



Subject:	Public Consultation response on proposed new rules for the sale and supply of puppies and kittens in Northern Ireland.
Date:	5 August 2025
Reporting Officer:	Sobhan Toland, Director of City Services
Contact Officer:	Helen Morrissey, City Protection Manager

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

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No

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Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

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Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

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No

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1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	<p>To make Members aware that The Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has launched a public consultation on proposed new rules for the sale and supply of puppies and kittens in Northern Ireland. The consultation was launched on 2nd June 2025 and closes, for councils, on Monday 15th September 2025.</p>
1.2	<p><u>SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSALS</u></p>
1.3	<p>All persons seeking to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sell; • give away; or • otherwise transfer ownership <p>of a puppy or kitten (under six months old) will be required to apply to their local council to be entered onto the Register of Sellers and Suppliers of Puppies and Kittens. Registration will be valid for one year and will have conditions attached.</p>
1.4	<p>Applicants will be required to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pay a fee, which will be set by the council and will be nil for the first year (for any non-businesses); • prove that they are the keeper of the mother of the puppies, by producing proof of a valid dog licence for the puppies' mother, or by producing proof of a valid licence to keep a dog breeding establishment or a pet shop where the mother of the puppy is kept; • declare that they are the keeper of the mother of the kittens; and • comply with the conditions of registration.
1.5	<p>Councils:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • will not be required to carry out an inspection; • will have powers to suspend, vary or revoke a registration; • will have powers to inspect an address; and • will have powers to take samples from animals for traceability purposes.
1.6	<p>Whilst Council would welcome any legislation to improve animal welfare, we do not agree that Councils or other bodies should be required to take on this new legal requirement for puppies and kittens to be registered without a more robust and transparent assessment of the regulatory and financial impacts being assessed and laid out as part of the consultation with Councils or the impacts on rate payers</p>

2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to agree the proposed consultation response as attached in Appendix 5 and to agree to officers forwarding the response to the Department by the closing date of 15 th September 2025 and advising it remains draft and subject to full Council ratification after the call in period of the September Council.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (the Department) is seeking views on a proposal to introduce a registration system for persons selling, giving away, or otherwise transferring ownership of puppies and kittens aged under six months old.
3.2	A key objective of the Department is to end third-party sales of puppies and kittens. A third-party sale is a sale that occurs when the seller has not bred the animal themselves but has obtained the puppy or kitten from a breeder so that they can sell it onwards.
3.3	Whilst we welcome any legislation to improve animal welfare, we do not agree that councils (or other organisations), should be required to take on this new legal requirement for puppies and kittens to be registered without a more robust and transparent assessment of the regulatory and financial impacts being assessed and laid out as part of the consultation with Councils / rate payers.
3.4	It is suggested that other alternative organisations should also be explored around the delivery of this new requirement, not excluding the Department themselves. for e.g. USPCA and other animal charities. We also advocate that a centralised register is created and maintained for NI hence one Department (DAERA) or central lead organisation would help facilitate this role . It is noted that the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine are responsible for a registration scheme in ROI.
3.5	Furthermore, it is our view that other reforms need to be addressed prior to the introduction of the proposed registration regime, and that the review of dog breeding legislation and the regulation of rescue and rehoming centres remain the priority.
3.6	Other key points made in the response:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officers from Councils have met with DAERA to strongly advise of our concerns of the difficulty of enforcing the proposed legislative provisions, eg the possible need for inspections, response to complaints, and possible litigation, criminalising individuals where there are no animal welfare offences. Council feels and legislation is especially difficult to enforce in relation to cats/kittens given their roaming nature . • Enforcement responsibilities being devolved to local Government without a more robust, transparent and appropriate assessment to rate payers of the corresponding resources, funding assessment and transfer from DAERA , powers or legal protections. • Costs impacts include need for investment by rate payers in a new IT system, new administration costs and recurring costs, a business support role around servicing a public facing register, new staff costs etc • Ongoing litigation with the Department on the withdrawal of funding for Animal Welfare to Councils. • Councils are still dealing with the new legislation on XL bully safeguards and incurring non budgeted and on going costs, which the Department expected to be absorbed by rate payers, the legislation still impacts on day to day Dog Warden service capacity.
3.7	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The Department has completed a Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) (See Appendix 2). There are significant concerns about the potential financial and resource implications of these proposals and our concerns have been highlighted throughout our response to the consultation.</p>
3.8	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>The Department has completed an Equality and Disability Screening Exercise (See Appendix 3) and a Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) (See Appendix 4). We have made comments on both in our responses to Questions 15 and 16.</p>
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1 – Consultation on new rules</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Regulatory Impact Assessment</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Equality and Disability</p> <p>Appendix 4 – Rural Needs Impact Assessment</p> <p>Appendix 5 – DRAFT Response – Consultation</p>