

Dog Fouling Task Group

Notes on a meeting held on Wednesday 11th September 2013, including recommendations to be taken to the Area Board

The meeting took place at 10am on Wednesday 11th September 2013, in Royal Wootton Bassett Library.

Meeting attendance: Jacqui Lay (Wiltshire Councillor), Tom Blundell (Member of the public, Lyneham), Elizabeth Wilson (Purton Parish Council), Lynne Barber (Ourway Dog Training), Emily Maiden (Officer, Royal Wootton Bassett Town Council).

Apologies: Ray Bourton (Broad Town Parish Council), Rod Case (Cricklade Town Council).

Notes from the last meeting: Minutes from the last meeting, held on Tuesday 4th December 2012, were circulated, and new Members were updated on the discussions and decisions of the Task Group thus far.

Recommendations to be put to the Area Board: After discussion of various points included in the previous Minutes and updates on the correspondence received from Town and Parish Councils since the circulation of the Toolkit, the Task Group decided upon the following list of recommendations to be put to the Area Board:-

Education

The Task Group recommends that an educational programme be implemented, to be available to all age groups, beginning with young children of Infant School age, spanning all year groups up to and including Secondary School level, with possible involvement of youth groups such as the Guides and Scouts.

Task Group thinking behind the recommendation... Although the Task Group understands that schools currently run programmes on health and social issues, it appears that the message regarding the dangers of dog fouling is not getting across.

The group feels that the pro-active educational programme with the children as leaders would be a more effective approach. The format suggested would include secondary school pupils undertaking a research project, and presenting their findings to their peers before visiting local primary schools to engage with younger children and explain the health dangers. There could be possible involvement of youth groups, with leaflets or information sheets made available for parents.

Roadshows/Inclusion in Wiltshire Council Roadshows

The Task Group recommends that the issue of dog fouling be included as part of a 'roadshow', with the involvement and assistance from partner agencies such as the RSPCA, Vet Surgeries and pet food manufacturers.

Task Group thinking behind the recommendation... By including dog fouling as part of the Wiltshire Council roadshows, it draws attention to the seriousness of the issue, and raises awareness of how serious the health risks are. The involvement of partner agencies allows for an exchange of knowledge and resources.

Public Awareness

The Task Group recommends that an on-going media and PR campaign be implemented highlighting the risks, the fact that wrapped waste can be disposed of in ordinary litter bins, as well as mentioning recent prosecutions.

Task Group thinking behind the recommendation... An ongoing campaign would ensure that taking dog waste bags and picking up become second nature. Many residents complain to their local council that there are not enough dog waste bins, as they are unaware that ordinary bins can now be used. Publicity surrounding fines and prosecutions shows dog walkers who choose not to pick up that being caught and fined is a very real possibility. The Task Group suggested that posters encouraging owners to pick up be displayed in pet food outlets, and in the dog food aisle of supermarkets.

'Rent a Warden'

The group recommends that a special 'community warden' position be created within Wiltshire Council, so that Town and Parish Councils have the chance to 'rent' this warden as and when required. A similar scheme is in place in Stratton St Margaret.

Task Group thinking behind the recommendation... Town and Parish Councils cannot afford to create new positions and employ dedicated staff to deal with the problem of dog fouling. The Task Group was impressed with the scheme implemented in Swindon, where the warden is 'rented' to the Parish. This warden could also deal with other issues such as litter, fly-tipping and maybe traffic problems. The warden could be available within a community area, or could serve a wider area within Wiltshire.

Community Volunteer Schemes

The Task Group recommends that Wiltshire Council encourage and support community volunteer groups who wish to target areas where dog fouling is a problem.

Task Group thinking behind the recommendation... The Group has researched community volunteer schemes such as that in Malmesbury, where volunteers mark areas of dog fouling with a white powder.

Funding

The Task Group recommends that the Area Board has a funding 'pot' allocated for tackling this aspect of anti-social behavior. Initially, this funding would be available to those councils who wish to install dispensing units for dog waste bags. Each application to be assessed on merit.

Task Group thinking behind the recommendation... Dog waste bag dispensers are relatively cheap to purchase and install, and would be a good tool to facilitate dog waste disposal. The installation of units is a positive scheme to tackle the problem, as opposed to the installation of prohibitive signage, and may therefore be more effective. Local councils would need to ensure that the units were kept full, and local vets and pet insurance companies could be approached to sponsor the bags.

Developers Contribution

The Task Group recommends that developers pay a small amount per new home towards open spaces which are safe from dog fouling, with sufficient numbers of bins, and fences around play areas.

Task Group thinking behind the recommendation... The Group discussed ways to protect open spaces. Children's play areas should be dog-free zones ideally. Some parishes have dedicated dog walking fields, which dog owners are encouraged to use. Some of the contributions paid by developers could go towards this type of open space scheme.

Reinstatement of Dog Licences

The Task Group recommends that the Area Board request Wiltshire Council to lobby the government for the reinstatement of licences.

Task Group thinking behind the recommendation... The Dangerous Dogs Act requires that all dogs are microchipped. This idea could fit in with this scheme, and the funds raised by the purchase of licences could be put towards paying for more wardens and other initiatives.

Mapping

The Task Group recommends that all local councils utilise the mapping tools provided by Wiltshire Council to ensure that bins are strategically placed in problem areas.

Task Group thinking behind the recommendation... The purchase and emptying costs of new bins is prohibitive to local councils, so the mapping of bins could be useful in assessing which areas have too many bins, and which areas require more. Bins in overcrowded areas could then be relocated, ensuring that the council incurs no extra waste removal costs. This could be assessed periodically to ensure the right areas are being targeted.

New Residents Pack

The Task Group recommends that 'New Residents Packs' are issued to inform the public of litter collection dates, Council Tax rates etc, and promoting responsible pet ownership.

Publicity

The Task Group recommends that a high profile campaign be run to target this problem and raise awareness. Things like a children's colouring competition/design a poster scheme could be included to ensure all age groups are targeted. Fines should always be publicized.