

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
CABINET HOUSING PANEL – 30 OCTOBER 2023  
REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, RESIDENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD

INTRODUCTION OF A PET POLICY

**1 Executive Summary**

- 1.1 It is a requirement of our current and proposed new tenancy agreements that tenants must seek permission before keeping pets in their home.
- 1.2 The Neighbourhoods and Enforcement team propose to introduce a pet policy for Council Housing (Appendix A). The purpose of the new Pet Policy is to formalise arrangements and to give clearer guidance to tenants and licensees about their obligation to request permission to keep pets in their home, and clarity of their responsibilities and circumstances where we might require them to rehome their pet or take enforcement action against them.
- 1.3 As part of the new pet policy, we are proposing to introduce a Pet Permission request form to gather the information needed for the Neighbourhood Officer to reach a decision about the request. We will also produce a standard letter/email template advising the tenant of the outcome of our decision and their right, under the new policy, to request a review of our decision.

**2 Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 To consider and note the policy.
- 2.2 That Cabinet Housing Panel recommend approval of the Pet policy to Cabinet.

**3 Explanation**

- 3.1 The Neighbourhoods and Enforcement team propose the introduction of a pet policy (Appendix A). The purpose is to give clearer guidance to tenants and licensees about their obligation to request permission to keep pets in their home and clarity of their responsibilities and circumstances where we might require them to rehome their pet or take enforcement action against them.
- 3.2 Our current and proposed new tenancy agreements state that tenants must seek permission before keeping pets in their home. However, we need to formalise this procedure, so it is clearer to our customers about how the requests are dealt with and their timescales. This will also help tenants who are planning a move or welcoming a new pet into their household.
- 3.3 There has been a steady rise in pet ownership, in particular dogs, in the UK. Dog ownership rose to 11 million (26% of population) in 2023 from 10.1 million (29% of population) in 2020, [Pet Populations - PDSA](#).

- 3.4 The anti-social behaviour team have had an increased number of anti-social behaviour reports about dogs barking, being intimidating and causing arguments between neighbours. To better identify where these issues are coming from, and to safeguard staff and visitors better, we plan to start gathering pet ownership information during our tenancy audits and recording the type and number of pets in our homes. This will obviously change over time, but it can be updated at the audits and through requests to keep more/new pets.
- 3.5 As part of the new pet policy, we are proposing to introduce a Pet Permission request form to gather the information needed for the Neighbourhood Officer to reach a decision about the request. We will also produce a standard letter/email template advising the tenant of the outcome of our decision and their right, under the new policy, to request a review of our decision.

### **Implications**

#### **4 Legal Implication(s)**

- 4.1 Having a clear pet policy in place will help ensure that everyone is treated fairly when we are considering their request to have a pet in their home. This will include ensuring that no one is discriminated against because of a protected characteristic in accordance with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.
- 4.2 The council have a responsibility to report to the police ownership of any dogs which are banned in England by the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991. Requesting information and holding better records of what animals our tenants are keeping will help us meet this responsibility as well as report incidents of out of control dogs.

#### **5 Financial Implication(s)**

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications. The process of introducing, advertising and adhering to the Pet Policy will be managed within existing resources.

#### **6 Risk Management Implications**

- 6.1 There are no risks related to this proposal.

#### **6 Security and Terrorism Implication(s)**

- 6.1 None

#### **7 Procurement Implication(s)**

- 7.1 None.

#### **8 Climate Change Implication(s)**

- 8.1 None

#### **9 Human Resources Implication(s)**

- 9.1 None

#### **10 Health and Wellbeing Implication(s)**

- 10.1 There is evidence that owning a pet can have a positive effect on health and wellbeing. Reassuring tenants that we will not unreasonably refuse them the

opportunity to keep a pet in their home should therefore have a positive impact on health and wellbeing.

- 10.2 Having better oversight of which of our tenants' own pets, particularly dogs, will help us to deal with any reports of nuisance or anti-social behaviour caused by the animals more swiftly, therefore reducing the emotional harm or distress to victims.

## **11 Communication and Engagement Implication(s)**

- 11.1 This report recommends that we introduce a pet policy. The Policy, if approved, will be communicated to our tenants via our community Edit newsletter and on our website. The policy will also be mentioned in all future advertisements for our homes, and offer letters, making it clear before a new tenant seeks to take on one of our tenancies that requesting permission for a pet is required.

## **12 Link to Corporate Priorities**

- 12.1 The subject of this report is linked to the Council's Strategic Aim 'Quality Homes Through Managed Growth', and specifically to the achievement of 'providing high quality housing, thriving neighbourhoods and sustainable communities.

## **13 Equality and Diversity**

- 14.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was completed on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2023 and no negative impact was identified on any of the protected groups under Equalities legislation.

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Appendices:

Appendix A – Draft Pet Policy with Pet Permission Request Form