

Responsible Ownership - Pets Policy

Housing Committee Thursday, 14 September 2023

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive

Purpose: For decision

Publication status: Open

Wards affected: All

Executive summary:

This policy applies to tenants and leaseholders wishing to keep pets in Council properties, regardless of the type of tenancy held.

This policy also includes temporary accommodation secured by the Council in the private sector, where the tenancy is granted by the Council or, within the Council's own temporary housing stock including the hostel.

This policy sets out the position of the Council (TDC) on keeping pets in Council owned rented homes.

This report supports the Council's priority of: Building a better Council.

Contact officer James Devonshire Head of Housing
JDevonshire@tandridge.gov.uk

Recommendation to Committee:

The Committee approves the Responsible Pet Ownership Policy as attached at Appendix 'A'

Reason for recommendation:

The Council recognises the benefits of pet ownership, and the enjoyment they can bring. The Council wishes to encourage responsible pet ownership and will look to ensure resources are identified to assist tenants to keep their pet in a responsible manner – this may include signposting to veterinary services at its discretion and assisting tenants to get their dog microchipped.

Officers will work in partnership with relevant organisations, such as the Dogs Trust, Cats Protection and RSPCA and support tenants where possible to maintain their pet's welfare. This will include referring tenants to independent advice on pet care, advice on pet insurance and a list of local, reputable animal welfare and veterinary organisations.

Help will also be given to older people and those living with a terminal illness to arrange care for their pet(s) including promoting services offered by charities to rehome pets if individuals can no longer care for them.

Introduction and background

- 1 There have been several recent cases involving pets within the Council's housing stock where allegations of nuisance behaviour prompted intervention from both Officers and Councillors.
- 2 This, paired with the increased support from the Housing Ombudsman and the Regulator for Social Housing for tenants to be granted permission to responsibly keep pets has prompted the review of the Council's policy.
- 3 The Council's existing pets policy is restrictive and does not allow residents to keep pets within certain accommodation, even if beneficial to their health and wellbeing.
- 4 The objectives of the updated policy is to:
 - Promote responsible pet ownership among the Council's tenants and leaseholders.
 - Ensure all pet owners living in the Council's properties take responsibility for their animals.
 - Ensure all pet owners maintain their property and repair any damage caused by their pet.
 - Ensure pets are only kept in appropriate Council properties.
 - Protect Officers and the wider community from any nuisance because of a pet living in a Council-owned property.
 - Ensure where appropriate tenants can benefit from the company of a pet.
- 5 The updated policy recognises the importance of pet ownership but aims to strike a balance between responsible ownership and reasonable enforcement should it be necessary.

Consultation

- 6 The Council will provide clear and comprehensive advice and information to residents, with an aim for a single point of contact.
- 6.1 The Council's tenants and leaseholders, the Dogs Trust, the RSPCA, and a range of Council Officers, will be consulted on future changes to this policy.

Key implications

Comments of the Chief Finance Officer

There are no financial implications arising from this report. If a pet were to cause damage to a property, this would be recovered from the tenant in line with the current process.

Comments of the Head of Legal Services

There are no legal implications arising from this report. It is intended that the updated Policy will provide the Housing Service Team with a clear framework for decision making so that there is a more consistent approach across the whole District. As stated in the report such policy relating to pets or animals in Council housing needs to find the right balance between recognising the value that pets and animals bring to resident's lives, the welfare of the animal, and the impact on other residents when things go wrong. As a landlord, the Council needs to get this balance right and it is envisaged that the update of this policy will be an important step in achieving this.

Equality

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed for this policy. It has been assessed that there may be some low impact on those with protected characteristics under disability and age, due to the need for sheltered or designated elderly housing accommodation and, also, poverty and other socio-economic impacts due to affordability of keeping a pet and potential welfare concerns.

Climate change

There are no significant environmental / sustainability implications associated with this report.

Appendices

Appendix 'A' - Draft Reasonable Ownership - Pets Policy

Background papers

None

----- end of report -----