

## BOROUGH OF KETTERING

<b>Committee</b>	<b>RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE</b>	Item A5	Page 1 of 3
<b>Report Originator</b>	Jon Hall (Environmental Services Manager)	<i>Fwd Plan Ref No:</i>	
<b>Wards Affected</b>	All	16 <sup>th</sup> February 2016	
<b>Title</b>	<b>DOG FOULING DNA TESTING</b>		

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To present information regarding the use of DNA profiling in order to help reduce the incidence of dog foul within the Borough of Kettering.

### 2. INFORMATION

- 2.1 Unmanaged dog fouling is not only a nuisance and an anti-social issue but it can also be responsible for the spread of harmful diseases, including toxicariasis, which can cause permanent vision loss. Young people are particularly vulnerable due to their behaviour patterns.
- 2.2 Various approaches to deal with dog fouling are available to local authorities including education strategies, verbal and written warnings, fixed penalty notices and ultimately prosecution.
- 2.3 Kettering Borough Council recognises that the vast majority of dog owners / walkers are responsible and pick up when their dog fouls. Indeed it is acknowledged that it is the few that break the law, and it is for this reason that the authority's resources continue to be targeted at these individuals who are irresponsible.
- 2.4 Wardens cannot be in any location all of the time, so the authority's existing approach is to actively work with the dog walking community (and wider public). Members of the public are able to assist in informing us of any offenders they notice when they are out and about (in other words, to help be the community's eyes and ears).
- 2.5 Over the last year, significant efforts have been made in establishing very good and real relationships with the dog walking community. Kettering Borough Council have implemented a new initiative that includes the wardens taking their own dogs out with them on patrol, engaging with other dog owners and obtaining vital information (intelligence) on names / descriptions of dog owners and times of walks of irresponsible dog owners. The team has then targeted the alleged offenders specifically.
- 2.6 When dog owners are caught allowing their dog to foul without picking it up, fixed penalty notices are always served.

## BOROUGH OF KETTERING

Committee	<b>RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE</b>	Item A5	Page 2 of 3
-----------	---	------------	----------------

- 2.7 DNA profiling is a technique which allows authorities to link a dog foul with a specific dog and owner, by cross referencing the genetic coding. This scientific technique then allows enforcement officers to identify potential offenders.
- 2.8 For the process to work effectively, samples of dog foul would be collected (aseptically in order to avoid cross contamination) by enforcement officers. DNA would then be compared to a database of dogs registered by their owners in order to identify potential suspects. The laboratory testing is believed to be 99.9 per cent accurate.
- 2.9 A pilot scheme to test the DNA of dog fouls, has already begun in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. In this scheme dog owners are encouraged to register their dogs voluntarily.
- 2.10 Initial DNA profiling of a dog would cost approximately £25. DNA testing of dog foul would cost approximately £30. A further DNA match, costs a further £70, the total cost being £125.
- 2.11 Should the pilot be successful, Barking and Dagenham Council plan to introduce a public space protection order (PSPO) to make DNA testing mandatory. Council tenants will also be forced to have their pets undergo the tests under the terms of their tenancy agreement.

### **3. CONSULTATION AND CUSTOMER IMPACT**

- 3.1 In order to determine the public support for such a scheme, a wider consultation process would be required, possibly through an agreed PSPO process. To date the authority has received only one comment from the public in favour of a similar scheme.
- 3.2 The impact of such an initiative is likely to be controversial and initiate some negative response. Firstly the feeling of being scrutinized covertly by the authority, will send a message of suspicion and potentially jeopardise the good working relationships that Kettering Borough Council is continuing to develop with the dog owners / dog walking community. Secondly, the cost of such a scheme for the public (registration costs) and the local authority (testing and verification costs) could add additional burdens to already stretched budgets.
- 3.2 It has to be noted that the offenders who are being targeted are unlikely to register. It may also be perceived that the wider dog owning public are being penalised for the offences of the few.
- 3.3 Evidence as to the effectiveness of these initiatives, on public land, has yet to be published and before any decisions is made, a review of the pilot currently being undertaken at Barking and Dagenham should ideally be considered.

**BOROUGH OF KETTERING**

<b>Committee</b>	<b>RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE</b>	Item A5	Page 3 of 3
------------------	---	------------	----------------

**4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 None

**5. USE OF RESOURCES**

5.1 Additional budgets would be required to facilitate the set up and running of the DNA profiling scheme in order to cover items including sampling equipment, media arrangements, DNA testing, and officer training.

5.2 At present, insufficient data exists to determine whether a DNA profiling scheme such as this, would reduce dog fouling incidents on public land, and how this would then translate in direct savings. For example through dog foul reduction and reduced enforcement costs.

**6. RECOMMENDATION**

That the report on dog foul DNA profiling is noted.

---

Background Papers:

Title of Document:

Date:

Contact Officer: Jon Hall

Previous Reports/Minutes:

Ref:

Date: