

AGENDA OPEN

ITEM NO: ITEM NO

REPORT



TO Council
ON 24 September 2009
FROM Wayne Knightbridge – Animal Control/Bylaws Manager
APPROVED BY Lloyd Barton – Director: Customer Service
SIGNATURE

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lloyd Barton".

SUBJECT **ANNUAL REPORT ON DOG POLICIES AND PRACTICES FROM 1 JULY 2008 UNTIL 30 JUNE 2009**
FILE REF DC/1/1

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

<input type="checkbox"/> Information only	<input type="checkbox"/> Strategic decision	<input type="checkbox"/> Policy decision	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Statutory process
<input type="checkbox"/> Community issue	<input type="checkbox"/> Contract decision	<input type="checkbox"/> Delegation	<input type="checkbox"/> Appointment
<input type="checkbox"/> Administrative matter			

IMPLICATIONS:

(i)	Is this matter significant in terms of Council's Policy on Significance? No
(ii)	Implications in terms of Vision Rodney? No
(iii)	Implications in terms of Long Term Council Community Plan / Annual Plan? No
(iv)	Implications in terms of other Council Strategic documents or Council Policy? No
(v)	Is a budget amendment required? No

(vi)	Have the views of affected or interested persons been obtained and is any further public consultation required?
	No
(vii)	Does a decision on this matter require Auckland Transitional Authority approval? (yes / no / advice being sought?)
	No

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Capital cost implications	Not applicable
Is it currently budgeted for?	Not applicable
Funding source of capital costs	Not applicable
Ongoing operational cost implications	Not applicable
Is it currently budgeted for?	Not applicable
Funding & rating impact (whether resulting from capital expenditure or arising directly)	Not applicable

SUMMARY:

Section 10A of the Dog Control Act 1996 requires each territorial authority to report annually to the Secretary for Local Government on its dog policy practices, listing the information that is required in the report. The local authority is also required to give notice of the report in a local newspaper and by any other means the authority deems desirable.

RECOMMENDATION:

- (a) That the Council's report on dog policy and practices for the period 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009 be accepted.
- (b) That public notice of the report's availability be advertised in local newspapers.

1.0 Background

Section 10A of the Dog Control Act 1996 requires each territorial authority to report on dog policy and practices for each financial year.

The report must contain the following information:

The territorial authority must report on dog control practices:

- i) *A territorial authority must, in respect of each financial year, report on the administration of –*
 - *its dog policy adopted under section 10; and*
 - *its dog control practices.*
- ii) *The report must include, in respect of each financial year, information relating to –*
 - *the number of registered dogs;*
 - *the number of probationary owners and disqualified owners in the territorial authority district;*

- *the number of dogs in the territorial authority district classified as dangerous under section 31 and the relevant provision under which the classification is made;*
- *the number of dogs in the territorial authority district classified as menacing under section 33A or 33C and the relevant provision under which the classification is made;*
- *the number of infringement notices issued by the territorial authority;*
- *the number of dog-related complaints received by the territorial authority in the previous year and the nature of those complaints;*
- *the number of prosecutions taken by the territorial authority under the Act.'*

2.0 Issues

2.1 Dog Control in Rodney District Council

There are 14,658 registered dogs in Rodney District, managed by a team of five animal control officers and one animal control/bylaws officer, with occasional assistance from three General Inspectors.

2.2 Current Dog Policy

Rodney District Council's Dog Policy was last reviewed in 2004 and can be viewed on the Council's website.

The Council's targeted property visit programme has been in place since April 2008. All new dog owners are sent a 'New Dog Owner' pack of educational material and offered the opportunity to have an officer make a home visit to discuss a range of issues from care of dogs, control of dogs, to explanation of the relevant bylaws.

Officers also conduct follow-up monitoring visits to all properties where justified complaints have been received during the previous month. This enables the officer to assess the effectiveness of the first intervention and also follow up any residual issues related to the complaint. Additional enforcement action can result where there is continued non-compliance. This proves particularly effective for the two most common types of complaint, namely dogs wandering at large and barking dogs, which together comprise 81% of complaints from the public.

Council animal control officers also conduct a greater number of street patrols in areas where a greater frequency of anti-social behaviour from dogs is experienced.

The first year of the targeted property visit programme has enabled staff to better deal with repeat offences by providing scheduled follow-up visits.

Comparisons of individual trends over the four years are shown in the tables below and graphically in **Appendix 1**.

COMPARISON OF INFORMATION	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Number of Registered dogs	13858	14288	14588	14658
Number of Probationary Owners	16	1	1	9
Number of Disqualified Owners	16	16	8	7
Number of dogs classified as Dangerous (Sec 31)	5	10	5	21
Number of dogs classified as menacing (Sec 33A)	29	33	46	78
Number of dogs classified as menacing (Sec 33C)	7	19	14	30
Number of Infringement Notices	541	451	589	567
Number of Prosecutions	45	10	16	3
Type of Complaints				
Barking	456	496	625	642
Dogs rushing at Animals	16	13	16	26
Dogs rushing at Persons	46	59	56	61
Dogs Roaming	980	778	740	711
Fouling	13	9	10	33
Dogs attacking persons	44	46	42	37
Dogs attacking animals	95	87	92	114
Stock Worrying	22	38	20	18
Welfare	28	25	37	48

Property Inspection	58	72	76	104
Other	2	0	0	0
Dogs Found	153	387	467	513
Total	1913	2010	2181	2307

2.3 Specific dog policies

The Council has adopted a number of specific dog policies which are discussed below.

2.3.1 Identify the owner of every dog

Owners are required to register their dogs annually and the Council encourages registration by offering incentives to pay early by discounting fees.

Reminder notices are sent out to all dog owners who fail to register their dog by 1 August. Reminders are also placed in the Council's 'Doggy Days' magazine that is sent to each registered dog owner.

Officers regularly follow up with the owners of unregistered dogs throughout the year to maximise the number of registered dogs.

This year the Council also introduced a greater variety of payment methods for dog registration, including internet banking.

2.3.2 Make provision for dog access to public places

Rodney has a mixture of dog exercise areas, off leash areas, prohibited areas and on leash areas. Off leash areas include beaches during winter months and at specific times during summer. There are also a number of dog prohibited areas centred on sites where concerns are held for native wildlife or endangered species.

2.3.3 Encouraging responsible dog ownership

The Council rewards responsible dog owners by setting a lower fee for those holding Selected Dog Owner status. Selected Dog Owner status can be gained by owners having adequate fencing to contain a dog, passing a test on dog control matters, having no justified complaints and by having a dog that is registered. Currently 35% of registered dog owners within Rodney hold this status.

2.3.4 Enforce dog owner obligations

Enforcement solutions, including education, written warnings, infringement notices, menacing and dangerous dog classifications and prosecutions are all used to protect members of the public and to penalise irresponsible dog ownership. During the past year officers dealt with 2307 requests for service; the most common complaint types were wandering and barking dogs, which accounted for 53% (wandering at large) and 28% (barking) of all complaints received.

2.3.5 Educate the community about dogs

The Council provides a range of pamphlets and handouts for dog owners. All new dog owners receive a new dog owner pack containing material that will be of assistance to the dog owner. Officers also carry out educative visits to schools, community groups and work groups which visit private properties, such as courier drivers, meter readers and the like.

2.3.6 Apply a more consistent approach to the management of dogs in the Auckland region

Rodney District Council maintains close relationships with neighbouring councils such as North Shore and Waitakere City Councils. Rodney and North Shore have just completed a joint venture project, building and operating the Northern Animal Shelter which will serve the North Shore and Rodney communities.

2.3.7 Provide adequate funding for dog management services

The dog account is funded entirely from registration fees and infringement fines. There is no input from the general rate. The dog fees accurately reflect the cost of providing dog control services.

2.3.8 Gather information to assess the effectiveness and fairness of the Council's policy on dogs

The Council currently conducts a biennial dog control survey to gather feedback from the community and people who use the service which is instrumental in providing opportunities for improvement to the services provided. In future it is intended to increase customer research by conducting annual customer surveys and gathering regular customer feedback through on-line research.

2.4 Enforcement practice

In previous years the Council has taken in excess of 40 prosecutions a year. In 2006/2007 ten were taken and there were 16 in 2007/2008. This year three cases were taken to prosecution. A much greater emphasis was placed on classifying dogs as menacing or dangerous during the year.

A total of 567 infringement notices were issued during the year, slightly fewer than the previous year (589).

The Council's general policy is to issue a verbal and/or written warning to a first time offender for a minor offence such as a dog wandering at large. Emphasis is now being placed on giving advice to the owner to avoid a reoccurrence and maintain public safety. An infringement notice is issued following a second minor offence.

For more serious offences such as any incident involving dog aggression, the enforcement options range from an infringement notice at the lower end of the spectrum, through menacing and dangerous dog classifications, to a prosecution in the District Court for the most serious cases. In the last three years an increasing number of dogs have been declared menacing and dangerous.

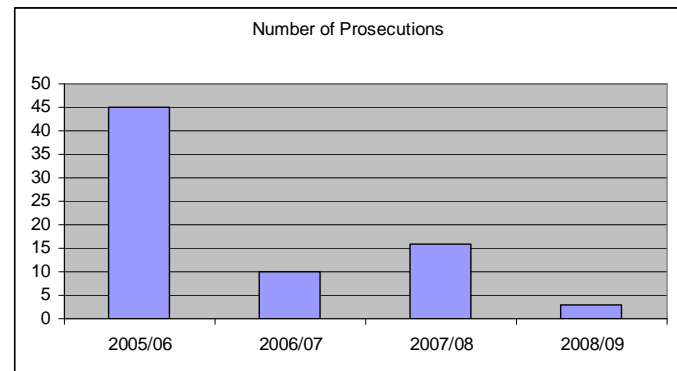
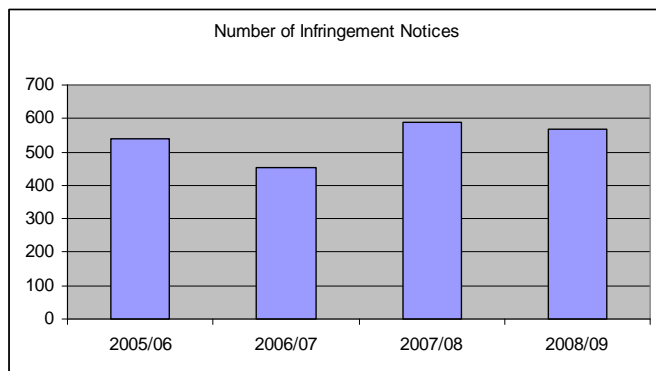
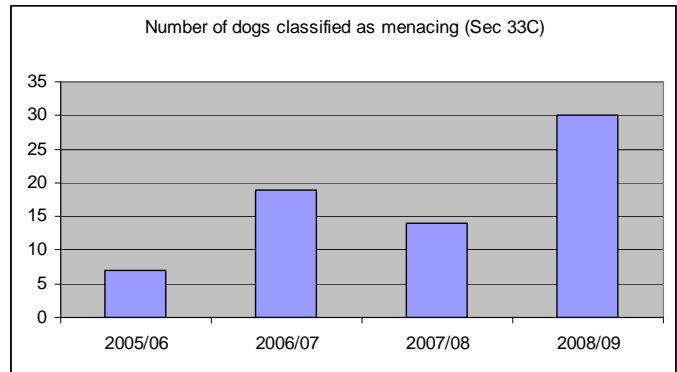
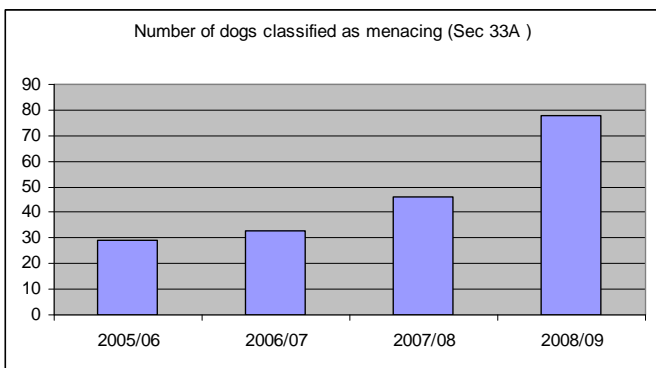
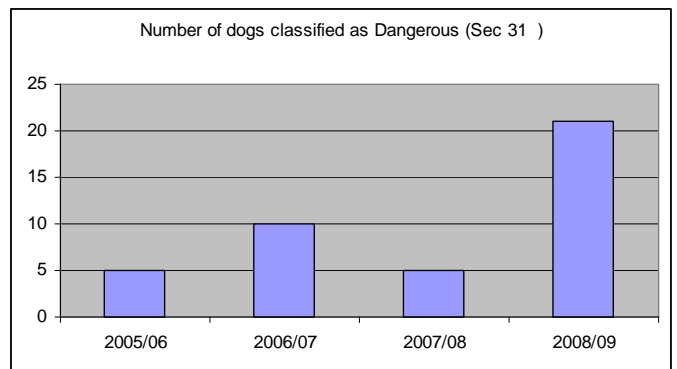
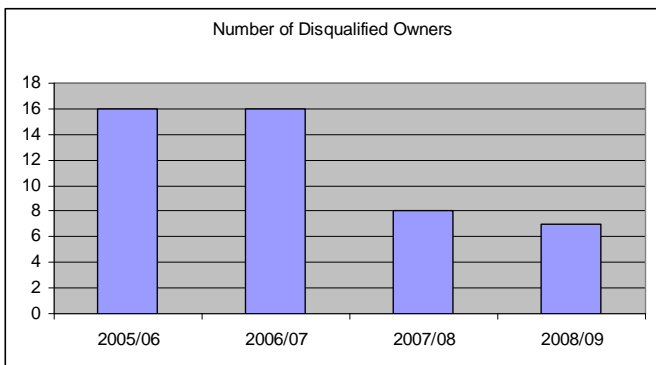
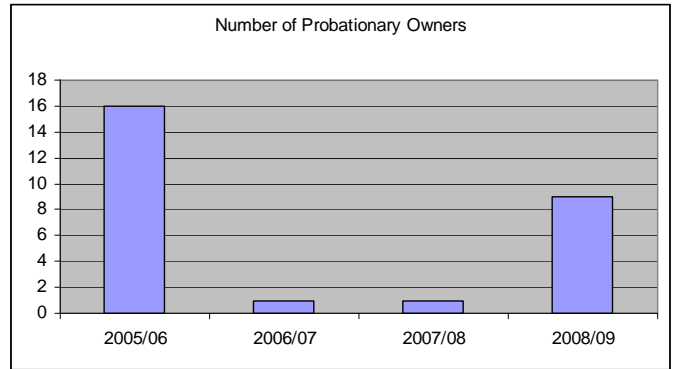
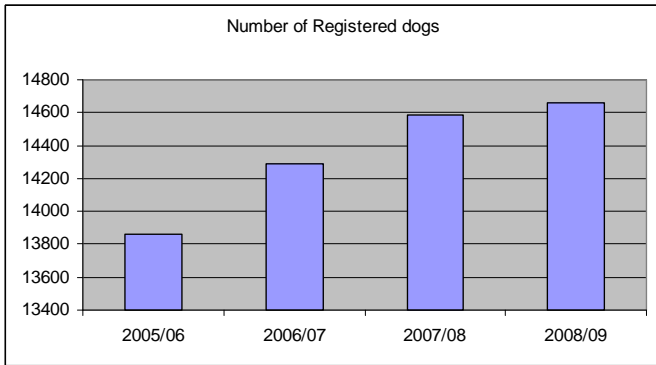
2.5 Approach to Dog Control

In addition to the Council receiving this report and agreeing that it be submitted to the Secretary for Local Government, a discussion is requested on the Regulatory Team's approach to dog control, a report on which is also being presented at this Council meeting.

3.0 Conclusion

This report represents the information relating to the Council's dog policy and practices required to be sent to the Secretary for Local Government for the period 1 July 2008 until 30 June 2009.

Appendix 1 - COMPARISON OF INFORMATION



TYPE OF COMPLAINTS

