



Subject:	Dog Warden Service Update - Responsible Dog Ownership; Internal Review and Proposed Changes to Fixed Penalty Fines.
Date:	7 th March 2023
Reporting Officer:	Siobhan Toland, Director of City Services
Contact Officer:	Helen Morrissey, City Protection Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
<i>After Committee Decision</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>After Council Decision</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Sometime in the future</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Never</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	<p>To provide members of the People and Communities Committee with an update on the Dog Warden Service and in particular: Responsible Dog Ownership; our Internal Review and Proposed Changes to Fixed Penalty Fines for dog fouling offences. The proposed changes to the Fixed Penalty Fines also apply to littering offences.</p> <p>The Committee noted the previous update at the meeting on 11 October 2022 and agreed that a follow up report would be submitted to a future meeting which would consider, amongst other issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhancing and localising the dog foul media campaign.• Developing a further stencilling campaign (including liaison with Dfl in this regard).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing the use of signage. • Consideration of the use of the Customer Hub in identifying 'hotspots'. • Linking directly with the Elected Members for identified hotspot areas. • The provision of free dog foul bags in problem areas. • Ensuring adequate bins for disposal were available. • The development of responsible dog ownership campaigns in the Council's parks and playing field locations.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the update on Responsible Dog Ownership. • Note an Internal Review is underway. • Consider Options 1 – 3 in relation to the new fixed penalty limits for dog fouling and agree a preferred option. • Consider Option 4 - applying any changes made to the fixed penalty limits for dog fouling offences to littering offences.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>Dog fouling and irresponsible dog ownership go hand in hand and can impact the quality and amenity of our neighbourhoods. Clearly, whilst the majority of dog owners exercise responsible dog management, there are a small number of owners who have less regard for this and this can have an impact on areas in the city. This requires on-going re-direction of our resources to address in terms of its removal from the streets, as well as providing a wide range of education and awareness programmes together with the use of fines where infringements are detected.</p>
3.2	<p>The Dog Warden Service as part of their role deploy routine monitoring patrols, to detect dog fouling incidents. However, it is widely recognised that the problem of dog fouling cannot be addressed solely by enforcement intervention.</p>
3.3	<p>To encourage a change in behaviour, a wider programme supporting responsible dog ownership is an essential element of the Council's approach to reducing levels of dog fouling throughout the city. Part 1 of this report summarises the activities undertaken to address the issue of dog fouling and encourage Responsible Dog Ownership.</p>

3.4 **PART 1 – RESPONSIBLE DOG OWNERSHIP**

Enforcement

3.5 Enforcement and visibility of same is an integral part of dealing with dog fouling. Councils are required to provide the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) with statistical information on a wide range of dog control service areas and enforcement for example: dog licences, complaints regarding stray dogs, dog attacks and dog warden enforcement actions. This information is provided by Councils on a quarterly basis, collated and held by DAERA. It is then referred to by Councils and DAERA when providing responses to dog related information requests from the media, the public and animal welfare stakeholders.

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/council-dog-summarystatistics>

3.6 The following table provides enforcement statistics for BCC for along with the DAERA NI average for 21/22.

Year	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23 to date	DAERA NI Average per Council 21/22
Fixed Penalties issued - Fouling	82	54	101	5	20	14	Not recorded by DAERA
Summons issued - Fouling	17	13	4	0	3	1	Not recorded by DAERA
Fixed Penalties issued - Straying	384	387	328	61	170	22*	42
Summons issued – Straying	120	126	81	0	21	9	6
Fixed Penalties issues – No license	338	341	244	61	180	122	65
Summons issues –	180	175	116	0	31	32	7

No license							
Total Dog Licenses issues	11,872	11,819	11,519	10,741	10,774	9,856 (to end of January)	12,631

* Dramatic reduction in straying FPNs due to legal opinion on definition of a stray.

Environmental Education and Outreach Team (EEOT)

3.7 The Environmental Education and Outreach Team have a project plan detailing a range of activities through educational, promotional and community-based programmes scheduled throughout the course of each year, which aims to highlight the problems of dog fouling.

3.8 In late 2019, prior to the pandemic, the EEOT launched the Green Dog Walkers Project, which is a non-confrontational, voluntary, UK wide scheme to change attitudes towards dog fouling. On signing, individuals pledge to commit to the principles of good dog ownership i.e. to clean up after their dog and encourage others to do the same. They get a lead with messaging on it and poo bags. The Team is in the process of re-instating this initiative and is encouraging Green Dog Walkers to sign-up at their events with Scoop Dog. The project will also go live on our website in the next few weeks.

3.9 The EEOT provide our community centres with a supply of poo bags for members of the public, to further broaden the reach of their support of the Responsible Dog Ownership Campaign.

3.10 The EEOT engage with schools and to make the biggest impact, in person visits are their preference. They have computer games, curriculum packs, activities and digital files they can give to schools. Large banners are also available for school railings.

3.11 They have a new campaign inviting local school children to design colourful billboard ads, urging owners to clean up after their dogs and keep our local communities clean. Four winners will have their designs displayed on a billboard in their area.

Stencilling

3.12 The legislation that relates to local authorities placing functional advertisements on pavements e.g. stencilling, has been updated since we last liaised with the Department for Infrastructure and we have written to DfI again, seeking permission to re-instate a stencilling

	<p>programme. We await a response. Over the last 3 months colleagues in OSS have been carrying out stencilling in parks across the City.</p> <p>Dog Fouling Campaign</p>
3.13	<p>Following a request from P&C, for a 'hard hitting' campaign, marketing and corporate communications designed and activated a fully integrated campaign for 3 weeks from 10 October 2022. The second burst of the advertising campaign is currently in market (running from 13 February 2023 and finishes on 5 March 2023). The overarching campaign message is #YourDogYourJob. Tactical outdoor advertising on buses and adshels was used as part of the media mix to target hotspot areas and across main arterial routes. Analysis of complaints, information from dog fouling patrols and Elected Members was also used to determine hotspot locations. As well as outdoor, the advertising media mix included; radio, online advertising and paid for social media promoted posts.</p> <p>High Visibility Patrols</p>
3.14	<p>Dog Wardens routinely carry out high visibility patrols and in October 2022, to support the media medic campaign, they carried out 30 high visibility patrols, totaling 46.3 hours.</p>
3.15	<p>Evaluation of October 2022 Dog Fouling Advertising Campaign</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The adshels were seen on average 10.7 times by over 70% of all adults. • The T-sides on buses were seen on average 3.4 times by 472,747 people. • The Q radio advert was heard on average 4.9 times. • The U105 advert was heard by 243,661 people on average 5.9 times. • Click through rates were strong. • 58% of dog owners recalled seeing the adverts.
3.16	<p>In general respondents were pleased to see a campaign tackling the issue. However, it was recognised there are challenges to having an influencing impact on that minority of irresponsible dog owners.</p>
3.17	<p>Advertising alone will never deal with this issue and it is recognised there is a need to continually reinforce our Responsible Dog Ownership messages through education and enforcement.</p>
3.18	<p>Colleagues in the Quality Team assessed the levels of dog fouling in 10 streets in North, South, East and West Belfast before and after the campaign. They looked at old dog</p>

fouling and new dog fouling, before and after. New dog fouling decreased across all areas, bar west. Old dog fouling increased across all areas. Dog Wardens routinely make colleagues in OSS aware of hotspots as street cleaning schedules may need to be adjusted.

Dog Fouling Signage

3.19 We have continued the use of signage, throughout the City, where there appears to be an increase in the incidence of dog fouling.

Parks and Open Spaces

3.20 The Dog Wardens carry out high visibility fouling patrols across the City and are assisted in the parks by Park Wardens. Dog Wardens and Park Wardens are carrying out joint patrols, when possible, to increase awareness of our Responsible Dog Ownership Campaign in the Council's parks and playing field locations. Traditionally, there was a high level of detection of fouling in parks and Dog Wardens are currently targeting our parks, along with other hotspots.

Local Hotspots

3.21 Analysis of complaints and information from dog fouling patrols and Elected Members are used to determine current hotspot locations. We are investigating the use of map info to help with the analysis of complaints. This will enable the Dog Wardens to see the weekly / monthly hotspots on one map of Belfast and target resources appropriately.

3.22 PART 2 - INTERNAL REVIEW OF DOG WARDEN SERVICE

3.23 The Dog Warden Service operates 7 days a week (except Bank Holidays) from 08:00 to 20:00 hours. There are 12 Dog Wardens who operate in 4 teams, 2 Supervisors and a Dog Warden and Animal Welfare Manager (temporary post until September 2023 with any extension subject to finding the finances).

3.24 There were 2,821 service requests in 2021/22 with 2,239 between 1 April and 31 December 2022, averaging 249 per month. The top two categories of service request going back 4 years are straying and fouling, with barking and dog attacks third and fourth.

3.25 We are in the process of reviewing the Dog Warden Service through a process known as Service Design. This approach moves away from a pure focus on a specific structure to a

	<p>focus on the service being delivered to the customer. Designing a service that the customer needs involves designing, processes, procedures, technology solutions and a structure to support the delivery.</p>
3.26	We aim to have most of the findings of the review implemented in the next 9 – 12 months.
3.27	<u>PART 3 - PROPOSED CHANGES TO FIXED PENALTY FINES FOR DOG CONTROL OFFENCES</u>
3.28	<p>The Environmental Offences (Fixed Penalties) (Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 which were made on 8 December 2022 came into force on 30 December 2022 and amend the previous 2012 Regulations. The effect is to alter the amount of a fixed penalty capable of being specified by the Council for a fixed penalty under:</p> <p>(a) Article 6 (6A) (a) of the Litter Order;</p> <p>(b) Section 44 (1) (a) of the 2011 Act insofar as it relates to an offence under a Dog Control Order set out in Schedule 1 to the 2012 regulations i.e. offence of dog fouling.</p> <p>and specifying that it shall be not less than £50 and not more than £200. Legislation previously specified not less than £50 and not more than £80.</p> <p>Current Situation</p>
3.29	The Council previously agreed to set the level of fixed penalty fine for dog fouling at £80, reduced to £50 if paid within 10 days.
3.30	<p>Options</p> <p>Option 1 – no change</p> <p>Option 2 – increase to maximum of £200 with reduction if paid within 10 days. Suggested reduction to £100 as an incentive to pay the fixed penalty promptly and avoid court action.</p> <p>Option 3 – increase but not to maximum with reduction if paid within 10 days. Could be anything from £90 - £190, with any level of reduction.</p>
3.31	If a change is made we will have to update our signage. Officers and Elected Members are inundated with complaints about dog fouling. It is extremely difficult to catch offenders as they often modify their behaviour and pick up after their dog if they see a Dog Warden patrolling.

	<p>Patrolling is really only a deterrent but it is labour intensive. During the 46.3 hours of patrols carried out in October 2022 only one dog fouling incident was observed and therefore only 1 fixed penalty notice was served.</p>
3.32	<p>This is a sensitive time to consider increasing the cost of anything. We recognise a balance has to be struck – on the one hand the public, staff and Members are clearly frustrated with the level of dog fouling across the City but on the other, an increase in the fixed penalty fine should act as a deterrent to the minority of dog owners who are irresponsible.</p>
3.33	<p>Option 4 – Consider applying any changes made to the fixed penalty limits for dog fouling offences to littering offences. The Council previously agreed to set the level of fixed penalty fine for littering at £80, reduced to £60 if paid within 10 days. There would be no additional signage costs as most signs include information about dog fouling and littering.</p>
	<p><u>Finance and Resource Implications</u></p>
3.34	<p>There will be finance implications for some of the actions falling out of the Internal Review in Part 2 of this report e.g. mobile technology, but this is being considered within existing budgets and across the Service.</p> <p>There are cost implications for Part 3 of this report if changes are required to signage. We do already have a budget for signage and cost varies depending on the size of the sign and the method of mounting but is in the region of £20 - £25 plus VAT each. We were about to order signage when we became aware of the changes to the legislation and have held off on placing an order until Elected Members make a decision.</p>
	<p><u>Asset and Other Implications</u></p>
3.35	<p>None</p>
	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment</u></p>
3.36	<p>None.</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
	<p>None</p>