**Decision log: PCCG-2023-030**



**MINUTES OF THE ANIMAL WELFARE VISITING SCHEME**

**HELD BOTH REMOTELY ON TEAMS AND IN PERSON IN HAWTHORNE MEETING ROOM, POLICE HEADQUARTERS ON 15th JANUARY 2024 at 4:00 PM**

**PRESENT:** Nicola Warren – Interim Chair, Scheme Administrator, OPCC (NW)

Steve Lewis - Animal Welfare Visitor – (SL)

Andrew Watkins – Animal Welfare Visitor (AW)

Helen Lawless – Animal Welfare Visitor (HL)

Linda Mason – Animal Welfare Visitor (LM)

David Davies - Sergeant - Roads Policing Specialist, Operations (DD)

Emma Smith – Inspector – RSPCA

Louise Crawford – Dogs Trust

Ceri Davis – Assistant Scheme Administrator, OPCC (CD)

**The meeting commenced at 4:08 p.m.**

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|  | **Notes and Actions** | **Action** |
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| **1.** | **Apologies** |  |
|  | Apologies for absence were received from Victoria Waite, Chloe Bradley-Thomas, Kirsty Buckland, Sarah Fowler and Inspector Shane Underwood. |  |
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| **2.** | **Minutes and Actions from Previous Meetings** |  |
|  | The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record. |  |
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| **4.** | **Scheme Update** |  |
|  | NW informed the meeting that there were ten volunteers on the Animal welfare Scheme this included the RSPCA representative and Dogs Trust representative.  NW advised the visitors that six Police Dogs (PD) out of twenty-two had not received a visit within a year. The longest period a dog had not been visited for was 17 months (since August 2022).  Two new PDs had recently joined the handlers and would need to be seen as a priority in addition to the others that had not been seen within the year.  NW informed the visitors there had been issues arranging visits due to handlers being on courses, sickness, dog handlers being called for operational matters and miscommunication. With less handlers available for visits operational matters would take priority.  NW asked visitors to continue to advise the Assistant Scheme Administrator when visiting arrangements had been confirmed and to request a copy of the updated framework to determine which dogs should be seen as per the visiting process. NW asked visitors to advise the OPCC if they experienced any issues when trying to arrange a visit.  NW reiterated to the visitors that if they were aware they would be unable to make a visit that they were scheduled for, they needed to liaise with other visitors as soon as possible to attempt to arrange cover.  NW advised the meeting that no major issues of concern had been raised in the animal welfare visitor reports since the last meeting.  NW reminded the visitors that there was a requirement to attend at least one panel meeting a year either in person or online. If they had not done so, could they please make every effort to attend the following meeting.  NW to recirculate the rota. | **NW** |
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| **5.** | **Operational Update from the Dog Section** |  |
|  | DD informed the visitors there had been some challenges within the section.  DD advised that of the three PDs that had completed their training, PD Cairo was now operational and had a number of successful results. PD Ripley had started experiencing hip problems whilst operational, advice was sought from the vet specialists and due to medical problems Ripley was no longer suitable to continue as a PD and the decision was made to retire her. The supplier that provided PD Ripley was able to take her back into their care on her retirement.  DD advised the meeting there had been an incident with PD Odin and the handler whilst exercising PD Odin. PD Odin attacked the handler which resulted in the handler being hospitalised for his injuries. Thankfully the handler was accompanied by an other handler at the time of the incident who was able to assist. The handler has now recovered. This was totally out of character for PD Odin and nothing had been suspected whilst under training. PD Odin was transferred to a secure kennel where his behavior had remained the same. The kennel staff reported to their vets that they were concerned for the dog based on his behavior.  The decision was made by the Senior team based on the behavior and veterinary advice that PD Odin would be euthanised.  An autopsy test was carried out by the University Vets Hospital in Bristol and unfortunately the results came back as inconclusive.  DD informed the visitors that PD Ralph was still recovering from his operation and not operational.  DD advised us following the incident with PD Odin a handler was without a PD. PD Wish was due to retire but was with a new handler on a short-term basis.  DD informed the visitors that PD Wish had a retirement home lined up and the due diligence checks were being carried out.  DD informed the meeting there were five PD on the Firearms Support course at present, as a result there would only be a small number of dogs available for visits during this time.  DD advised the visitors a new handler would be joining the team in the coming weeks. Four handlers required a PD, three new PDs had been sought and were due in Force in the coming week following the completion of the due diligence checks to confirm if they were suitable for the next stage of the process.  DD advised the meeting that a decision had been made to retire PD Loki who had not yet completed any training course. PD Loki had slipped on a shiny floor surface whilst training and since then had been very reluctant to go on shiny floors. PD Loki was given a break away to assess if this was a learnt behavior or if he would recover from it but unfortunately, he’s not improving and would be retired.  DD informed the visitors that explosive dog, PD Jerry was fully operational.  DD advised the meeting that two new potential PDs would be coming into force in the next week.  DD informed the meeting new PDs were sourced from different areas, reputable breeders, or other forces.    NW asked if the changes would affect visiting arrangements going forward.  DD confirmed that arranging visits would not be an issue and there would be opportunity for visitors to attend at the being or end of a training course.  DD informed the visitors of a number of successful operations involving the PDs.  NW asked if the new vehicles for transporting the dogs had arrived. DD advised the visitors the new vehicles had not arrived yet but were expected in March.  They would consist of a van with four cages in the back and four cars. The cars would replace existing vehicles, but the van was an additional vehicle.  NW asked if there were any senior staff changes planned. DD confirmed no changes were planned and he would be remaining on the section.  NW asked how many PDs handlers could manage if they also had retired dogs. DD confirmed that handlers could only have two dogs at any one time this was due to them only having double kennels. When up to full establishment every hander would have two dogs. Retired dogs would be classed as their pets. |  |
| **6.** | **AOB** |  |
|  | LC informed the visitors the Dogs Trust behaviour team currently had two dates available for visitors to attend enrichment training online should they wish to do so. LC to send full details to CD for circulation to the visitors.  LM raised concerns and a discussion was held regarding lack of financial support for retired PDs should medical attention be required particularly if the dogs were too old to insure. DD confirmed the dogs were not insured by the Force following retirement.  DD advised the visitors the logistics and infrastructure was changing in the kennels they utilised in South Wales, and they would no longer be accepting retired PDs kept by their handlers which had caused an issue. Also, they would not accept any dog that may be reactive, and caution needs to be taken around them. One operational PD was in this category and would no longer be able to kennel there. A meeting with the kennels would be taking place in the coming weeks to discuss matters. DD to provide an update at the next meeting.  NW asked the visitors if they would like to resume conducting visits to the kennels in Waterton should there be any Gwent PDs held there. NW to contact DD to establish when there were to be Gwent PDs there, so she was able to advise the kennel of the visit. | **LC/CD**  **DD**  **NW** |
| **7.** | **Date of Next Meeting** |  |
|  | The next meeting will be held at **4pm, on 15th April 2024.** |  |

**Meeting concluded at 5:02pm**

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| **Acting Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent**  I confirm that I have considered whether or not I have any personal or prejudicial interest in this matter and take the proposed decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct.  The above request has my approval. |
| **Signature:** |
| **Date: 23.02.24** |

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| **Actions from Meeting dated 15th January 2024** | |  |  |  |
| **Minute Number** | **Action** | **Owner** | **Update** |  |
| **4.** | NW to recirculate the rota. | **NW** |  |  |
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