

3. REVIEW OF ANIMAL CONTROL SERVICE

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Corporate Plan Output: Dog Control	

The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of the results of a recent review of the Animal Control Service and to seek the Committee's views on how the indicated savings should be used.

BACKGROUND

In May last year a comprehensive review of the Animal Control Service commenced. The goal of this project was to provide customers with the best and most efficient dog control service possible. The review was carried out by a project team comprising Animal Control and Efficiency Project Team staff. Information gathered included process mapping and critiquing, activity sheets, phone and volume logs, customer focus groups and a customer survey.

The project team worked through a business planning process that:

- Identified a goal for the Animal Control Service (an Animal Control Service that provides value for money and delights our customer)
- Identified key objectives that deliver the goal
- Determined a range of structural options and scored these against the objectives
- Adopted a preferred structural model (based on it being the 'most efficient')
- Determined resource requirements and technology solutions for the new model

FINDINGS

The Animal Control Team undertakes a function that can at times be very difficult as well as contentious. They perform this function well and have consistently demonstrated a commitment to customer service and a desire to find better ways of doing things. This commitment was very apparent throughout the review process, the success of which was largely due to the enthusiastic involvement of the Team.

Key issues raised in the review of current performance were:

- The administrative cost of registering a dog is \$16.14. Responsible Dog Owners (RDO's) are being charged \$40 per dog. This means that each RDO, who by definition are dog owners who do not cause complaints, are paying \$25 towards the total cost of animal control.
- Complaint processes could be streamlined to reduce lost time and increase the number of complaints dealt with by each Animal Control Officer.
- Animal Control Officers are spending a maximum of 5 hours per day in the field due to the requirement to drive back to Linwood Service Centre each lunch time to pick up the next bundle of complaints.
- Figures for the last year show that of the 2097 dogs impounded 546 were destroyed. This is considered to be too high a figure and some action is required to reduce it.
- The net cost of impounded dogs at the Animal Shelter is \$76.83. This constitutes a significant cost to the business.

- The Council's new computer system will have a positive impact on the day to day operations of the Service. One challenge to be faced is how to transmit the information contained in the new system (Request for Service) to the Animal Control Officer in the field.
- An evaluation of the volume of calls received after hours shows that on the basis of responding to complaints there is no need to have Animal Control Officers working on Saturdays (which they currently do).
- The Environmental Services Unit has just initiated a Customer Call Centre to handle, eventually, all ESU related customer contacts. This provides an opportunity for the Service to consolidate the customer contact.

The survey of customers contained both positive and negative feedback. Positive feedback was received on the current methods of registration payment and a high level of awareness of RDO status. On the down side, there was dissatisfaction with the current 24-hour service and a rating of 4.5 out of 10 for value for money, on the basis that the great majority of dog owners do not see anything for their money.

Currently officers investigate and action only high priority complaints after hours, these hours being from 6.00pm until 8.00am Monday to Saturday and on Sunday, these complaints relate to dog attacks on people, stock, and domestic animals and do not include patrols.

CONCLUSIONS

The business planning process determined a 'most efficient' business structure that provided for the Animal Control Administration Team to move from the Linwood Service Centre to the Animal Shelter. This move would reduce rent costs and remove the duplication of various processes. This structure would also utilise the new software system to provide improved management of workflow to the Animal Control Officer in the field resulting in less travel back to the office and therefore greater time addressing complaints, enquiries and education issues.

Business process mapping highlighted that a number of the current processes were complex and lengthy. Improved processes and workflow management, (including the use of the ESU Customer Centre), and the merger of the Administration and Shelter teams, support a reduction of 4.5 FTE's (noting that 1 FTE has already left and not been replaced).

The proposed changes create a number of issues that have been addressed by the project team. The most critical of these is the communication and technology structure to forward electronic messages to the Animal Control Officers in the field and to manage their workflow. This provides significant capabilities for managing performance, reporting and reducing the paper flow.

It is anticipated as the implementation of these new changes take place that substantial savings over the next few years will occur, which over time may allow the RDO registration fee to drop from \$40 to possibly \$25. It is anticipated that reduced RDO fees will be a big incentive for owners to manage their dogs effectively and that ultimately this will lead to fewer complaints about dogs in the future.

It is proposed, dependent on the approval of Council, to have a staggered reduction of fees of \$5 per year starting in 2001/02. The slower introduction of reduced fees recognises the desire to manage the realisation of savings through natural attrition rather than any more pro-active process. It is also proposed to fund capital expenditure for implementation through the dog account. Capital expenditure will be required for new technology and the shift of the team to the Animal Shelter. Savings made in future years will be used to pay the fund back.

Alternatively, the anticipated savings could be returned to the Dog Account. Other options include an increased level of service, such as more patrols, or a subsidised neutering scheme.

There are a variety of change management and implementation issues yet to be considered and evaluated, but an effective target date to start implementing the changes should be 1 July 2000.

It is suggested that this report be considered in conjunction with the two following reports on this agenda; dog registration fees for 2000/01 and de-sexing and euthanasia of dogs.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the information be received.
 2. That the Council aim to reduce the registration fee for Responsible Dog Owners by \$5 in 2001/02.
 3. That further RDO fee reductions be considered once the new arrangements have been implemented and the savings evaluated.

Chairman's Recommendation: That the officer's recommendation be approved.