



**MINUTES OF THE ANIMAL WELFARE MEETING
HELD ON 22ND OCTOBER 2018, 4.00PM
AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS, CROESYCEILIOG**

PRESENT: Mr Martyn Evans – Chair
Mrs Gill Mason
Mr Gary Lucas
Ms Laura Buchanan-Smith
Mrs Caroline Herbert
Ms Jennifer Deasington
Emma Smith, RSPCA Deputy Chief Inspector
Chief Inspector Martyn Smith
PC 1129 Paul Booth, Dog Section
Miss Jessica Tippins – Scheme Administrator, OPCC
Ms Michelle Vaisey-Baker – Assistant Scheme Administrator, OPCC

The meeting began at 4.00pm

- 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** **ACTION**
Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lisa Winnett and Mr Elis Park.

- 2 CONFIRMATION OF CHAIR & VICE CHAIR ELECTIONS**
We were advised that following a successful nomination process a Chair and Vice Chair had now been selected by the Scheme. The Chair was to remain as Martyn Evans (ME) and Jennifer Deasington (JD) was appointed as Vice Chair. This will now mean that both ME and JD will devise future agendas, linking in with the OPCC who will still provide administrative support. They will also draft the annual rotas and be the main point of contact for other members on queries etc. JD confirmed that she was happy to take responsibility for drafting the 2019 rota and would link in with the OPCC on this. **JD/JT**

- 3 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF MEETING OF 23RD APRIL 2018**
The minutes were agreed to be an accurate record and it was verified that all actions had been completed.

- 4 MATTERS ARISING**
No matters were raised for discussion.

5 SCHEME UPDATE

Jessica Tippins (JT) informed us that the OPCC had now finished the review of the organisation's structure which started in 2017. This has resulted in revisions to job descriptions and an increase in staff numbers. JT reminded us that as discussed at previous meetings she will no longer be the Scheme Administrator in the future, as this would be part of a new OPCC Governance Officer's role. This role was currently awaiting appointment, so the new Scheme Administrator would hopefully be in post by the February meeting and be able to attend with JT who will introduce them to members and provide a handover. We were informed that Michelle Vaisey-Baker (MVB) would also no longer be the Assistant Scheme Administrator after this meeting. This role would sit with the Administration Assistant within the OPCC.

JT/JP

It was noted that at the last meeting we agreed that we would ideally like a members pre-meet before the official meeting starts. Therefore from the February meeting onwards a 20 minute pre-meet will be incorporated at the start of the 4pm meeting. It was noted that it may not be necessary for a pre-meet every time, therefore it was agreed that members would link in with ME and JD in advance of the meeting, to discuss the need for a pre-meet. ME or JD would then link in with the OPCC so that they could notify the Dog Section which time slot they needed to turn up for; 4pm or 4:20pm.

**ALL
ME/JD/
JT**

It has been agreed that meetings will now be held quarterly as opposed to half yearly, providing agendas get appropriately filled. If agendas cannot be filled then a decision will be made as to making the meetings every six months instead as was standard practice across other force's schemes. JT confirmed that she had contacted other forces around the UK to see if there was anything additional that we could include on our agendas. However, it was established that we were not doing anything less than in other areas and in fact compared to many, Gwent was actually doing more. If members have any ideas for future agendas they were asked to link in with ME and/or JD who will in turn link in with the OPCC.

ALL

JT confirmed that an updated list of dogs and trainers had been circulated as requested. JT was also able to advise us that the Gwent Police Open Day for 2019 was currently in the process of being planned and was due to take place on Sunday 2nd June 2019. We were informed that the future Scheme Administrator would keep us informed of developments regarding this event.

We were advised that there has been no issues in connection to the report forms provided.

JT informed us that if anyone had any training suggestions that could be beneficial to take place at future meetings to let either ME/JD or the OPCC know so this could be arranged if suitable.

ALL

We were made aware that an article had gone out in the Torfaen A-Z which mentions the Scheme. JT also advised that the OPCC were hoping to do a volunteers campaign sometime in the next six months. If anyone was interested in being the face of the Scheme they were asked to contact JT outside of the meeting. It was clarified that the OPCC would be carrying our promotional campaigns around both the Animal Welfare Scheme and the Independent Custody Visitors Scheme.

ALL

6 VOLUNTEER SAFETY GUIDANCE

JT advised us that attached to the agenda was a document that provided guidance on ID safety. This was for members to have awareness of and so it was asked that everyone read the document and note its contents. We were informed that this information wasn't to scare anybody, but had been requested by Lisa Winnett for a bit of common sense advice in respect of ID's e.g. don't wear your ID when you are out shopping or out and about etc. It was noted that some people have had difficulty opening the documents embedded in the agenda, JT confirmed that she would send the attachments separately to all again.

JT

We were reminded to also keep note of when ID cards were due to expire so that the OPCC could link in with the relevant departments and arrange replacement ID as and when appropriate.

7 OPERATIONAL UPDATE FROM DOG SECTION

Chief Inspector Martyn Smith (MS) and PC Paul Booth (PB) provided with an overview of the update report that was circulated as part of the agenda papers. We were advised that the Dog Section provided a lot of updates on Twitter, but that not all the Handlers use Twitter. As such, this update report captured work done by everyone in the Dog Section. There has been some really good work by the Section around tracking of offenders, burglars and also vulnerable people being located. The drugs dogs have also been very successful with significant finds. We were informed that PDs Ryker, Wasp, Charlie and Sophie all qualified early this year and were doing well.

We were advised that PC Booth had worked really hard to source capable dogs and has found that the breeds currently coming through were really strong in terms of tracking. Over the last 20 years the forces dogs have changed so much and don't necessarily have the same resilience to get up to speed around public order issues. Therefore, the dogs the force have been trying to source are ones which use their noses, not necessarily their teeth, as the breeds that are coming in now are far more driven to do nose work than bite work. We were informed that most of the dogs now are German Shepherds, however the force don't specifically look at the breed, just whether it's a good dog capable of doing the tasks required. The force were currently looking for suitable candidates for drug dogs. If members have recommendations on contacts for dogs, they should feel free to pass on details to the Dog Section.

We were informed that the Dog Section was having a new rota system designed to formulate a new shift pattern. This was following learning that has come out of an incident in Middlesbrough, where a lady was bitten by police dog in 2014. The recent inquest has determined that there should be dedicated training patterns in an Officers shift pattern to mitigate these types of risks. Therefore, Sergeant Julie Pearse was looking at blocks of training so that Handlers and the dogs get continuous training on a regular basis. We were advised that once the Dog Section establishment was at its maximum numbers, they should be able to finalise training arrangements.

At present, the Dog Section was looking to recruit two new Handlers, so an assessment process would take place. This was not a paper sift exercise as it was essential that Officers applying for the role were given an opportunity to show specific skillsets and their work with dogs. Whilst this would be an internal process, the successful Officers have to be dedicated and driven, given that it was such a unique role.

It was explained that one of the hardships facing Officers in the role of a Handler was that your Partner was a dog and due to their lifespans, all Handlers have to face losing their Partner(s) at some point. This was hard on Officers, but they also need to be very committed, dedicated and professional as they will still need to work even after their dog(s) have passed away.

We thanked the Dog Section for their update and in particular for the report on what work the dogs have been doing. It was confirmed by MS that the Dog Section would continue to provide this type of information on a quarterly basis. It was noted that there was an error on the current report, the Dog Section has five firearms support dogs, not four.

For our awareness PC Booth explained that firearms support dogs were a bolt on to a general purpose dog. These dogs were trained to work in close proximity of Firearms Officers so have to adapt to environments where there are lots of shouting and lots of testosterone, whilst still being able to do the same job. As such they are required to have a higher level of self control. The dogs were mainly selected on the Handler and dogs competency to work in that arena; they have to be mentally sound so that they don't lose control as they were working in an environment that was volatile and loud.

8 KENNELING CONSTRUCTION

We were informed that PC Booth had looked into this issue and established that much of the guidance from DEFRA relates to commercial issues. He established that the Handlers only have to conform with the law in a house; the dog must have access to water, freedom to move etc. It was confirmed that all Handlers have access to suitable cleaning materials, food and bowls. PC Booth clarified that there was therefore no issues of concern that they were aware of but would suggest that spot checks were conducted every now and then so that it was audited. The Dog Section was therefore looking to introduce a supervisor check at homes.

JT clarified that if kennels were outside of the house they would need to be made of non-permeable materials, so cannot be wood. She confirmed she had discussed this matter with the OPCC Chief Executive who agreed that the OPCC would support the force in changing any kennels that were wooden. It was therefore confirmed that the Dog Section would link in with Estates to establish whether they were happy with the existing set up or if new kennels were needed. If new kennels were required, the force were asked to progress accordingly. It was agreed that the Dog Section would arrange for inspections to take place and update JT in due course. It was noted that many of the new kennels purchased only have wooden exteriors so that they blend in with people's homes. It was noted that it would also have to still be a comfortable material for the dog e.g. plastic is easy to wash down but would not be nice for the dog to sit/lie down on. An update on this would be provided at the next meeting.

MS

JT/MS

9 WATERTON

The next visit to Waterton was due in February. It was agreed that Gary Lucas (GL) and Caroline Herbert (CH) would conduct this visit. Therefore both confirmed they would link in with the Dog Section nearer the time to establish the best dates to visit when Gwent dogs will be kenneled there. We were informed that there was a new Sergeant who had just taken over in Waterton, who, by the time of the visit, should be settled in.

GL/CH

10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

It was agreed that the Scheme would like the OPCC to send a letter on their behalf to Sergeant Julie Pearse sending her their best wishes on her recovery.

JT

CH noted that the Animal Welfare report form was a bit outdated and asked if it could be adapted at all. It was noted that one of the main areas that was needed was more space for comments as the other areas still needed to be completed. It was noted that some members write their comments across various sections of the form but generally, as a whole, there was rarely ever that many comments needed. It was agreed that if a visitor speaks to a Handler and is informed that their dog

has a minor ailment they should have room to note it down clearly. JT advised that she would look to see if she could adapt the form to allow more room for commentary etc, whilst ensuring the aide memoire and appropriate questions remained. She will arrange for this to be ready for a discussion at the next meeting.

JT

It was flagged that all Scheme Members should be sent copies of report forms if any concerns were raised in order that they can be aware of them for future visits etc. We were informed that on the whole there was never anything to be reported, but in instances where there was, the OPCC would send an email around advising Scheme members.

MS informed us that when the Dog Section gets the opportunity to review their training they would also be able to provide information to members to say what training the Handlers and their dogs have attended. We agreed that this would be very beneficial.

We queried whether the Scheme should monitor that every dog in the Dog Section gets a visit in 12 month period. It was noted that this hasn't been done before but will be part of the new Assistant Scheme Administrator's duties. Upon receipt of visit forms each month they will send an email to all members attaching a copy of the form to make everyone aware of which dogs have been visited and any comments noted. This was to ensure that different dogs could be visited each time. We acknowledged that we also need to have a bit more flexibility in when we can do visits in order to ensure we see different dogs, as often visitors stick to the same days / locations etc, which limits the Handlers and dogs that are available.

JT

PC Booth advised that at present the Dog Section have no means of washing or bathing their dogs in force when they have been on duty; so if dogs were going out and getting oil or contaminants on them, the Handlers were either having to go into wash bays etc, or go into another force area to use their facilities. It was queried whether the Scheme would potentially support having a facility in either Mamhilad or Ystrad Mynach for officers to wash their dogs. It was noted that the Scheme would want to support this and in fact would recommend a washing station in both areas. The Dog Section would now raise the matter with the Chief Officer Team (COT) advising that the Scheme supported the concept. The Dog Section agreed to keep the OPCC aware of the outcome from COT. JD advised that in the interim, officers are more than welcome to use Newport City Dogs home washing facilities if they ever need to.


MS/PB

We queried whether there had been any further developments in regards to the request for cooling jackets over the summer. It was noted that a formal escalation procedure was clarified in light of this request coming direct to the Police and Crime Commissioner before going to COT. Should individual officers require them in the future they would

need to make a request to the force first. Should further support be required following this initial request, the OPCC could be contacted.

11 DETAILS OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next Animal Welfare Meeting has been scheduled for **4pm** on **25th February 2019** 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 the meeting room. Attendance before 4pm is advisable as the main reception doors are locked from 4pm.

Jeff Cuthbert, Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent	
I have monitored the Animal Welfare Scheme Minutes and am satisfied with progress.	
Signed 	Date 16/11/18
Contact Officer	
Name	Jessica Tippins
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Background papers	None

