

DECISION NUMBER: PCCG-2014-034

**MINUTES OF THE ANIMAL WELFARE MEETING
HELD ON 1ST MAY 2014
AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS, CROESYCEILIOG**

Present: Mr E J Harry (Chair)
Ms G Mason
Mr M Evans
Councillor L Winnett
Inspector E Smith (RSPCA)
Sgt Julie Pearse – Dog Section
PC Rosie Rabbitt & PD Uzo – Dog Section
Mr Paul Harris, Deputy Police & Crime Commissioner
Mrs Maria Chapman, Scheme Administrator
Ms Michelle Vaisey-Baker, Assistant Scheme Administrator

Apologies: Mrs L Buchanan-Smith, Councillor D Blakebrough, Mr G Lucas,
Inspector J Davies, Mrs S Curley

The meeting began at 4pm

1 Deputy Commissioner

ACTION

Mr Harris advised that he had attended the regional dog trials and had found it to be a really good day. There was a great deal of public support for the dog section, people are really keen to attend any events they put on and learn more. The day really raised the profile of the dog section and its activities. It was noted that the dog section are a cost effective department as much of what the dog handlers and dogs do would take multiple officers to do, e.g. searches.

Mr Harris advised that further to the request at the last meeting the Commissioner had written to Local Authority Leaders in respect of Council membership on the scheme. Mrs Chapman provided a further update on this later in the meeting.

Mr Harris thanked everyone for their continuing hard work on the scheme.

Mr Harris left the meeting

2 Presentation by PC Rabbitt with PD Uzo

PC Rabbitt advised that she has been asked to provide an update to everyone on what volunteers should be looking for when checking the condition of dogs. She advised it was worth noting that not all handlers

want people handling their dogs as due to the nature of their role the dogs can be temperamental and handlers may be protective of them, so it was recommended that visitors always check with the handlers before attempting any contact.

Areas to look for when inspecting dogs are:

- Eyes – check they are bright and check they have no discharge.
- Nose – check there is no discharge around the nose.
- Well groomed – Advised that at this time of year the dogs can get tufts, the handlers do their best to keep this under control but they can generate a lot so any seen should be minimal.
- Weight – the dogs should look lean as this is a benefit of being fit and healthy. The dogs should have an obvious waist. Some handlers like to see a little bit of rib as the dogs run; this means that they are lean but they should not show too much bone.
- Ears – Volunteers may ask the handler to show them inside the dogs ears. There should not be any dirty, black content. There should also be no bad smell.
- Teeth – Volunteers will unlikely get to see the dogs teeth but again can ask the handler to show them the dog's teeth to check they are clean.

PC Rabbitt advised us that the term "bright eyed and bushy tailed" is very apt. PD Uzo was on the sick with a cut on his back paw. However, it was evident by his behaviour that he was still bright and energetic. We were informed that the injury had occurred at the last incident they had attended, he has had two operations to stitch the wound but because he worried at it they came out. The vet tried stapling the wound but all the attention caused Uzo more distress so they took the decision to let it heal by itself, this process would take longer but Uzo would be less distressed. It was anticipated that he would remain on the sick for another 10 days.

We were informed that all dogs are treated for fleas and worms regularly. They are all weighed once a month however most dog handlers can tell their weight by looking at them. PC Rabbitt advised that their claws were unlikely to need cutting due to the work they do, however all handlers do keep an eye on it.

PC Rabbitt explained that Shepherd dogs can be quite pink below their belly as they tend to suffer with allergies, this is something that continues to be monitored. We were informed that in order to reduce allergic reactions some dogs can have a non-allergy diet if it is known

what they are allergic to. E.g. one of the dogs has an issue with food mites so their handler freezes all their food to kill them off. Another dog was allergic to cereal so had to have a diet of salmon and potatoes as well as taking antihistamines. We were advised that Royal Cannon is the main food supplier for all the dogs but when some dogs have specific requirements different food is purchased so that their needs can be accommodated.

The living arrangements for the dogs was queried, PC Rabbitt advised that all dogs live in kennels, none live in their handlers homes as due to the nature of their work they would end up causing a lot of damage.

PC Rabbitt and PD Uzo left the meeting

3 Minutes of Meeting dated 3rd February 2014

The minutes were confirmed to be an accurate record.

Mrs Chapman advised that as per Mr Harris' earlier comments she confirmed that letters were sent to the Council Leaders on membership to the scheme. So far two responses have been received:

Monmouthshire County Council advised that they have noted the comments raised and would bear this in mind when nominating a representative. Caerphilly County Borough Council have now appointed Councillor Elaine Forehead to the scheme, Councillor Forehead would be added to the rota and circulated to everyone. Mrs Chapman advised that we had not heard back from Torfaen County Borough Council or Newport City Council but it is possible they were waiting on their forthcoming meetings to nominate representatives.

MVB

Mr Harry raised a query in respect of item 5.1 in the revised handbook; did we have sufficient numbers on the scheme? Mrs Chapman advised that given we only conduct one visit a month the numbers are more than sufficient. It was noted that whilst at the last meeting it was raised that a number of visits had been missed in the Autumn, recent visits have been conducted in March and the April visit was completed on 1st May by Gary Lucas and Inspector Emma Smith.

4 Operational Update from Dog Section

PS Pearse advised that with NATO coming up her immediate line management (Superintendent Russell and Inspector Davies) had been seconded out of the dog section so PS Pearse is the main contact for the Dog Section and her first line manager for this period is T/Superintendent Paul Thomas.

We were informed that the National Dog Trials will take place between 14th and 17th May 2014 in South Yorkshire. PC Watkins and PD Jack would be attending as they were joint runners up in the Regional Trials.

PC Booth will also be attending as he will be the track layer again and PC Davies will be showcasing criminal work skills.

Two dogs are currently on an explosives course which will be completed in June. Paul Booth with PD Breeze and Nick Price with PD Molly.

We were informed that PD Ed (Andy North's dog) had been ill again, PD Ed had previously been muzzled because he has a habit of eating everything. He has had his third stomach surgery because despite being muzzled he had managed to eat wood shavings which caused a blockage. He is now well and working again. PS Pearse advised us that Summerhill Vets had been fantastic and had operated at 2am when this incident arose. PS Pearse confirmed that Summerhill Vets have recently won the tendering process so will remain the vets for the Dog Section.

PC Woods had been on sick leave until recently but is now back working on restrictive duties.

PS Pearse circulated the latest report from the dog section to all, we were informed that the dogs had been fantastic during the Newport and Portsmouth game helping with crowd control. PC James and PD Bryn had also been of great assistance following the protest in Pontlottyn where they assisted in moving members of the public to safety.

We were informed that some volunteers had requested to conduct their rota visits on dog training days to enable them to see more of the dogs. The next training day will take place in June, a date and time has not yet been set but will be circulated to everyone once agreed. It was noted that currently Martyn Evans and John HARRY were scheduled to do the June visit so have the option to do this visit on the training day or to conduct a normal separate visit. Other scheme members would also be entitled to attend the training day as they are additional to the scheduled visits. If anyone is interested in attending please contact PS Pearse. This matter had been brought up following the visit to Waterton when some volunteers expressed concern that not all Gwent dogs were necessarily being seen during a 12 month period. Training days will allow a number of dogs to be seen at the same time, as such future training dates will be circulated to members when they arise. PS Pearse requested that if any scheme member specifically wants to see anything then they can contact her directly and she will see what she can arrange.

**JP /
MVB**

5 Scheme Update

Mrs Chapman updated us on the visit to Waterton that herself, Mr HARRY, Ms Mason and Councillor Winnett attended. The refurbishment had been finished and was of a high standard. Two Gwent dogs were kennelled there at the time and were appropriately

checked over and found to be in good condition. However concerns were raised regarding two South Wales dogs that appeared malnourished. The South Wales escorting officer who was also very concerned and gave assurances that the matter was being dealt with appropriately. Gwent visitors were concerned that there was potential for a similar incident where some dogs and handlers had not been seen for some time due to sickness or leave. This issue was discussed with the Dog Section Sergeant and it was agreed that Visitors could attend future training days to have greater overview of all dogs and their condition.

PS Pearse also confirmed that Gwent dogs are weighed monthly and their information is documented so their wellbeing is constantly monitored. Should a handler report in sick PS Pearse has to conduct welfare checks on the officers and also checks on the dogs too. If an officer is unable to look after a dog while they are on sick leave all their information (including diet, when they were last wormed etc) is detailed on their computer system so the dog will be constantly well cared for. Additionally all the experienced qualified instructors for Gwent are out on shift so they get to see all the dogs regularly and will raise any issues immediately. PS Pearse advised as an extra measure she is now logging which dogs are being seen by our visitors so that she can ensure all dogs are rotated so that every dog is seen. It was confirmed that our visitors felt reassured by the processes Gwent have in place.

Mrs Chapman advised us that there is a link detailed on page five of the handbook should anyone wish to access the ACPO guidance on dog handling.

6 Training

It was noted that the earlier presentation had been very beneficial and it was queried whether there were any other areas that visitors felt training would be useful in. Ms Mason advised that at a recent visit she attended her counterpart had failed the visit as the handler didn't have a grooming kit in the car. Ms Mason hadn't been aware to ask for this before and queried whether training could be provided on what else needed to be looked at. PS Pearse advised that volunteers can always ask to see it and will be shown it upon request but that there is no specific requirement to check the kit if they are happy that the dog appears well groomed as this will be more beneficial. However visitors do need to bear in mind that if the dogs are coming straight from an incident where they have been searching in woods or mud etc they may appear less groomed than normal, therefore as long as the handler can explain the reason why they are in whatever state they are in then they can be passed. Ms Mason queried whether they should also be looking at the air conditioning in the car if dogs are left in vehicles. PS Pearse advised that this is not something the visitors need to look at, all vehicles are fitted so that the air conditioning for dogs can remain on when officers are not in the vehicle.

Ms Mason commented that when she joined the scheme her training had consisted of attending a visit with someone else and is aware other volunteers have had the same training as such they only pick up what is required of them based upon the advice given by those they attended visits with and subsequently learn different things with different people e.g. the grooming kit. More detailed training would be beneficial and training on what to be looking for when completing the dog visit report forms would be of great assistance.

It was noted that Gary Lucas previously did a presentation from the RSPCA perspective on what should be documented. It was queried if Inspector Emma Smith could provide a ten minute presentation at the next meeting on completing report forms which she confirmed she would.

ES

It was suggested that a training session take place at every meeting or every other meeting if required. Some areas that can be covered in future meetings are handling dangerous dogs; appropriate deployment of dogs and dog training.

7 South Wales Animal Welfare AGM

All visitors were reminded of the opportunity to attend the South Wales Animal Welfare AGM on 3rd June at 6:15pm. It was confirmed that in this instance scheme members would be happy just to have a copy of their minutes. Mrs Chapman confirmed she would arrange this.

MC

8 Any Other Business

Councillor Winnett queried whether it was possible to utilise the old Glascoed Kennels for accommodating stray dogs in the instances when Gwent Police cannot get the council to take them in the early hours of the morning. It was clarified that access to Glascoed is restricted so the majority of officers would not have access and it would not be permitted due to the work that is conducted there. Councillor Winnett is in contact with an officer from Gwent Police who has asked her for assistance in trying to resolve the matter with the Council. It was agreed it is a Council matter but Councillor Winnett wondered whether the Commissioner could assist. Mrs Chapman suggested that Councillor Winnett or the officer send an email to herself and she will raise it with the Commissioner.

Councillor Winnett queried why the animal welfare scheme were not involved when a Gwent police dog needs to be rehomed as shouldn't they be overseeing they go to appropriate homes? PS Pearse advised that the majority of general purpose dogs were kept by the handlers. A lot of the dogs also get rehomed to Police Officers so the dog section keeps in contact. It was confirmed that all homes are fully checked, and that on the occasions the dog handlers don't keep the dogs themselves they usually know the people they are going to. E.g. PD

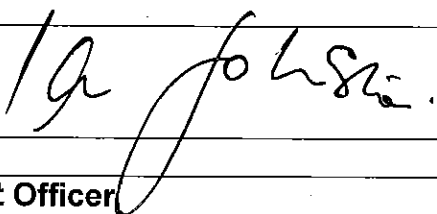
Beauty has recently retired and has been rehomed to the parents of one of the dog handlers so there is constant contact in respect of her welfare. If this is not an option an article goes on the police Guardian system for all police staff and officers in Gwent to review to see if the dog can be rehomed internally. PS Pearse could not think of any instance where none of these options have been viable in recent years. However if a dog had to be rehomed externally then appropriate checks would be made so no involvement from the scheme would be needed.

9 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for 27th August however PS Pearse advised that this is during the NATO cut off point so ideally could a meeting be scheduled either before 22nd August or after 8th September. It was agreed by all that it would be more beneficial to hold a meeting late September so that the scheme could have a NATO update. Mrs Vaisey-Baker will send out details of the next meeting in due course.

MVB

Subsequent to the meeting the next Animal Welfare Meeting has now been scheduled for 4pm on 24th September 2014 in Conference Room 1. Please can all visitors note that they will be required to go to the main Police Headquarters reception to gain access to this meeting room. Attendance before 4pm is advisable as the main reception doors are locked from 4pm.

Ian Johnston QPM, Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent	
I have monitored the Animal Welfare Scheme Minutes and am satisfied with progress.	
Signed 	Date 22.5.14
Contact Officer	
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Background papers	None

