

**Animal Licensing Forum
Council Chamber
Wednesday, 27th February 2013**

Present:

Andy Godman – Head of Housing and Public Protection Service
Councillor Bernard Lovewell – Portfolio Holder
Gio Silverio – Licensing and Enforcement Manager
Chris Woodard – Animal Welfare Stevenage Borough Council
Dave Gould – Station Commander - Herts Fire & Rescue
John Allard – Greenfields Cattery
Georgina Clements – Waterdell Cattery
Vivienne Huffer – Cozy Cats Cattery
Jeremy Burrowes – Country Boarding Kennels & Cattery
Jeanette Deards – Deards Kennels

Apologies:

Karin Groom – Vanstone Park Garden Centre
Jill Spreckley – Greyshingles Boarding Cattery
Alfredo Caruso Ildio - Holidays4Dogs
Aparecida de Paula da Silveira – Holidays4Dogs
Mrs Cooper – Harefield Park Kennels

1. Introductions and Apologies

Gio made introductions and went through housekeeping procedures.

Mrs Clements produced 2 email confirmations permitting her to represent Heather Cairns of Leygreen Boarding Cattery and Mr & Mrs Spreckley of Greyshingles Boarding Cattery.

Gio went through the internet access links which are included as follows for access to the Forum and also the Animal Licensing Policy, http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/business/licensing/animal_licensing.htm. This holds all the information with regards to Animal Licensing and the Forum.

2. Animal Licensing Policy Update

AG gave a policy update explaining that there is a 2 stage approach to how a policy is adopted, first the policy is present to the Licensing and Appeals Committee (LAC) for comment and then it will go to Cabinet to be adopted. A copy of the report is available on the internet via the link above. All the premises have been inspected and relicensed following the inspections.

It was felt that some of the licensees concerns were not addressed and whether the concerns covered in the report, the concerns would have been dealt with at the LAC meeting which would have been open to the public, the trade had put their concerns in writing but didn't think they had the opportunity to speak albeit they were present at the meeting. Every opportunity is given to let people voice their opinions. Issues raised at the Animal Forum meetings prior to committee were discussed and those changes were considered.

Mrs Clements felt there was a breakdown in minute taking at the meeting. AG asked if the concerns are still as strong and valid. Certain points that were discussed and agreed then changed were presented in the report they were minor points not major.

GS and CW had been through the report today. GS had been through points on the report that went to LAC, there were no new requirements for cattery owners and following the inspections all premises had met the requirements of the policy. CW had visited all premises and found they were all above what was expected and some were exceptional. The conditions of the policy could affect new owners if the business is sold.

Mrs Clements brought up the subject of vaccination certificates in that they had to be presented 4 weeks prior to entering the cattery/kennels; some people get their pets done the week before their stay. The policy states at this should happen at least 4 weeks prior to the stay.

GS: the policy is open for review and is in place for 5 years, if it was felt that minor amendments were required they can be made if deemed necessary by the Portfolio Holder and Head of Service. AG will look at the vaccination requirements if evidence is made available from a recognised body then amendments could be made and the time period considered may result in less than 4 weeks being applied to the policy. Mrs Clements stated that the Cat Show says 1 week. Once the evidence has been gathered it will be looked at and the Forum will be advised if it is workable or not.

If an animal had to be taken in in an emergency, i.e. house fire, and it was impossible to obtain a copy of the vaccination certificate it was agreed the animal could be housed but in isolation until the vet could be contacted to confirm vaccination certificate was in place.

Terms of breach of the policy would be looked at case by case and the facts presented.

It would be advisable at the time of taking bookings to advise that they must present the vaccination certificate the time of bringing the animal for boarding.

The policy states all units must have sealed joints – each premises will be different not all have run offs. CW advised when he did the inspections of the type of flooring required, this is something that needs to be discussed on an individual basis with CW, not for the Forum. As long as there is no standing water in the unit then it meets the objectives of the Policy, if any problems ask for advice.

As this is a Forum Terms of Reference must be agreed. GS to action.

3. Fire Safety presentation Fire Commander

DG is the District Commander Fire Protection Fire Safety Commercial Premises.

The Forum is in place to get relevant advice across, information is on the NHDC website. They are a phone call away, cannot do risk assessments but can give advice. Would advise to steer clear of Fire Risk Assessors – they are an unnecessary expenditure. If the guidance is followed the licence holder is the best person to do the risk assessment. If you have more than 5 employees or are a licensed premises you need an assessment that the proportionate to the size of the premises.

If you have employees sleeping on site you need to have an Emergency Action Plan to ensure their safety should there be a fire. To raise the alarm you can shout, use a gong etc does not necessarily have to be an electronic fire system depending on the size of the premises. There should be emergency lighting if natural light is not available for means of escape. Fire fighting equipment should be the minimum requirements no CO2 just water. The priority is to make sure all people are safely evacuated - do not put yourselves at risk over animals. Signage advising where to go etc should be placed around the site.

GC had spoken with Lee Craig and Rob Deveraux of the Fire Service and had given key numbers and contact numbers in case of an emergency.

Contact number for advice and information is 01707 292350 – ask for Fire Protection and you will be put through to the Duty Officer.

4. Feedback from Stevenage Borough Council re inspections

CW had visited all the premises and the majority were exceptional, the only real issue was missing fire assessments.

Legislation states that someone has to be on site at all times whilst animals are boarded, comments that most are one man bands and do not always have someone who can cover, the paragraph needs changing.

Section 5.10.1 of the NHDC Animal Policy states that the legislation says has to be covered at all times. It used to be that the animals had to be checked every 4 hours, the licensees would have to lobby their local MP on this as it cannot be changed locally as it has to be done by Government.

Customers had been asked if they expected someone to be on site 24 hours and they all said no.

You are responsible for yourselves and the Local Authority only take action if in the public interest, if action is needed it would start with a verbal warning, followed by written warning and then court if the Policy is not complied with. The Local Authority are here to guide and assist.

Advised that as an authorised officer you cannot turn CW away as he has right of entry at any time.

5. Dispatch of licenses

Phone calls had to be made at the end of December as applications for renewal of licenses had not been received. The licence runs from 1st January to 31st December and licenses will be despatched early January if payments and applications have been received. If a replacement licence is required there is a fee.

3.1.1 of the policy – Plans – plans are not currently submitted, it is just a basic plan of the layout of the premises there is no need to use an architect. Plans are useful even for the Fire Service and Local Authority Officers.

6. DEFRA – consultation from Summer 2012 on ‘Promoting More Responsible Dog Ownership’

CW – it is a requirement by law of 1992 that all dogs should have a tag with their surname and address, this will be changed to a microchip in due course.

7 out of 10 times a dog doesn't belong to the person on the chip, not sure how effective this will be.

It is the responsibility of a new owner to get the details on the chip changed.

7. AOB (All)

GS advised if anybody has any concerns to email her at giovanna.silverio@north-herts.gov.uk

If any member of the Forum is going to represent other members needs to be confirmed in writing, an email will suffice.

JB was appealing against the rateable value of his premises, he had looked at other establishments who had more animals and their rates were far lower, felt he was being penalised for increasing the size of his premises. GS advised he needed to speak with Geraldine Goodwin, Business Rates Manager.

GS would invite somebody from Business Rates to attend the next meeting.

GS will pass details of Mr Burrows to Business Rates.

The Forum only represents North Hertfordshire, all 26 licence holders were invited to attend the Forum.

If anybody knows of any premises which are unlicensed please pass the details to GS for investigation.

Information of all licensed premises within North Hertfordshire will be going on the NHDC website with the name and address.

Licenses are not required for dog walkers.

AG and GS are contactable at all times if there are any problems, no need to wait for the next Forum.

8. Frequency of meetings

It was agreed the meetings should be held 12 monthly. A draft Agenda would be sent out prior to the meeting.

5. Date of the Next Meeting

To be advised.