

Environment Select Committee

A meeting of Environment Select Committee was held on Monday, 19th January, 2009.

Present: Mrs Maureen Rigg (Chair) , Cllr Dick Cains, Cllr Colin Leckonby, Cllr , Cllr Roy Rix, Cllr Michael Smith, Cllr Bill Woodhead

Officers: Mike Batty, Mark Berry (DNS), Graham Birtle and Mrs Tanya Harrison (LD)

Also in attendance: Chief Inspector Gent (RSPCA)

Apologies: Cllr Andrew Larkin, Cllr Mick Stoker and Cllr Mick Womphrey

1 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Cains declared a personal non prejudicial interested in the animal welfare and dog fouling item due to the fact that he had been a magistrate.

Councillor Smith declared a personal non prejudicial interested in the animal welfare and dog fouling.

2 **Minutes of 22nd September 2008, to be signed by the Chair**

The minutes were signed by the Chairman.

3 **Draft Minutes of the meeting held on 24th November 2008**

Consideration was given to the minutes on the meeting held on 24th November 2008.

CONCLUDED that the minutes of the meeting held on 24th November 2008 be agreed and forwarded to Council for consideration.

4 **Review of Dog Fouling**

Members were provided with information from Chief Inspector Gent (RSPCA). Members were advised that the RSPCA had been set up 100 years ago and had always run on public donations. The RSPCA's remit was mainly animal welfare, however as it had grown they were now undertook scientific research as part of animal welfare.

Animal Welfare legislation had remained unchanged since 1911 (The Protection of Animals Act 1911) until the implementation of the Animal Welfare Act in April 2007 which created a new welfare offence (Section 9).

The changes to the act enabled officers to intercede prior to actual suffering of animals unlike previously when suffering had to occur before formal action could be taken.

Since the introduction of the new act there had been an increase in animal welfare cases. It could take 7 - 8 months for cases to be heard in court during which time the R.S.P.C.A were responsible for the board of the animals.

Members were advised that domestic cruelty complaints were the usual reports received.

Chief Inspector Gent advised that the quality of service differed between Councils. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council was the only Council which had an animal welfare service. In certain cases the Council and R.S.P.C.A work side by side.

Chief Inspector Gent advised that if there were adequate staff within Councils and the R.S.P.C.A the animal welfare problem would be significantly reduced. The Chief Inspector advised that he would like to see:

- Compulsory dog Licensing
- Registration fees for an animal
- Compulsory micro chipping for dogs
- Controlled breeding of animals

Chief Inspector Gent thanked Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council for the services it provided as they were among the best in the North East.

Members discussed animal welfare at allotments and horses.

Members discussed the sentencing guidelines which bound magistrates. If people thought the sentences passed out by magistrates was too harsh they would go to a regular court which could result in the original ruling being overturned.

Chief Inspector Gent advised that barking dogs were not classed as a high priority therefore it would be the Council's Noise Team/Animal Welfare Department who members of the public would be better calling. However, if the issues surrounding the animal went deeper than just repeated barking then the R.S.P.C.A would consider it a higher priority.

Members advised that Animal Welfare deal with barking dogs promptly.

CONCLUDED that the report be noted.

5 Work Programme

The Chair informed Members that at the next meeting they would formulate recommendations in relation to the review on Animal Welfare and Dog Fouling.

Monitoring reports on Cemeteries and Wastes Management would be presented at the next meeting.

CONCLUDED that:

1. Members will formulate recommendations in relation to the review on Animal Welfare and Dog Fouling at the next meeting.
2. Monitoring reports on Cemeteries and Wastes Management will be presented at the next meeting.

