

**Animal Licensing Forum  
Committee Room 1  
Monday, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2014**

**Present:**

Councillor Bernard Lovewell (BL) – Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Health

Giovanna Silverio (GS) – Licensing and Enforcement Manager

Steve Cobb (SC) – Senior Licensing Officer

Maija-Lisa Bissett (MB) – Licensing Officer

Colin Broadhurst (CB) – Licensing Officer

Linda Shiel (LS) – MSU

Ben Salvatierra(BS) - Environmental Health Officer Central Beds

John Allard (JA) – Greenfields Cattery

Georgina Clements (GC) – Waterdell Cattery

Vivienne Huffer (VH) – Cozy Cats Cattery

Jeanette Deards (JD) – Deards Kennels

Renate Burrowes (RB) – Country Boarding Kennels and Cattery

A Langton-Beck (ALB) – Westdene Canine Holidays

Letty Glaister (LG) – Longcrft Luxury Cat Hotel, Royston

**Apologies:**

Andy Godman – North Herts District Council

**1. Introductions and Apologies**

GS made introductions and apologised for an error on the website.

GS informed the meeting that she would be leaving the Council and that Steve Cobb would become Licensing Manager.

**2. Minutes from the previous meeting 27/2/13**

GC commented that section 3.4.2 of the Policy had not been put in the minutes, otherwise minutes agreed.

**3. Terms of Reference**

Membership is open to all owners of boarding/breeding establishments etc, it would cover the frequency of meetings and had been finalised on Friday. This is available on the NHDC website and any questions as the content could be addressed via email to [licensing@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@north-herts.gov.uk). It is a commitment by NHDC to do things and explains what can be done.

**4. Feedback from Central Beds re Inspections**

It was explained that Central Beds had taken over the inspections from Stevenage Borough Council. No major issues have been found, the older units had a few problems with cleanliness due to lack of maintenance, and the premises involved had been advised as to what needed to be done.

GS asked for any comments with reference to the inspections.

GC commented that the inspections had been different to those done by Stevenage Borough Council, seemed more interested in the buildings than the animals.

RB had not had any issues over the last 2½ years but now had issues that needed to be sorted out, barriers need to be put in, was explained this is in the conditions of the licence, this had not been mentioned before.

GS advised that Central Bedfordshire would be doing the inspections until the end of the calendar year. With regard to the pen size all licence holders were exempt for the life of the existing business. There is no intention at this time to use another authority, Central Bedfordshire have three different inspectors and they all worked together and would discuss any queries before a decision is made, they are trying to help to meet requirements of legislation if there are any questions ask at the time of inspection.

BS - have looked at the history of the premises and if they are complying there is no need to spend too long looking at the animals more a Health and Safety issue, i.e. up to date Electric Certificates etc.

GC commented that Richard Johns was like a breath of fresh air.

BS advised that Central Beds visit 3 times and if there are no problems will ring rather than visit to see if all ok, unless there is a report of a complaint or accident and wondered whether NHDC would consider this. They can be contacted if assistance is required.

Question was asked about a fire alarm not being linked to the house, GC said that a Fire Officer had said this was not needed. Consistency is needed in inspections.

JA advised something was raised during his inspection was told had not got to do it but was recommended it be done.

BS explained they are health and safety inspectors experienced with Animal Welfare, safety is an issue that is a legal requirement, recommendations would be give rather than serving a notice giving areas that needed attention. Trying to work with the premises, if things are seen they will be mentioned. Do know that Animal Welfare is as imported as Health and Safety, they do look at the animals and if they saw something that deemed it necessary they do call a vet in.

RB was aware that members of the Forum were all small establishments and that a lot of home boarders are not licensed, NHDC need to be aware. Felt that a lot of people did not know they needed to be licensed.

SC advised this is in hand, when they get reports and visit is made, if anyone knows of anyone doing this please advise NHDC via the licensing in box.

RB some people are not happy to use kennels/catteries and the stricter inspections are welcomed and wondered if some sort of grading system could be put in place, felt they were competing with home boards/pet sitters and concerns over kennel cough in boarding establishments, had heard of an incident at a home boarder. Real need to make changes with regards to this.

General public should be more aware and should ask if any establishment holds a licence to board.

Also dog walkers, some are walking up to 5 dogs at a time, dogs have been known to attack people and other dogs.

RB now has a dog park at her kennels but only walks dogs with other dogs if the owner has agreed.

SC – could be a need to educate people and could look to put something in the OUTLOOK magazine which goes to all households in North Herts. Enforcement Officers are out doing dog fouling campaigns and can boost knowledge as they meet regular dog walkers. Number of dogs being walked comes under a separate legislation, if problem in North Herts could look to put control orders in place.

All licence holders have conditions that must be met attached to their licence.

A separate set of conditions exist for home boarding dependant on the size of the business.

## **5. DEFRA – consultation from Summer 2012 on ‘Promoting More Responsible Dog Ownership**

GS advised that MB would give the background of this as follows:

The latest consultation (2012) sought views on the method of introduction of compulsory micro chipping. Overall Support for this has increased to 96% (of 26,849 responses).

76% favoured the option of compulsory micro chipping of all dogs after a defined period. The consultation suggested on year. However, 40% of those in favour of this option felt a lead in period of more than one year would be required.

A three year lead time for 2013 to 2016 is proposed.

DEFRA plans to introduce Regulations requiring all dogs to be micro chipped in England from 6 April 2016. Those regulations would require owners to microchip a dog and register it on an authorised database; owners would have to register the details of any new owners prior to transfer of ownership of a dog and require owners to keep their contact details up to date on the microchip databases.

The consultation sought views on four proposals:

1. A requirement that all dogs are micro chipped.
2. An extension of criminal law (i.e. section 3 of the 1981 Act) to all places, including private property.
3. Allow owners of dogs seized as suspected dangerous dogs or prohibited types to retain possession of their dogs until the outcome of court proceedings.
4. Increase the application fee for dogs to be placed on the Index of Exempted Dogs

A very clear majority felt that owners should not be prosecuted if their dog attacks an intruder who has no legal right to enter the owners home.

DEFRA is of the view that owners of dogs should be responsible for their dogs and answerable whenever and wherever those dogs may be dangerously out of control.

Friends and family in homes and anyone legitimately on premises such as social services, health professionals and utility works should be protected by law, as should anyone delivering to the door such as postal workers.

The intention is to judge cases on their merits, protecting householders but not to protect burglars or other intruders trespassing on private property. This level of protection however would not extend to situations where a child goes into a garden to retrieve, say a lost ball.

The Dangerous Dogs Act should apply to any part of private property so that all cases of dog attacks can be investigated by the police and appropriate action taken against irresponsible owners who allow their dogs to be dangerously out of control.

A large majority (85%) agreed with the proposal to allow owners of dogs seized as suspected dangerous dog types to retain possession of their dogs (if considered by police to be no threat to public safety) until the outcome of court proceedings. Most (90%) agreed that kennelling dogs unnecessarily could lead to dogs becoming maladjusted and developing behavioural problems.

The amended legislation will NOT allow dogs considered dangerous to remain with their owners until court proceedings have been completed and those dogs will continue to be kept in kennels until a Court rules they are no threat to the public or a destruction order is executed.

It is better and less stressful for dog and owner if the dogs can stay in their familiar surrounding if at all possible so that behavioural problems do not develop later as a result of kennelling.

## **6. CIEH Model Licence Conditions & Guidance for Cat Boarding and 7. Animal Licensing Policy Update**

It was agreed to do these two items from the Agenda at the same time.

The CIEH policy is based on the model conditions for dog breeding. SC had not had a chance to go through it in detail but would compare the Guidance with the NHDC Policy, if changes are needed and they are minor he will discuss these with BL but if it is a major change this will go to consultation, then to the Licensing Committee and then to Cabinet.

GC commented that micro chipping for cats had not been removed from the final policy as requested.

SC advised this could be looked at again.

GC wanted clarification of whether someone needed to be on site at all times this was a statement by the Stevenage Borough Council inspector.

SC advised the NHDC context was that a licence had been issued to a fit and proper person but it did not mean that you had to be there 24/7 only that something is put in place that reviews on the premises are taking place at regular times, if not on site contact details should be on view. Advisable to log telephone numbers with the Fire Authority, Police, owners, inspectors and have a procedure in place to prove the checking of animals.

All premises had adapted to the conditions of their licence and all licenses had been issued.

There had been a lot of resistance to the police but from NHDC's point of view the policy is needed not just for the animals but all aspects of the licence.

BS commented that larger pens are a lot easier to clean than smaller ones.

GC advised the FAB website gave a flow chart for cat shows showing that injections were needed only one week before a show, not four weeks as required for cats being put in a cattery.

SC any comments regarding changes to the police or updates to minutes should be emailed to the licensing in box, need for consultation but need to be aware that would not be tearing up the policy and starting again. There is a link on the website for the CIEH as follows:

Cat Breeding Establishments: [http://www.instituteoflicensing.org...%20\(Nov\).pdf](http://www.instituteoflicensing.org...%20(Nov).pdf)

And

[http://www.instituteoflicensing.org...1\)%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.instituteoflicensing.org...1)%20(1).pdf)

CG would like a set of standards set up from things found on inspections.

SC hands are tied if you want to go the extra mile.

RB Under certain areas need to mix animals, a need for more flexibility in the policy to enable to offer added services.

BL there is a star rating scheme on food establishments in North Herts, what about looking into an animal star rating for premises. The overall assessment may involve customer feedback, would be based on Government guidance and could be worth considering. Food hygiene certificates have brought standards up. The result would not be static there would be an appeal process.

## **8. Vaccinations for Animals being Boarded**

CG produced a copy of a Pet World Letter.

SC advised NHDC had also had a copy and that this was of American origin and resembles nothing we do here. The issue of vaccinations prior to boarding can be looked at, give feedback on what was suitable in terms of this.

CG had spoken to a vet and they are considering reducing the number of vaccinations, for example if you had a cat in an isolation cage they could end up with a sick cat in the next cage that had not been vaccinated.

SC advised discussion will take place on this with BS.

CG It is just the wording in the Policy, could it not just say 'have current vaccination. All vets have different views on the length of vaccination and that cats can become immune at a certain age.

SC there are a lot of different opinions, need to find middle of the road. SC requested any views/documents be emailed to the licensing in box.

## **9. AOB**

JA asked why it had taken so long to get the licenses out, the letter arrives earlier and earlier and the licence received later and later, have nothing to show customers to prove they hold a current licence not even a letter.

GS if the renewal is received before the expiry of the licence the new one will be issued before the end of January.

North Herts Homes are offering a micro chipping of dogs for free, there are 3 dates this year and the information is on the website.

BL thanked everyone for their views.

SC any comments or ideas to the licensing in box please.

RB - 2 catteries had closed down and there is a shortage in certain areas of North Herts. If looking to open new premises would need to contact planning at the Council. More likely to give permission if in a semi industrial area rather than residential due to noise issues.

## **10. Date of next meeting**

Committed to at least one meeting per calendar year if need for an extra meeting this would be arranged.

Date and time of next meeting TBA