobb (SC)	Licensing Manager (Chair)
	Hannah Sweetman (HS)	Licensing Officer
	Richard Johns (RJ)	EHO Central Beds Council
	Georgina Clements (GC)	Waterdell Cattery
	Barry Huffer (BH)	CozyCats Cattery
	Vivienne Huffer (VH)	CozyCats Cattery
	Abigail Huffer	CozyCats Cattery
	John Allard (JA)	Greenfields Cattery
	Helen Allard (HA)	Greenfields Cattery
	Cllr Bernard Lovewell	Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health
	Caroline Speck	NHDC (minute taker)

Apologies: none received

1. Minutes of previous meeting

GC mentioned that a few items were missing on the last set of minutes in particularly clarification on progress with 'Paws on the Doors'. Also Ben from Central Beds Council was not put down as an attendee. SC apologised for missing him off.

In regard to putting the minutes on the web site HS has now been trained and will in future ensure minutes are on the web promptly. Other than that the minutes were agreed.

2. CIEH Regulation – changes to animal licensing legislation

SC advised all that he and HS attended the Institute of Licensing conference last week and DEFRA have given their response re the new animal licensing regime. HC will give all a brief update.

HC - The proposal is to combine all licences into one licence for all animal establishments under the Animal Welfare Act with existing legislation being repealed. They also propose to remove the calendar year licence period. They aim to increase the length of licences to a maximum of three years based on a national risk based system – similar to 'Scores on the Doors' currently used in food premise establishments.

Further details re a risk basis system will be made clearer in due course. There will be national minimum standard conditions based heavily on the current CIEH model conditions – it is DEFRA's current intention to introduce the new regime in October 2019.

HS is hoping to get DEFRA's presentation so that we can post it on the Forum website.

GC Q – would these new conditions have to be met immediately or would there be a transitional period?

SC A – there will most probably be a time period to meet the requirements.

BH Q – will the decision to reach the national conditions be based on existing standards?

SC A – there is intended to be national minimum standards which will be based on existing conditions and tied in with a star rating scheme – more stars you have less inspections you get.

SC said a lot of resistance was met from licensing officers about introducing the new regime in 2019 due to other commitments.

RJ – said that he did not think anyone should be overly concerned at this point as Local Authority's can sometimes be granted discretion.

SC said DEFRA advised the national minimum standard is set and will not be discretionary.

GC Q – what is the transitional period?

SC A – normally 2-3 years but not yet set..

Discussion arose most felt that if the new national minimum standards are met a lot of animal establishments would close down or need a total rebuild.

SC is hopeful that all establishments in North Herts will be able to undertake minor upgrades through the transitional period as most are of a high standard.

GC Q - will the new policy make us rebuild?

SC A – a number of options will be applied going forward.

VH Q - is this all a waste of time as the new legislation may not be granted?

SC A – we still have to set a policy for the next few years irrespective of any legislative changes.

BH Q – how do you define 'public' in public consultation? there was nothing on the NHDC website or Outlook about the proposed changes.

SC A – anyone can make a comment – Outlook only goes out 3 times a year and the recent one was published in June.

SC said the public consultation will end in January 2018.

At the Licensing Committee elected members would want a summary of all responses so that they could make a recommendation and then refer it on to Cabinet.

Anyone who sends in a representation by 31 January 2018 will have their comments included in the report that is presented to the Licensing Committee.

SC asked for feedback

GC – said that “when she started there were no catteries in the area this went up to 7 over the years. It is now down to 4 and will soon be down to 2 if the Policy comes into effect”.

“In the last policy you said you did not want to close down businesses but if this policy is adopted it will close businesses and GC will lose 40% of her income. There has been no increase in salary for 30 years. The Policy will force people to take their cats to another local authority and cats do not like travelling.”

“Eg – GC recently took a cat who could not ear to an out of hours vet, she also helped a cat with severe diarrhoea and stayed up all night on New Years eve with another cat who was poorly.”

In brief GC is saying that animal welfare is more important than how wide a pen size is.

RJ said that it could be an option that boarding standards have to be amended.

JA – in regard to the existing legislation and how the new legislation is based on that – other considerations need to be made for e.g. animal welfare needs to be carefully monitored.

BH – main concerns are

- A) What requirements are going to have to be met?
- B) How long have we got to meet them?

For example applying retrospectively to catteries that have been built for years having to be re-built to certain standards e.g. water proof sockets.

Practically the transitional period if discretionary will need to be known.

SC said we will wait to see what DEFRA wants.

SC asks all to let him know what the best way forward is.

RJ can also take part in the consultation as our designated animal welfare expert – we have got until the end of January 2018.

Cllr Lovewell said please make sure your views are heard as he sits on the cabinet and wants to hear everyone’s thoughts and does understand their concerns. He doesn’t want any animal establishments to close down due to the new legislation. Anyone can also contact their local MP.

BH – said a new planning app has gone in for a new cattery in Letchworth on green belt land.

RJ said they have been receiving more and more FOI requests. SC said NHDC have also been receiving more FOI requests.

GC – said referring to appendix A & B this could quite easily be changed to the national standard. Why is the only option to close down premises?

SC reminded GC that we have to formulate a policy as the current one is becoming out-dated; with the recent legislative developments it may be that an alternative option, not included in the proposed poicity, may be necessary for

boarding establishments as a temporary measure pending the introduction of national standards. SC invited all to write in with suggestions so that we can come up with a suitable policy going forward..

VH asked about licensing applications? HS said all letters are going out Friday those who provided email addresses have been emailed.

In summary – all advised to send in a representation - all will get a response. If anyone wants to register to speak they can do so. All advised to write in individually. Any further queries to HS.

3. Dates of Future Meetings

The next date will be confirmed ASAP.