

REPORT TO PLACE SELECT COMMITTEE

14 SEPTEMBER 2026

Kennel Site Visits

Summary

The report summarises observations from the site visits that took place on 14 August 2026 and 4 September 2026.

Detail

1. Four members of the Committee visited two kennels on 14th August, the Council's holding kennels and partner kennel. The Chair and Vice Chair also visited the kennels Adult Social Care utilise on 4th September.
2. The visits gave a fuller understanding of the space at the kennels and an opportunity to discuss operational issues with those running the kennels.

Holding Kennels

3. There are nine kennels in the compound within the security centre, four with runs which can be opened by the Animal Welfare Officer at the kennel door to reduce the need to enter the kennel, and five without runs. The kennels are clean, well-maintained, and fit for purpose. Animal Welfare Officers are on site during the day, 365 days a year, and there are security cameras within the kennels for the security centre to observe out of hours.
4. The Police also used the kennels on occasions before dogs are transferred to their own kennelling provision.
5. There is a recharge for the cost of kennelling stray dogs, however if the dog is only in the kennel for a short period this waived as the Service does not wish to deter people from being reunited with their pet.
6. Dogs are only at the kennels for a short period of 24/48 hours before they are transferred to the partner kennels. At the time of the visit, there was only one dog in the kennels which had been brought in as a stray and had an eye infection. The dog was showing aggressive behaviour, possibly due to being in pain with the infection. It had been microchipped and officers had contacted the registered owner. However, the contact information was for a previous owner, who was attempting to contact the person they had sold the dog onto. Animal Welfare had were awaiting a response.
7. The Animal Welfare team will be moving from their base at 16 Church Road to security centre and a section of the car park will be fenced to give more space for the service and the animals they look after.

Partner Kennels

8. The partner kennels have 15 kennels in a purpose-built block separate and at a distance to the daycare kennels they also operate onsite. The 15-kennel block are for sole use of

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council. The kennels are clean and well maintained, and all have runs which can be opened by staff outside of the kennels.

9. The dogs taken to the kennels can be aggressive and volatile, often with an unknown history. The positioning of the kennel block allowed for vans to be driven to the door and dogs transferred straight into the block with minimum walking distance. Quieter dogs can become distressed by the noise of the aggressive dogs, and the kennel tries to house the different temperament of dogs in different parts of the kennels to reduce their stress, but this is not always possible.
10. There is no provision for dogs to exercise outside their individual kennel. It was explained that this was due to the significant investment required to adapt the outdoor space into a safe and suitable exercise area, together with concerns regarding staff safety when exercising some of the dogs accommodated at the kennels. The owner also noted that the use of an external area would create a significant risk of disease transmission due to the unknown vaccination status of stray dogs.
11. The dogs are held at the kennels until assessed by Dogs Trust at their centre. This assessment then determines whether they are suitable for rehoming or determined that they needed to be put to sleep. Dogs that are put to sleep included prohibited breeds and, due to the number of traits to check for these breeds, it can be challenging to determine the breed of a dog.
12. Once a dog has been assessed for rehoming, it may remain at the partner kennel until a kennel space becomes available at the Dogs Trust facility. Pressure on kennels is created when the Dogs Trust are unable to take dogs straight away and in exceptional circumstances dogs can remain in the partner kennel for three months, which has an impact on their health and behaviour, however this is not the norm. The partner kennel explained that the Dogs Trust have behavioural specialists who work with the dogs at their facilities before rehoming them.
13. At the time of the visit there was one dog in the kennel, which was aggressive. However, there were periods where the kennels are full. Busy periods highlighted were after Covid when dogs bought in lock down were abandoned or handed in and when the banned breeds legislation was extended.

Adult Social Care Kennels

14. Since the proprietor could not accommodate a larger contingent, Place Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair visited these kennels used under contract by Adult Social Care. Indeed, it was confirmed that the layout would have made it difficult for a larger visiting group.
15. The site has a total of 28 kennels, 5 of which are now contracted to the Council, albeit 8 dogs were currently accommodated. Dogs have stayed from 2 weeks to over a year. The proprietor understands that over 90% of the dogs requiring care come from owners who have mental health issues; most of these dogs present with behavioural issues and often come in poor physical state; this can create difficulties in any eventual rehoming via the Dogs Trust. All "SBC dogs" are vaccinated and receive necessary treatments from a Stockton vet service. Further, it was proposed that, if legally possible, an earlier deadline,

sat after 6 months, for a decision about rehoming would be beneficial to the dogs' long-term futures.

16. The proprietor is a very experienced ex-military dog handler and appears passionate about and committed to the care of the dogs in his charge. Good relationships exist with SBC Adult Social Care whose support is readily accessible and given if needed – comparing favourably to some other local authorities using the kennels. Similarly, there is a good working relationship with SBC Animal Welfare.
17. The kennels are on land leased by the proprietor who recognises that the facilities need upgrading in the near future. It was stated that they were “not the most beautiful kennels” but that they do a good job with the dogs in their care.