NEW POLICY PRIORITY:
ADDITIONAL DOG FOULING AND LITTERING ENFORCEMENT OFFICER

PURPOSE

1. To consider the introduction of an additional dog fouling and littering enforcement officer post.

RECOMMENDATION

2. That the Executive:
   a) Approve the introduction and recruitment of an additional dog fouling and littering enforcement officer post for a fixed period of 12 months.
   b) recommend to Full Council that the commitment of £15,000 on next year’s budget (2013/14) is approved.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

3. A new policy priority for the Executive is to tackle the continued problem of dog fouling within the Borough. The introduction of an additional dog fouling and littering enforcement officer post will enable the Council to undertake an increased enforcement role to break up patterns of this unacceptable behaviour.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

4. Background
   StreetScene Unit currently has 1 full time Dog Warden that is managed by the Contracts Manager. The primary role of the dog warden is to fulfil the Council’s statutory duties relating to stray dogs and to ensure the public are protected from any harm.

   In addition this role has evolved over time to include other ‘non-statutory’ responsibilities. The Dog Warden works in partnership with the Park Rangers tackling irresponsible dog owners and undertaking dog fouling patrols in problematic areas.
The role currently acts as an operational arm to ensure that residents maintain compliance with other relevant legislative tools that enforce responsible dog ownership. Dog Control Orders and the Clean Neighbourhoods Act are utilised pro-actively by the Council in raising awareness and where necessary equipping staff with the appropriate tools to take enforcement action / issue FPNs to address dog fouling / dog control issues.

The dog warden currently spends approximately 60% of their time tackling statutory responsibilities and the remaining 40% is spent proactively monitoring hot spot areas to tackle dog fouling issues. The split will likely change following the review of dangerous dogs procedures. A summary of current performance is shown in Appendix 1.

5. **Additional Post**
The Executive have confirmed that the priority for the additional dog warden role is to focus on ‘non statutory’ Fixed Penalty Notice dog fouling work. The introduction of dog fouling and littering enforcement officer post would complement the current Dog Warden/Park Ranger responsibilities and offer a flexible proactive response to tackling dog fouling issues within hotspot areas across the town. In addition, the post would focus its activities to early mornings and early evening when the majority of dog walking takes place. It is hoped that the post will break up existing patterns of dog fouling in the Borough and as a result it is recommended that the post is for a fixed period of 12 months.

6. **Communications Campaign**
In addition to introducing the new post work will commence on the development of a high profile communication campaign which will ensure that the public can easily report problem areas by phone and through the internet.

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**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND BUDGET PROVISION**

7. The cost of the new post is estimated to be approximately £25,767 - £28,000. In addition, there is a need for an operational budget of £7000 for uniform, transport costs such as fuel and insurance, additional signage, etc. The total budget cost of £35,000 can be funded as follows:

- £20,000 in 2012/13 from the surplus from the £250 allowance for a pay award that is no longer required.
- £15,000 in 2013/14 - this element require Council approval as it places a commitment on next year's budget.

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**POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

8. None

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**DETAILS OF CONSULTATION**

9. Chair of Community Services Scrutiny Committee
BACKGROUND PAPERS

10. None

FURTHER INFORMATION
PLEASE CONTACT: Mick Cartledge
ALSO:
Appendix 1

Summary of Current Performance

During 2011/12 (1/4/11 – 31/3/12) the following requests for service have been dealt with:

Stray Dogs Collected
179 Roaming / Stray dogs reported requiring the dog warden to monitor an area to attempt to collect the stray dog.
319 stray dogs have been collected by residents requiring the dog warden to either return the dog to it owners or to take the dog to the kennels.
212 residents have telephoned the council to notify that they have lost their dog.
148 Dogs which have either been collected on the street or from a resident’s property have been taken to the kennels by the dog warden.
54 Dogs have been taken directly to the kennels by residents, outside of office hours.

Dog Fouling
The council has achieved high profile prosecutions relating to dog fouling offences. However, feedback from residents groups continues to identify dog fouling as a priority within their local neighbourhoods. During 2011/12 (1/4/11 – 31/3/12) the following requests for service have been dealt with:

135 FPN’s were issued against dog owners for dog fouling offences. (Of these, 98 were issued by Park Rangers)
58 of these FPNs were paid.
27 cases taken to court for dog fouling
3 cases taken to court for providing false details.
The remaining 47 FPNs were either successfully appealed, awaiting a prosecution file to be prepared by the council or incorrect details have been provided by the dog owner, which the council is then unable to enforce.
80 requests have been made from members of the public for dog fouling signs.
437 residents have contacted the council with information relating to irresponsible dog ownership, or relating to dog owners who allow their dog to foul on a regular basis.

Dangerous Dogs
The council received 92 reports of dangerous dogs between 1/4/11 and 31/3/12. The council has supported the police activities, but have not taken direct enforcement action against any dog owners for dangerous dog offences. The approach to dangerous dogs is currently being reviewed and this will impact upon the work load for the current dog warden. Previously, any reports of a dangerous dog were simply passed through to the Police for investigation, without being assessed by the council. A joint review has taken place between the Police and the council, using guidance produced by Defra to enforcers of dangerous dog law. Defra suggest that a local service level agreement should be devised in order to tackle such issues. The service level agreement will ensure that the Police deal with the serious incidents and investigate any criminal activity including banned breeds, and the local authority will deal with minor incidents relating to dangerous dogs. This service level agreement is currently being devised and will become effective in June 2012. Once this has been agreed this will have a resource implication, but at the moment these are unknown until the new procedures have been implemented.