

**BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL**

**Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission**

**22nd September 2014**

**Report of:** Mary Ryan – Service Director Housing Delivery

**Title:** Pets in Flats - An update on Housing Delivery's approach

**Ward:** Citywide

**Officer Presenting Report:** Katie Bodle, Planning & Development Advisor

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**RECOMMENDATION**

Neighbourhoods Scrutiny note the progress in tackling the issues caused by pets in council flatted accommodation

**Summary**

Following complaints raised by tenants about nuisance caused by pets in flats an holistic pets policy has been introduced by Housing Delivery. The policy includes piloting the re-introduction of some pet free blocks of flats.

**The significant issues in the report are:**

The revised pet policy was introduced following significant consultation and has been well received so far

**Policy**

1. Not applicable

**Consultation**

2. **Internal**  
Staff
3. **External**  
Tenants, Neighbourhood Forums

## Context

4. In 2010 the Council's tenancy conditions were reviewed and the clause that required tenants in flats to ask for permission to keep dogs was removed as this was no longer considered to be enforceable.
5. Previously some blocks of flats had been labelled as dog or pet free, however over-time these 'rules' had broken down in most blocks and when tenancy conditions were changed the dog-free block status was also removed.
6. The council received growing levels of tenant dissatisfaction with the changed approach to pets and a small number of tenants were very proactive in pursuing the matter - raising complaints, involving MPs, the media and petitioning the Mayor.
7. Complaints focused around two issues: Irresponsible pet owners and nuisance issues not being addressed (mainly around noise and fouling), and requests to re-instate pet free blocks
8. As a result Housing Delivery committed to review its policy - with a significant amount of consultation with Tenants, Housing Officers, Neighbourhood Partnerships and Animal Welfare charities. A new policy was agreed in February 2014 and is now being implemented.

## Proposal

9. The agreed approach involves an holistic policy based on enforcement and education; specifically:
  - Roll out responsible pet owner agreements- that clearly set our expected behaviours of pet owners.
  - Promote responsible pet ownership to tenants
  - Develop clear enforcement pathways.
  - Reintroduce tenant initiated 'aspiring to be dog free blocks'
  - Reintroduce the need for new tenants to ask for permission for pets
10. **Work to date.**
  - Staff training delivered by Dogs trust on Health and Safety of working with Dogs and Dogs and the law.
    - Responsible pet owner's agreements used: at sign up for new tenants, and in cases of ASB or breach of tenancies involving pets.
  - Number of pet events run in partnership with Dogs Trust, PDSA and Neighbourhood Partnerships. (81 dogs micro chipped, 78 dog health checks, 40 dog neutering vouchers given out and 25 Tenants attending talks on responsible pet ownership)

- Pet Event in Easton linking cultural awareness and responsible pet ownership.
- Articles on BCC website, Housing news, local newsletters.
- Joined up enforcement procedures developed with Housing Officers and Neighbourhood Enforcement officers to enable quick effective intervention
- Responsible pet owner agreement in line with new tenancy agreed
- Process developed to pilot the reintroduction of dog free blocks.
- Ballots held in 3 blocks to ask tenants if they wanted to become 'Aspiring to be dog free' - all three blocks voted to not allow any new dogs to enter the blocks.
- Change has been received well by tenants - comments such as "I will no longer be afraid of using the lifts", "Having a dog free block will help me breath"
- No tenant has got a new dog so far, ASB issues in the blocks with current dog owners are being addressed by Housing Officers, pre the vote the average number of emails of complaints per month from tenants in two of the blocks was 8 - since the vote this number has fallen to 0.

## **11. Next steps.**

- a. Monitor the use of responsible pet owner agreements and see if it leads to a decrease in ASB and Breach of tenancy incidents.
- b. Review Dog free block pilots in February 2015 with a view to rolling out across the city.
- c. Reintroduce the need to ask for permission to keep pets when a new tenancy agreement is brought in.

## **Public Sector Equality Duties**

- 8a) Before making a decision, section 149 Equality Act 2010 requires that each decision-maker considers the need to promote equality for persons with the following "protected characteristics": age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Each decision-maker must, therefore, have due regard to the need to:
  - i) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010.
  - ii) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a

relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to --

- remove or minimise disadvantage suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic;
  - take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it (in relation to disabled people, this includes, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities);
  - encourage persons who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
- iii) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to –
- tackle prejudice; and
  - promote understanding.

8b) Equality impact assessment was undertaken in developing the policy

### **Legal and Resource Implications**

Not applicable

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**  
**Background Papers: None**