

## Infrastructure Services Committee – 20 June 2013

### DOG FOULING ACTION PLAN

#### 1 Recommendation

The Committee is recommended to:-

- 1.1 Approve the dog fouling action plan contained in the appendix to this report.
- 1.2 Seek a further report by December 2013 on progress in implementing the action plan.

#### 2 Background/Discussion

- 2.1 Dog fouling consistently features in citizen/community surveys as an issue of concern, with communities seeking improvement in the way the Council deals with this matter. The number of complaints received by the Environmental Health Service has risen in recent years although many of them tend to be of a general nature.
- 2.2 The Environmental Health Service has three Dog Wardens who work closely with local communities in raising awareness of this topic, investigating complaints and taking enforcement action where appropriate. They carry out a wide range of duties and, bearing in mind the size of Aberdeenshire, it is proving a challenge to devote sufficient resources to this issue to the extent that some local communities would wish.
- 2.3 Appendix 1 outlines actions being taken and proposed to be taken in tackling this issue. Further preparatory work needs to be done prior to full implementation of the plan, requiring discussions with other Services and other partners. It is envisaged that full implementation will commence from early autumn.
- 2.4 There is a need to develop partnerships with local communities. The Clean Dog Walking Campaign has proven to be successful in a number of communities over the last year in raising the profile of this issue locally. Work will continue to encourage other communities to become involved.
- 2.5 The objectives of the Action Plan are:-
  - Reduce incidences of dog fouling
  - Reduce the number of complaints received by the Council due to dog fouling
  - Increase awareness of the issues associated with dog fouling
  - Emphasise the need for communities to help the Council
  - Undertake publicity to promote responsible ownership of dogs
  - Improve the availability of dog waste bags

- Make disposal of dog waste bags easier
- Improve the information on the Council website
- Make it easier to report incidents of dog fouling via the website and contact centre
- Work in partnership with local communities and other agencies
- Increase the number of officers authorised to serve fixed penalty notices

2.6 The Service takes, and will continue to take, a balanced approach, focusing on raising awareness, working with communities and encouraging the responsible ownership of dogs, but taking enforcement action where appropriate. There are often difficulties encountered in taking enforcement action eg obtaining evidence of the offence of failing to remove the faeces immediately and disposing of it appropriately, and members of the public are reluctant to give evidence as required in order to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN). Dog Wardens and Community Wardens are currently authorised to serve Notices. There is a need to extend authorisation to other officers so that offenders can be more effectively tackled.

2.7 Where there is sufficient evidence, Fixed Penalty Notices will be issued to owners who do not clean up after their dogs. Evidence requirements are: offence is witnessed, identity of owner is known (or vehicle registration number is taken and a description of the person in charge of the dog given), a description of the dog, date, time and place the offence is witnessed. The person who witnessed the offence must be prepared to go to court if a FPN is appealed.

2.8 The Head of Finance and the Monitoring Officer within Corporate Services have been consulted and their comments incorporated in the report.

2.9 Area Managers, Community Planning Officers and the Customer Services Manager have been consulted and their comments incorporated in the report.

### **3 Equalities, Staffing and Financial Implications**

3.1 An equalities impact assessment is not required because there will be no differential impact, as a result of this report, on persons with protected characteristics.

3.2 The impact of proposed authorisation of officers to serve fixed penalty notices will require further consideration and advice from HR and Finance.

3.3 Minimal costs will be incurred through purchase and free distribution of dog waste bags, and additional overtime costs may be incurred. Any additional costs arising will be contained within existing budgets.

#### **Director of Infrastructure Services**

Report Prepared by: David Cooper, Environmental Health Manager

Date – 30 May 2013

## APPENDIX 1

### DOG FOULING ACTION PLAN

- The Environmental Health Service will promote the Clean Dog Walking Campaign, working with Community Planning, local communities and other partners, to ensure a consistent approach across Aberdeenshire. This is a community led initiative and involves the dog owner “taking the pledge” to always clean up after their dog and dispose of the bag in a bin. Those owners that have taken the pledge also agree to encourage other owners to act responsibly and will provide them with dog waste bags.
- Dog waste bags are provided free of charge by Aberdeenshire Council and are available in all eleven Environmental Health Offices.
- Dog waste bags will be made available in more Council premises than at present.
- The Council website will be improved, and will include on-line reporting and guidance on the information required to enable action to be taken against owners who have committed an offence.
- Members of the public will be able to report incidents of dog fouling through the Council’s Contact Centre and website.
- The process for purchasing and siting of bins has been improved. The Waste Management Section of Infrastructure Services now has responsibility for purchasing, siting and maintaining dog waste bins, in liaison with the Dog Wardens. Additional bins will be provided where considered appropriate.
- Dog waste bags can be deposited in any dual purpose Council litter bin: appropriate signs are provided on bins.
- Additional officers will be authorised to serve Fixed Penalty Notices on owners who fail to clean up after their dog. Discussions are to take place with relevant Heads of Service and managers on the most appropriate officers to authorise. Training and guidance will be provided on service of Notices.
- Areas which are particularly prone to fouling will be targeted for investigation on a prioritised basis, provided sufficient evidence and information is available to enable effective use of limited resources.
- A publicity campaign will be developed in conjunction with Corporate Communications.