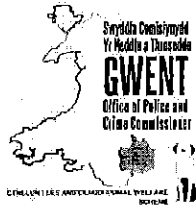


DECISION NUMBER: PCCG-2017-040



**MINUTES OF THE ANIMAL WELFARE MEETING
HELD ON 5TH JUNE 2017, 4.00PM
AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS, CROESYCEILIOG**

PRESENT: Mr Martyn Evans – Chair
Councillor Lisa Winnett
Mrs Gill Mason
Mr Gary Lucas
Sergeant Julie Pearse - Dog Section, Gwent Police
Mrs Siân Curley – Scheme Manager, OPCC
Ms Michelle Vaisey-Baker – Scheme Administrator, OPCC

The meeting began at 4.00pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Anthony Davies, Chief Inspector Emma Smith and Miss Jessica Tippins (Assistant Scheme Administrator).

ACTION

2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF MEETING OF 13TH FEBRUARY 2017

The minutes were agreed to be an accurate record, however it was noted that under Item 4 of the previous set of minutes it should have said two or three new visitors would be recruited, as opposed to “two visitors would be recruited”. It was verified that ideally three new visitors would be preferential depending on the uptake and the result of interviews.

It was queried whether the review of member attendance at meetings and visits was still going ahead. It was confirmed that this will be done in July/August as a year will have passed since the volunteer agreements were signed to enable an annual review.

3 MATTERS ARISING

It was queried whether there was an update on the fencing issues at Waterton. Mrs Sian Curley (SC) advised that unfortunately no update was available at the meeting as such it was requested that Jessica Tippins (JT) establish whether there is any further update from South Wales in order to update the Scheme at the next meeting.

JT

SC advised that she had raised the various concerns raised at the last meeting at the Staying Ahead Programme Board which is the Change Management Board that the Deputy Chief Constable, Assistant Chief Officer of Resources, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, Chief of Staff and Chief Finance Officer sit on. SC was able to confirm that the Board were very supportive of the dog section recruiting more staff in order to meet demand.

Julie Pearse (JP) advised the Scheme that the board had undertaken a comprehensive review e.g. the amount of calls that handlers went on and whether or not the calls were dog related or not. It was clarified that the Dog Section are currently three handlers under establishment, as such it has now been agreed to advertise for two posts. A further review will then take place in six months time to evaluate the status of the workload and whether an additional third officer is needed.

4 SCHEME UPDATE – VERBAL

SC advised that the OPCC received 28 applications for the Animal Welfare Scheme of which 8 have been shortlisted for interview. The intention is that the interviews will take place in July. SC informed us that due to the Chief Constable's retirement the OPCC has had to prioritise the Chief Constable recruitment process so resources have been stretched which is why there has been a delay.

SC advised that the OPCC had not yet started the planning process for the interviews. It was suggested that the Chair for the Scheme should be involved in the process. JT will be organising the interview panel so SC will request that she link in with ME to check on availability in order that the Scheme is represented.

JT

Concerns were raised by the Scheme that they are having less input in the Scheme now. Specifically ME advised that when the former Scheme Administrator was involved she would meet with him before upcoming meetings. SC advised that the OPCC were unaware that this had occurred and unfortunately there had not been a handover where this was explained. SC advised that staff currently responsible for the Volunteer Schemes have had it added into their roles so there are fewer resources at present to provide as in depth admin support as previously was the case, especially when the statutory responsibilities for the OPCC have had to be prioritised. However, SC reassured the Scheme that it is something that the OPCC are aware of and clarified that an organisational review process was underway as there are capacity and resource issues on a wider scale within the office, therefore this will hopefully find some resolution to appropriately resourcing the Scheme in the future. SC confirmed that the Police and Crime Commissioner is very supportive of the Animal Welfare Scheme and appreciates the work of its members.

JP advised that she was aware that, in the past, monthly update reports on the dog section were provided. This is no longer provided due to the pressure on resources and time. The Dog Section has a twitter page that documents everything of this nature, as such collating all that information into another format for the Scheme would be duplication. SC confirmed that initially JT had started trying to copy and paste it all into a word document for the Scheme but unfortunately due to resources being stretched this was no longer feasible either. JP advised that the Dog Section have also not got their Admin Support any more which is why they no longer have statistics and additional reports to circulate. Councillor Lisa Winnett (LW) advised that she does look at the twitter page and finds it very informative and is worth all other members looking at. JP confirmed that there was also a Facebook page for the Dog Section too. JP advised that she would look into other options of what can be done to provide information to the Scheme as there is lots of things the Dog Section do that would be of interest to the Scheme.

JP

A member commented that the Scheme has changed because of austerity measures. SC queried whether there was anything about the scheme that members felt should fundamentally change. As a whole it was agreed that there don't appear to be any issues like there were years ago in regards to the dogs' welfare. It was noted that on a general basis the only issues tend to relate to Waterton which means there is a limit on what our Scheme can do. The scheme was reminded that the OPCC and Gwent Police declined having a three year fixed contract with Waterton to ensure that the arrangements with Waterton can be reviewed annually to address any issues.

5 OPERATIONAL UPDATE FROM THE DOG SECTION SERGEANT

JP advised that the Dog Section is changing Line Management again, Chief Inspector Martyn Smith (MS) is replacing Chief Inspector Huw Jones, as such JP will ask him to attend the future meeting. JT to be requested to add MS to future meetings going forward.

JT

JP provided a further update on the Dog Section review, we were advised that previously the Dog Section had 16 dog handlers and a Sergeant. This was eventually cut down to 13 Dog Handlers via officers leaving. A decision was made previously that the Explosive Search Dogs were no longer required (the dogs remained but in another capacity) and that Instructors were also to be reduced too via natural wastage. However as a result of the review and the current climate the Explosives Search Dogs are now to be retained. It has been determined that more General Purpose Dog Instructors are needed so two handlers are going to be trained up to do that role. JP advised that an ex dog handler is also going to come back as a civilian trainer. Two extra handlers will also be recruited as outlined earlier in the meeting; as such, the review has been very positive. JP informed us that the paper-sift process of applicants still needs to be done,

following that the officers will do an assessment where they interact with the dogs. After that there will be an interview process.

JP advised that Mark Porter is now back at work in a reduced capacity but is working his way back up on duty slowly.

We were advised that a few of the dogs are due to retire soon, therefore the force are going to run two basic general purpose dog courses to replace them.

JP informed us that recently there was a good result with PD Kato in respect of a vulnerable female who had overdosed on tablets and who had left her address without telling anyone where she was going, however following an extensive search in a wooded area they found her unconscious, she had been gone for quite a while so this was a fantastic result.

PD Monty has now retired with cancer but is doing ok, he is living with his handler and still coming to work but not actually working, this is being done as this is what he was used to and what he likes, as such in himself he is very happy and is enjoying a nice period of retirement.

JP made us aware that she has now done explosive search dog training with PD Molly, she is now licensed with JP as her handler. Over the weekend there had been a few calls with suspicious packages given the recent climate and awareness within the public. As such JP and PD Molly have already done a number of searches now.

PD Kato also got used at the Champions League at the Severn Bridge Tolls. There was a coach of supporters that were having a dispute at the tolls when the Handler just happened to be there with PD Kato, he was slightly outnumbered but was shortly joined by six Handlers and Police Dogs coming across from Avon & Somerset who were able to help out.

6 KENNELING AND VET BILLS

ME advised that following the issues at Waterton whereby PD Taylor appeared depressed and distressed after being in kennels for a substantial time, he wanted to clarify whether or not there needs to be a policy of how long dogs are kept in kennels for.

JP advised that each dog is different and that whilst the concerns raised by visitors were taken on board, PD Taylor had been fine. LW advised that he was curled up in a little ball and when he did stand you could see his hips. JP informed us that he had only lost 500g and verified that he will not be the same weight as a pet dog as he is a working dog. When JP checked on him she did not deem that his hips were showing, however can confirm that the vet has also checked him out and has confirmed that he both his physical health and his

condition is fine. He has now been home with his handler for a month and he just weighs the 500g more again so there is no concern, however the handlers had been keeping check on him at Waterton during his time there.

For background JP gave us an overview of the West Midland Puppy Scheme, where when dogs are born they are born into kennels, so when they go out to puppy walkers they are purposely brought back to stay in Kennels. Their Scheme is designed so that all kennels are in a circle so that they can look in on each other, it's a loud and noisy environment but the dogs get used to being in kennels so are at ease with that. If a dog is struggling they will obviously put measures in place. Therefore from this JP is reassured that if PD Taylor was in the kennel curled up it means he was relaxed and fine. JP confirmed that if the kennel door was opened he started bouncing around like normal, so the fact that he is quieter isn't a big concern as long as he responds happy and ok when he comes out of the kennel and is interacting with kennel staff. LW advised that she could not get much of a reaction from him, JP clarified that because he had been in for a while he was used to people going in and out.

LW raised concerns about a bowl with sharp edges in one of the runs that could have caused damage to the dogs, the run also had poo left in there. JP advised that the bowl was plastic so wouldn't have really caused any damage. A lot of the dogs will chew and damage the bowls themselves but JP did check with the Sergeant from Waterton who informed her that the run that was being queried hadn't been occupied by any Gwent Dogs and that they were using an adjacent run. LW advised that the dog had been in there as there was dog poo in there however confirmed she had not seen any of the Gwent dogs in there but noted that it must have been from a Gwent dog as there were only Gwent dogs there. Gary Lucas (GL) clarified that the Scheme and Gwent Police are limited on what they can do, JP has acted on the concerns raised by visitors and been informed by Waterton that our dogs weren't in there, given that we cannot prove the dogs were in there the important thing to focus on is that JP has challenged it and our Scheme will need to assess the situation at the next visit to Waterton.

JP advised that when at Waterton unless the Gwent Dog Handlers are there then Scheme members should not be interacting with the dogs. This is why PD Cody wouldn't have been taken out when they attended the Kennels last. JP suggested that, in future, Waterton Staff have confirmed they will move the Gwent Dogs to the pens that the dogs can be viewed through if they are made aware visitors are going down.

JP was able to clarify a concern that PD Taylor had definitely not been in the kennels since before Christmas as she had taken him there herself. Due to the fact he was having an extended stay he had the

gold star treatment. LW advised that she had been informed by the Handler in attendance that PD Taylor wasn't being exercised at all, a Gwent Officer had been down and exercised him but since then he hadn't been walked. It was confirmed that it's important our Scheme continues to record and feedback the information that they find but not to give personal perceptions. The information needs to be shared with JP who can share it through the right channels. JP advised that she was going to arrange to speak to the Sergeant at Waterton. It was noted that the South Wales Scheme don't appear to raise any concerns, they have specifically been asked that should they have any concerns to raise them with us but we have never been informed of anything. They are also supposed to share their minutes with us.

JP

It was noted that the force are paying for a staff member in Waterton and that there are supposed to be 2 staff on duty, however whenever visits have taken place there is only 1 staff member. We were informed that this will be reviewed going forward but that the feedback had been that this had been a rare occasion based on circumstances at the time. JP clarified that all dogs are treated on an individual basis, if there is an issue with the need for kennelling it is not always viable to give the dogs to other handlers to look after as they have their own dogs. However sometimes if kennelling is detrimental to a dog and the kennelling is due to go on for a while then JP herself has had them at home with her. E.g. JP had PD Hilda when their Handler was off on sick leave.

SC advised that the next Waterton visit for our Scheme is due in September, as such given the concerns the members asked if GL could attend the visit but in an independent capacity so as to get a true perception. GL has agreed but can only do the visit the first week of September, LW has confirmed that she will do the visit with GL, ME advised that if needed he could also attend but was happy for just LW and GL to do the visit. JP confirmed that she would provide dates to JT of when the Gwent Dogs are due to be in Waterton that week so that JT could send this onto GL and LW. It was confirmed that on this occasion it was recommended not to advise the staff at Waterton that the Scheme were visiting, this should not be a problem as Waterton staff have previously said that our Scheme can attend whenever they wish. JP will however verify the specific times we have previously been told to avoid to ensure we are compliant with that.

JP

JT

JP

ME raised the issue of vet bills with regards to Police Dogs being looked after once they have gone into retirement. It was confirmed that Summerhill Vets do give a discount for medication, but whoever has the dog is still required to pay for this. SC advised that this issue was raised many years ago when the Scheme wanted to look into the possibility of all costs for retired dogs being covered by the force. The issue was that if the Police or OPCC retain responsibility for payment then they should also retain responsibility for decision making which

people who had the dogs from retirement onwards were unwilling to give up.

JP confirmed that the rate from Summerhill is good and officers are happy to pay the bills themselves. SC requested that in anticipation of the next meeting the agreement in place with Summerhill be reviewed, this was previously detailed in minutes from the Scheme when it came into effect. JP confirmed she would also verify details with Summerhill and get an update on what the rates are so that the Scheme can be made aware.

OPCC

JP

It was queried whether the force would cover the costs if a dog was injured on duty and then forced to retire. JP confirmed that whilst the force does not continue to pay for care they do pay to put things right, so any injury would have the treatment it needed paid for, after that it will be the responsibility of the owner.

7 UPDATE ON FINNS LAW

A document was circulated to all with the agenda papers for the Scheme's awareness. SC advised that the sentencing result is not known as yet, but that once it is the OPCC will update the Scheme.

JT

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

GL advised that he has found the old training documents that he compiled roughly 7 or 8 years ago, he has been looking at reviewing it and remodelling it for the Scheme as he believes it will be beneficial for any new members and also for any new officers who start in the Dog Section. GL suggested the option of doing a training afternoon for the new animal welfare visitors that could also be refresher training for existing members. It was confirmed that in the past the Dog Section Sergeant has also contributed towards the training day and the visit form whilst not gone through in great details is usually presented along with the five freedoms for awareness. All agreed this would be very beneficial for both new starters and existing members and thanked GL for this idea. The OPCC will link in with GL to assist in organising the training day. GL provided a copy of the old Police Dog Strategy to JP to query if there was a new one etc, JP confirmed that she would look it over and feed into GL so that the training document could be modified accordingly. It was recommended that the training session take place prior to the next meeting as this will also provide an opportunity for all the visitors to meet.


OPCC/
GL

JP

The meeting concluded at 5.30pm.

8 DETAILS OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next Animal Welfare Meeting has been scheduled for 3pm on 23rd October 2017 in Conference Room 1, this will be a mandatory meeting for all to attend as it will also incorporate training.

Jeff Cuthbert, Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent	
I have monitored the Animal Welfare Scheme Minutes and am satisfied with progress.	
Signed 	Date 3/10/17
Contact Officer	
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Background papers	None