

## Report for the Trowbridge Area Board

15<sup>th</sup> November 2012

### Wiltshire Council Dog Warden Service

#### The role of the dog wardens

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 requires local authorities to appoint an officer to deal with stray dogs and Wiltshire Council has appointed dog wardens for this purpose. But their role actually extends far beyond this duty to include the general promotion of responsible dog ownership throughout the Wiltshire Council area.

#### Service Delivery

The service provided by the dog wardens is summarised below.

- Stray dogs - When the dog wardens collect a stray dog, their aim is to repatriate the dog with its owner. If this is not possible, they will transport the dog to a designated holding kennel where it remains until either the owners come forward to collect it or until the dog has been in the care of Wiltshire Council for 7 days. If the dog is not collected by its owner within this time period, the kennels will search for a new home.
- Dog fouling enforcement - On 1<sup>st</sup> September 2012, Wiltshire Council rolled out new dog control orders which clarify the rules for dog walkers. In most open areas it is an offence for a person in charge of a dog to fail to clear up after it has fouled. If a dog warden or other authorised officer witnesses a person committing this offence, they are likely to be issued with a fixed penalty notice of £75. Failure to pay could lead to prosecution and a fine of up to £1000. Recent patrols have been carried out in some areas and fixed penalty notices have been issued.
- Signage - The dog wardens can also erect dog fouling signs or provide Parish and Town Councils with signs to erect themselves.
- Identification - Owners are advised to ensure their dogs wear a collar and tag for identification, however, Wiltshire Council also offers a micro chipping service at a competitive rate.
- Home visits - Dog wardens carry out home visits for dog rescue organisations to assess the suitability and surroundings of prospective dog re-homers.

- Licensing - Boarding kennels, home boarders, dog crèches, pet shops and dog breeders are all required to be licensed and the dog wardens carry out inspections at these premises to ensure the required standards are met.
- Dangerous dogs - In conjunction with the Police, dog wardens enforce the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991. Generally, attacks by dogs on humans or livestock are the responsibility of the Police and attacks on other dogs are dealt with by Wiltshire Council.
- Advice - The public protection service receives complaints from members of the public about many dog related issues and the dog wardens are keen to offer advice to irresponsible dog owners.
- Education - It is recognised that education is needed if standards are to improve. In July this year, dog wardens, supported by other consumer protection officers, attended Junior Good Citizen – an event through which 1200 Wiltshire school children were taught about responsible dog ownership, in particular, fouling/picking up after your dog, putting dogs on leads etc.

### Available Resources

Wiltshire Council currently employs 3 dog wardens. One of these is on a six month temporary contract which comes to an end on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012. Some support is also received from other public protection officers.

A number of Parish Councils are interested in enforcing the dog fouling control order themselves by appointing and training suitable individuals to issue fixed penalty notices to dog owners who fail to clean up after their dog. Wiltshire Council is supporting this interest and has produced a tool-kit which will assist those who wish to pursue this further.

**Yvonne Bennett**  
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