

## Councillors' Briefing Note No. 136

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### Dog Microchipping and Dangerous Dogs

Following a period of consultation between April and June 2012 the Government have announced that they propose to pass Regulations under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 which will require all dogs to be microchipped from the 6<sup>th</sup> April 2016. The Regulations will also require owners of dogs to update the details of ownership held on the computer databases should they sell or give away the dog. This change in the law will help local authorities and animal charities to reunite stray, lost or stolen dogs with their owners and promote responsible dog ownership.

At the moment approximately 60% of the 8 million pet dogs in the UK are microchipped. To assist in the process of microchipping the remainder the Dogs Trust, Battersea Cats and Dogs Home and the Blue Cross are likely to offer free microchipping at their centres for the next three years up to 6<sup>th</sup> April 2016. Wiltshire Council, through their Dog Warden Service, regularly works in partnership with the Dogs Trust and the RSPCA actively promoting microchipping at dog shows and other events. In the next few months such events are planned in Westbury and Salisbury.

After 6<sup>th</sup> April 2016 owners of dogs found by the police or local authorities not to have a microchip will be given a short period to comply with the legislation or face a fine of up to £500.

The Government also announced that it proposes to amend the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 extending the criminal offence of allowing a dog to be dangerously out of control so that it applies to all places, including private property. The present legislation only makes it an offence for the dog to be dangerously out of control in a public place. Many of the recent very serious dog attacks on young children have occurred in a house or garden with the result that the police have been unable to take action under the Act. Also the amendment to the Act will protect postmen, healthcare and professional utility workers visiting a house should they be attacked but not intruders or burglars. The penalties under the Act will also be increased to a new maximum penalty of 18 months imprisonment.

The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 can be enforced by both the police and the local authority, however, in Wiltshire we have a protocol with the police that they will lead on dog on human attacks and the Council will lead on dog on dog or other animal attacks.