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# Briefing Note – PPP Kennelling Provision

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## 1 Purpose of the Briefing

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Corporate Board with an update on the challenges faced by the service regarding the kennelling provision for stray dogs.
- 1.2 The main challenges are focussed on
  - (a) The direct cost increase of kennelling provision for the PPP for strays
  - (b) The costs of moving unclaimed dogs onto longer term facilities for rehoming.
  - (c) The options the service is putting in place to mitigate direct and indirect costs.
- 1.3 In addition to the above, challenges arise from the emotive nature of this subject matter where destruction is considered as an option to alleviate space pressure or where temperament checks prevent the ability readily rehome.

## 2 Background

- 2.1 The shared service includes the provision of a stray dog collection and kennelling service. The areas currently covered are Bracknell Forest Council and West Berkshire Council.
- 2.2 Section 149 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 places a duty on the Local Authority to provide the provision of a stray dog collection, and where collected, maintain that dog in its care for at least 7 days.
- 2.3 If after 7 days, the dog is unclaimed, or unable to be reunited then a decision needs to be made in terms of what to then do with the dog. The Act allows for the LA to arrange to have the stray rehomed or humanely destroyed. The service has a contractor in place to provide collection and drop off and separate arrangements for kennelling at facility's who are able to take on stray dogs. There is no current dedicated animal warden in place although the post is currently out to advert.
- 2.4 Despite numerous attempts to engage with local kennel providers, the service was limited in who it could use as a kennelling facility, and it does not have any in-house across either of the Council areas within the Partnership.
- 2.5 Up until 2023, the service used a relatively local kennelling service in Slough at a cost of around £20/night. In Dec 2023, this facility, stopped taking larger dogs which meant the need to search further afield. This was extremely challenging, as there was no capacity available locally and many Councils were in the same boat, especially during the banning of XL bully type dogs.

- 2.6 However, we were successful in securing a facility that was shared with other Local Authority's, albeit some distance away in the Chessington area. Moreover, to secure a space the service had to commit to a longer 'letting' bases for each space as with the other LA's and this was initially for 1 kennel space for 1 year at a cost of around 1k per month.
- 2.7 The Slough facility that was no longer able to take larger dogs then closed altogether in 2024. This meant we had to increase capacity to the alternate kennel, and with it came increased costs for both the service and the contractor, and in particular travel distances and monthly costs. At the same time, the service was without a dedicated animal warden, meaning additional burdens on existing staff and additional contractor usage.
- 2.8 The service of stray dog collection is unpredictable, and it is not possible to predict the number of strays at any given time, but figures for this year show that the summer months brought about more pressure than preceding months (Annex B). In August, the service had the situation where more than 4 dogs arrived within 7 days of one another needing kennelling.
- 2.9 There is a cost recovery system in place where a dog can be reunited with its owner. However, for various reasons, this cost recovery is limited including for many reasons the owners are not traceable. Since April, cost recovery has amounted to around £2k compared to the 28k it has cost the service so far in collection and kennelling, excluding officer time (Kennelling 18k and collections 10k).

### **3 Current Status**

#### Kennelling provisions

- 3.1 Since April 2025 the dog warden service has dealt with 100 stray dogs across the West Berkshire and Bracknell Forest areas. 35 of which required kennelling (See Annex B). This has been one of the busier summers, and challenges have exacerbated due to not having in place a dedicated animal warden, summer staff leave (and absence) and external capacity issues in arranging rescue spaces when attempting to rehome unclaimed dogs.
- 3.2 The service now currently has 3 permanent kennelling spaces across 2 locations, with an overflow option for another space if available. Each space is secured on a monthly basis, costing around £1000 per month/space. However, neither facility allows members of the public to attend to reclaim. Also, there is no guarantee that should a space be given up, that it then becomes available later.
- 3.3 Depending on the need for an additional space, the kennelling costs are predicted to be around 36k-48k for this year. To date, this is compared to just over 22k the whole of last year (Annex A).

#### Moving dogs on after 7 days.

- 3.4 The service has over 10 different rehoming centres in its contacts and the means of placing dogs with finders and other members of the public as set out in the Act.
- 3.5 We also have the ability to instruct the kennels to seek rehoming. This comes at a cost with one of the kennels used by the service. However, we recognise that rehoming takes time, and success can be dependent on the age and breed of the dog as well as the rescue centres capacity to take in dogs at that time. The officers' involved in arranging rehoming do so from day 1 of collection, or up to 3 if following a weekend collection.
- 3.6 Moving dog on after 7 days has been the biggest pressure insofar as maintaining the ability to collect and hold stray dogs. The average time to rehome a stray dog this year has been around 14.5 days, 7.5 days over the statutory period.
- 3.7 The Act allows for an Authority to humanely destroy a dog that hasn't been claimed after 7 days. Historically, the service would only seek this option if no rehoming was possible, but this was at a time when Kennelling wasn't so scarce and rehoming a little easier. This year, the service has arranged for one humane destruction due to the temperament being such that rehoming was not an option.

#### Risks and Mitigation

- 3.8 The Local Authority has explored alternative options for moving dogs on.
- 3.9 Some of the cost experienced by the service is being balanced by the vacancy of the animal warden. However, this is not sustainable given the vacancy itself leads to higher costs, increased pressure on existing staff trying to back-fill the role and limited activity in other areas that role plays within the community. An advert is progressing to replace the role.
- 3.10 Despite the challenges, officers currently covering the role have developed a fostering scheme designed to alleviate kennelling pressures after the statutory 7-day period whilst permanent rehoming takes place. This approach isn't without its own considerations that need to be managed. For example, dog movement, incentivisation, officer time, dog temperament checks, repeated straying, damages or risk of injury to either dog or human. However, the service feels it can mitigate those risks with the steps it has put in place, such as officer learning and development, temperament checks, home checks and free food vouchers to potential fosterers and support from its contractor.
- 3.11 The scheme is being finalised and will be rolled out to all PPP to create a directory of dog foster homes we can call on during peak times. Following invite to express interest in the scheme to PPP employees, there are currently 4 potential dog fosterers' being lined up and will assist in refining any issues that might arise. Once proved it is intended member of the wider Council staff groups will also be invited to participate once all processes are in place.
- 3.12 Whilst numbers over the summer have been significantly higher than the months preceding, it is felt that 3 permanent kennels is enough to cope with demand, provided moving dogs on after 7 days is done as quickly as possible.

## 4 Conclusions

- 4.1 Having a permanent AW role in place will alleviate the pressure placed on other staff in attempting to rehome, whilst carrying out their other 'day-job'. This is currently being advertised.
- 4.2 Assuming the rate of kennelling demand remains the same or increases, it can also be assumed that the kennelling costs will not reduce any time soon under current arrangements and there are opportunities for alternate tariffs and very limited supply.
- 4.3 As it stands, holding dogs for a period of 7 days requires at least 3 kennelling spaces being kept available and sometimes more or if demand increases at any given time.
- 4.4 Another alternative might be that the Council seeks its own facility which it could use and to let out spaces to other neighbouring authorities at market rate. This will require investment, proper project management oversight and time.
- 4.5 Dogs for rehoming after 7 days block spaces, and it is this blockage that impacts on service delivery. The service is looking at introducing its own fostering programme to alleviate over stayed dogs beyond 7 days to ensure the 3 kennels remain open for new strays. This brings with it risk, but ones that can be managed.
- 4.6 Should the foster scheme be successful, it might be rolled out to a wider catchment if demand on spaces dictates. However, there remains an obligation on the Council to hold stray up to 7 days.
- 4.7 One other option, where spaces are filled, is the humane destruction of an unclaimed dog after 7 days.

## 5 Appendices

Annex A- Summary of Kennelling costs 2023/24, 2024/25 and 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 to August 2025.

Annex B – Summary of stray dogs collected and kennelled

Annex C – Legal note regarding 7 day boarding requirement

**Annex A – Summary of Kennelling costs 2023/24, 2024/25 and 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 to August 2025.**

<b>Year</b>	<b>23-24</b>	<b>24-25</b>	<b>April 25 – August 25.</b>
<b>Combined Kennelling costs (£)</b>	17258.00	22480.00	18500.00

**Annex B – Summary of stray dogs collected and kennelled.**

<b>Month (2025)</b>	<b>Dogs Collected (WB)</b>	<b>Dogs Taken to Kennels (WB)</b>	<b>Dogs Collected (BF)</b>	<b>Dogs Taken to Kennels (BF)</b>	<b>Total Kennelled</b>
<b>April</b>	6	1	9	5	6
<b>May</b>	8	3	4	1	4
<b>June</b>	4	2	2	1	3
<b>July</b>	11	5	9	2	7
<b>August</b>	14	7	8	4	11
<b>September</b>	18	4	7	0	4

## **Annex C - Legal note regarding 7 day boarding requirement**

### **Legal Research Note: Requirement for Local Authorities to Keep Stray Dogs for Seven Days**

#### **Legal Standards/Rules**

The legal framework governing the seizure, detention, and disposal of stray dogs is primarily set out in section 149 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The Act imposes specific duties on local authorities regarding stray dogs, including their seizure, care, and disposal. Key provisions include:

1. Local authorities must appoint an officer responsible for dealing with stray dogs found in their area.
2. Stray dogs must be detained for seven clear days after seizure or, if a notice is served to the owner, seven clear days after the service of the notice.
3. Local authorities must ensure that detained dogs are properly fed and maintained during the detention period.
4. If the owner of a seized dog is identifiable, the officer must serve a written notice to the owner, stating the seizure, the location of the dog, and the requirement to claim the dog within seven clear days and pay all expenses incurred.
5. If the dog remains unclaimed after the seven-day period, the officer may dispose of the dog by selling it, giving it to a person or establishment that will care for it, or destroying it in a manner that causes minimal pain. However, the dog cannot be sold or given for the purposes of vivisection.

#### **Analysis**

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 establishes a clear legal obligation for local authorities in England and Wales to detain stray dogs for seven clear days. This requirement applies regardless of whether the owner of the dog is identifiable. If the owner is known or can be identified through a collar or other means, the local authority must serve a written notice to the owner, specifying the seizure and the location of the dog, and informing the owner that the dog will be disposed of if not claimed within seven clear days after the notice is served.

During the detention period, the local authority is required to ensure that the dog is properly fed and maintained. Additionally, the officer must maintain a register containing prescribed particulars of the seized dogs, which must be available for public inspection at reasonable times.

If the dog remains unclaimed after the seven-day period, the local authority officer has the discretion to dispose of the dog in one of three ways: (a) selling it or giving it to a person who will care for it; (b) selling it or giving it to an establishment for the reception of stray dogs; or (c) destroying it in a manner that causes as little pain as possible. Importantly, the dog cannot be sold or given for the purposes of vivisection.

The legislation also provides for exceptional circumstances where a detained dog may be destroyed before the expiration of the seven-day period if the officer believes this is necessary to avoid suffering.

## Conclusion

In summary, local authorities in England and Wales are legally required under section 149 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to detain stray dogs for seven clear days. During this period, the dogs must be properly cared for, and a register of seized dogs must be maintained and made available for public inspection. If the owner of a stray dog is identifiable, they must be notified in writing and given seven clear days to claim the dog and pay any associated expenses. If the dog remains unclaimed after the seven-day period, the local authority officer may dispose of the dog in accordance with the options provided under the Act, ensuring that the disposal is humane and does not involve vivisection. In exceptional cases, a dog may be destroyed before the seven-day period to prevent suffering.