
Report to Council

Date of Meeting: 23rd June 2016

Subject: Bandeath Stray Dog Shelter

Report by: Head of Development and Environment

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1. To update members on the current review being undertaken by partners jointly funding the operation of the Bandeath stray dog facility.
- 1.2. To present a proposal that affirms Clackmannanshire Councils ongoing commitment to fund the stray dog facility.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1. It is recommended that the Council :
 - a) Agrees to rescind the notice of intention to withdraw from the Bandeath stray dog kennel partnership, subject to there being no increase to the Councils' current funding contribution.
 - b) Notes that officers will actively pursue a reduction in the Councils' contribution (to reflect a likely reduction in demand and the average unit cost paid by other Local Authorities) in order to achieve best value.
 - c) Writes to Police Scotland seeking their commitment to continue to be a partner in the funding of the Bandeath Stray Dog shelter and affirms that Clackmannanshire Council will not take over responsibility for the duties and powers placed upon the Police in relation to stray dogs should they withdraw from the partnership.

3.0 Considerations

- 3.1. The Council has a statutory duty to seize stray dogs and retain them for a maximum period of 7 days during which time the owner has to collect it. After this time the dog becomes the property of the Council and we may dispose of it through sale, transfer (charity) or destruction. Police Scotland also have duties in relation to stray dogs. They require to treat a dog handed into a Police station in a similar fashion to that of a dog seized by the Council in that they require retain a dog for a maximum period of 7 days.

- 3.2. Clackmannanshire Council is one of four partners including Falkirk, Stirling and Police Scotland, who fund the stray dog facility at Bandeath. This is a facility for the temporary holding of dogs found straying in any of the three Council areas. It is managed on behalf of the partnership by Stirling Council.
- 3.3. The facility, over and above providing temporary accommodation for stray dogs, provides the following services :
- accommodation for dogs not collected by their owners after being held for the statutory period of seven days. Such dogs are looked after at the facility until they are either sold or transferred to a dog home/re-homing centre.
 - a service to allow volunteers to walk dogs. This service has a two fold purpose, 1) it provides a benefit for the welfare of the dogs and 2) provides a therapeutic value to the dog walkers themselves e.g. for individuals suffering/recovering from mental health issues.

The arrangement to allow volunteers to walk dogs is a service Stirling Council has developed, it is not required as part of the formal agreement. The number of volunteers who walk the dogs and the number who have benefited from this is unknown to Clackmannanshire Council.

- 3.4. Clackmannanshire Council has been a partner of the facility since prior to re-organisation in 1996. In 2001 an agreement was made that all partners would contribute an equal share (25%) of the gross operating costs of the facility. This Council took 41 dogs to the facility in 2015/16 and the cost to the Council was £23,384. In relation to other partners Clackmannanshire Council uses the facility the least, with Police Scotland taking in 117 dogs, Falkirk Council 56 dogs and Stirling Council 87 dogs.
- 3.5. The number of dogs placed by the Council at Bandeath has dropped considerably over the years from 200 in 1999-2000 to below 100 in 2009-10 to the current average of 35. This drop is reflected by all partners with the total dogs at the facility dropping from over 800 in 1999-2000 to around 400. Despite the reduction in dog numbers the operating costs of the facility have increased over that same period. The average cost to the Council is around £700.00 per dog.
- 3.6. A survey of other local authorities conducted by Falkirk Council revealed a wide range of differing arrangements for the keeping of stray dogs. Most authorities have arrangements in place to transfer dogs to charitable organisations immediately after the seven day statutory requirement for a Local Authority to hold onto a dog has expired.
- 3.7. The survey also obtained details of the costs other Local Authorities pay for holding stray dogs. This revealed a range of different charging methods which made it difficult to compare like with like, however of the 20 other Local Authorities who replied the average cost per dog, if held for seven days, was estimated to be £118.70.
- 3.8. The Council expects in the coming years the number of dogs taken to a stray dog kennel facility to reduce further as a result of dog microchipping legislation. This requires every dog to be microchipped by law to enable

owner identification to be determined. The Council has purchased microchip scanners to enable more owners of stray dogs to be identified and taken back to the owner, rather than taken to Bandeath. The Service expects to take less than 30 dogs to Bandeath this financial year.

- 3.9. The partnership, as required by the terms of the formal agreement between partners, meets bi-annually and at one of those meetings is required to review and agree the proportions of annual costs payable by each partner. The issue of increasing costs was raised by the Council at a number of partnership meetings sometime ago however no agreement could be reached with partners that would secure either a different proportion of costs or overall reduced operational costs at the facility. It was as a result of this that notice to withdraw from the partnership was given, thus positioning the Council to better enter into more focussed discussion on costs with partners.
- 3.10. The formal notice of withdrawal was issued in December 2015 with a withdrawal date of 1st January 2017. Along side that formal notice partners were advised that the Council was fully committed to working with the other partners to identify a solution that can benefit all.
- 3.11. At the most recent meeting of partners, there was agreement to identify a delivery model that best matches the demand for the service. Partners are therefore actively working on appraising different options and the next meeting of the partnership is scheduled for 23rd June 2016. A review will also take place of the additional services the kennel facility provides.
- 3.12. Possible options for the future could include :
 - reduction in costs for Clackmannanshire – met by other partners.
 - reduction in costs for all partners.
 - alternative delivery model from a sustainable cost base, including consideration of third sector and external funding mechanism and/or a Social Enterprise model for some of the kennel services.
- 3.13. The above options and any other options being considered will be influenced by the continued participation or otherwise of Police Scotland. It is understood that Police Scotland is having to make significant budget savings and is currently reviewing services that don't directly impact upon frontline policing. It is therefore uncertain at the moment as to whether or not they remain committed to sharing the costs of the Bandeath facility. Police Scotland have been asked by the partnership to give the partnership a position statement in regard to the future funding of the Bandeath facility at the next partnership meeting.
- 3.14. Police Scotland have not as yet made any changes to the kennelling arrangements in other Local Authority areas. It is their intention to complete a national review of the kennelling arrangements they have throughout Scotland before making any changes locally.
- 3.15. It should be noted that if any of the partners withdraws from Bandeath the cost to operate the facility would require to be met by the other partners. At current costs this would be around an additional £8k per annum.

- 3.16. Stirling Council have not withdrawn from the partnership agreement and are committed to continuing to work with partners on the options for the future stray dog facilities. There is political support for the facility to remain open.
- 3.17. Falkirk Council have affirmed they are committed to the partnership and to reviewing the options for the future stray dog facilities. Their formal notice to withdraw from the partnership was issued to safeguard their financial position should other partners withdraw funding.
- 3.18. There is now a clear commitment, with the exception of Police Scotland, to identify a delivery model that best matches the demands for the service and therefore there is no reason at this point in time that the Council cannot rescind its notice of withdrawal from the partnership (to enable the other partners to have the assurance that Clackmannanshire Council is committed to a partnership solution), subject to there being no increase to the Councils' current funding contribution.

4.0 Sustainability Implications

- 4.1. The recommendations in the report will have no sustainability implications

5.0 Resource Implications

5.1. Financial Details

- 5.2. The rescinding of the notice to withdraw may have budgetary implications for the Council. As referred to in paragraph 3.15 above, should any of the other partners leave the partnership the Councils' contribution is likely to increase.
- 5.3. It should be noted that formal notice period to withdraw from the partnership is 12 months and therefore if costs increase or do not reduce to reflect the current and future likely reduction in demand then a further period of 12 months notice would require to be given.

6.0 Exempt Reports

- 6.1. Is this report exempt? Yes (please detail the reasons for exemption below) No

7.0 Declarations

The recommendations contained within this report support or implement our Corporate Priorities and Council Policies.

- (1) **Our Priorities** (Please double click on the check box)

- The area has a positive image and attracts people and businesses
- Our communities are more cohesive and inclusive
- People are better skilled, trained and ready for learning and employment
- Our communities are safer
- Vulnerable people and families are supported

- Substance misuse and its effects are reduced
- Health is improving and health inequalities are reducing
- The environment is protected and enhanced for all
- The Council is effective, efficient and recognised for excellence

(2) **Council Policies** (Please detail)

8.0 Equalities Impact

- 8.1 Have you undertaken the required equalities impact assessment to ensure that no groups are adversely affected by the recommendations?
 Yes No

9.0 Legality

- 9.1 It has been confirmed that in adopting the recommendations contained in this report, the Council is acting within its legal powers. Yes

10.0 Appendices

- 10.1 Please list any appendices attached to this report. If there are no appendices, please state "none".

None

11.0 Background Papers

- 11.1 Have you used other documents to compile your report? (All documents must be kept available by the author for public inspection for four years from the date of meeting at which the report is considered)
 Yes (please list the documents below) No

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