

REPORT TO PLACE SELECT COMMITTEE

14 SEPTEMBER 2026

North East Local Authorities Animal Welfare Services

Summary

The report outlines the responses received from questioned sent to all North East Local Authorities regarding their provision of Animal Welfare Services.

Detail

1. As requested in the scope and project plan, information has been gathered from other North East Local Authorities (LA's) to consider how Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's (SBC) service compares and if there are any areas of best practice that SBC can learn from.
2. The following questions were emailed to all 11 North East LA's in July 2026:
 - What services above the statutory duties do you provide, if any?
 - Do you carry out any services that generate an income?
 - Has there been an increase in demand for animal welfare services and, if so, what changes have you put in place to meet the demand?
 - What training do you provide for staff?
3. Five responses have been received and are set out in **appendix 1**.
4. The responses show that only one responding LA is providing an animal welfare service, similar to SBC. The remaining LA's who responded reported carrying out statutory duties only, although one LA noted it operates longer hours than other areas. The LA providing additional animal welfare services also operates a Green Dog Walker service to tackle dog fouling, whereby residents pledge to clean up after their dogs and encourage other dog owners to do the same. Residents receive a badge to wear and free poop bags.
5. Two of the LA's stated that they contract out their out-of-hours service. One LA also has arrangements with one of their rescue shelters and a 24-hour practice for members of the public to drop off dogs they have found.
6. One LA indicated that it previously had a joint procurement arrangement with a neighbouring for the kennel provision, however, now procure this separately. They also noted that the provision they contract is used by three local authorities, including themselves.
7. None of the LA's that responded reported generating an income from their animal welfare provision. Release fees are charged to recover kennelling costs, similar to SBC, and one LA had operated a microchipping service which generated a small income, but this has now ceased. Another LA has considered a chargeable dog transport service linked to health and social care needs to cover costs, but it has not been used.

8. Several LA's reported an increase in the number of calls received relating to animal welfare. Most refer concerns to the RSPCA or working closely alongside them.
9. All LA's provide some form of training, ranging from basic dog handling skills, health and safety and COSHH training, personal safety, and training with senior staff. Staff have also completed accredited training including the CTSI Animal Health and Welfare training course, Diploma in Animal Welfare and BTEC Level 3 Certificate for Animal Inspectors. At SBC new staff receive on the job training and all staff are offered training on short courses as and when needed. Training staff have undertaken include:
 - Dangerous Dog Legislation training
 - Animal Microchipping training
 - Pet Shop Licensing training
 - Dog Handling training
 - Police Wildlife Crime Training
 - Mental Health First Aid

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Appendix 1: Local Authority Responses

Response	What are your current arrangements for stray dogs and what services are provided?
Response 1	Stray dog collection/transport service provided via Neighbourhood Wardens service during the below hours – Mon – Thur 9am – 7pm Fri - up until 9pm Sat/Sun - 4.45pm – 9pm
Response 2	Investigate and respond to stray dog services in house Monday - Friday. We offer an out of hours service and kennel provision that is sub-contracted.
Response 3	We have one dog warden (in house). The pound is provided by a charity that carries out animal rehoming. It was, until recently, jointly procured. It is contracted, separately, by three authorities.
Response 4	We have 4 full time Animal Welfare Officers and 1 Senior Animal Welfare Officer who work Monday to Friday. We also provide an out of hours service which runs 5pm-10pm Monday to Friday and 8am-10pm on weekends and covers most bank holidays minus Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Years Day. The out of hours service is contracted out to a self-employed person. We have a drop off facility contract with one of our rescue shelters and a 24 hour veterinary practice also where members of the public can drop off directly should they wish to do so or if there is no service at the time of finding the dog. All calls are handled by our call centre, during out of hours this goes to Fire Control who work 24/7.
Response 5	Stray dogs service is provided by Animal Care Services.

Response	What services above the statutory duties do you provide, if any?
Response 1	Our Neighbourhood Wardens operate longer hours than many other local authority dog warden services offer.
Response 2	We provide statutory services only; stray dog service and animal licensing
Response 3	None. We used to offer to take surrendered dogs. We only deal with livestock welfare.

Response 4	We also provide an animal welfare service on top of the stray dog statutory duties. This includes investigating animal welfare offences, seizing animals, applying for warrants through the magistrates courts, preparing court files and PACE interviews. We also provide a Green Dog Walker Service to help with dog fouling issues within the area, we hold regular events around this.
Response 5	We do not provide duties above what is statutorily required.

Response	Do you carry out any services that generate an income?
Response 1	No – although we have suggested a dog transport service for social services/health care when dogs need to be housed somewhere whilst owners are in hospital etc this has been offered with costs for staff and mileage fees but not yet used.
Response 2	Release fee's of stray dogs to owners and animal licensing
Response 3	In the area of animal services, no.
Response 4	We have just stopped our microchipping service which did create an income.
Response 5	We do not carry out animal services that generate income.

Response	Has there been an increase in demand for animal welfare services and, if so, what changes have you put in place to meet the demand?
Response 1	Yes – a lot more calls reporting issues to wardens – however as we are not animal welfare experts we inform clients to report matters to RSPCA or Police – we will assist with transport if dogs are to be seized
Response 2	We do not provide an animal welfare service – all concerns raised are redirected to RSPCA.
Response 3	Not known, as we generally refer companion animal welfare reports to the RSPCA.
Response 4	Yes our figures for welfare concerns have substantially grown over the last 5 years. We now work closely with RSPCA and World Horse Welfare for assistance.
Response 5	There has been an increase in animal welfare demand however the local authority only get involved with significant welfare concerns such as abandonment.

Response	What training do you provide for staff?
Response 1	Basic dog handling skills (also use of dog grab poles for aggressive dogs – any dangerous dogs are reported to police
Response 2	Dog handling training, banned breed awareness. General health and safety and COSHH around decontamination of kennels and transportation of vehicles. Also Animal Licensing training (BTEC Level 3 Certificate for Animal Inspectors)
Response 3	The dog warden has a diploma in animal care. They are trained in-house on health and safety and personal safety. Some external legal training is also provided.
Response 4	Staff are provided with the initial induction to the Authority and the role, internal training with Senior and experienced staff until they're signed off to investigate on their own with the support where needed. We have a team who have been here for many years and all have an animal welfare diploma. However, this course does not exist anymore. I have a new member of staff who is currently working through an 18 month online Animal Welfare Diploma.
Response 5	Staff have recently undertaken CTSI Animal Health and welfare training course.