

**MINUTES AND ACTIONS OF THE ANIMAL WELFARE VISITING SCHEME**

**HELD BOTH IN PERSON AND REMOTELY ON TEAMS**

**28th APRIL 2025 at 6:00 PM**

**PRESENT:** Stephen Lewis– Chair, Animal Welfare Visitor – (SL)

Andrew Watkins – Animal Welfare Visitor (AW)

Helen Lawless – Animal Welfare Visitor (HL)

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

Inspector Emma Smith – RSPCA (ES)

Nicola Warren - Scheme Administrator, OPCC (NW)

Ceri Hiscox – Assistant Scheme Administrator, OPCC (CH)

**The meeting commenced at 6:10pm.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Notes and Actions** | **Action** |
|  | | |
| **1.** | **Apologies** |  |
|  | Apologies for absence were received from Kirsty Buckland, Vikki Waite, Sarah Fowler, Inspector Jeffery Smith - Roads Policing Specialist, Operations and Louise Crawford – Dogs Trust |  |
|  | | |
| **2.** | **Minutes and Actions from Previous Meetings** |  |
|  | The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record.  SL informed the meeting the Gwent Police Facebook page was informative and interesting providing updates and positive success cases in relation to the Police Dogs (PDs).  **Action 2**  DD advised the meeting that the general-purpose dog training course was taking place and would run for the following 6 weeks. DD to send future training dates to NW and CH for circulation to the visitors | **DD/CH** |
|  | | |
| **3.** | **Scheme Update** |  |
|  | NW informed the meeting the membership of the Animal Welfare Scheme, including the RSPCA representative and Dogs Trust representative had 8 volunteers. There had been no issues covering visits and it was agreed to continue with 6 visitors, and this would be revisited should there be any future issues.  NW asked visitors to continue to advise the Scheme Manager when visiting arrangements had been confirmed.  DD suggested that the dog handler’s rota relating to the dog at the top of the to be seen list could be shared with the visitors to arrange a convenient visit date and time. If a convenient time could not be agreed, then to move down to the next dogs in line, with priority on visiting all dogs within one year.  NW informed the meeting there were 2 dogs out of 19 waiting to be seen, the remaining dogs had been seen within the ast year.  NW thanked the visitors for visiting all the dogs within a year’s period.  NW informed the meeting that the visitor 3-year reviews have been completed, feedback from the visitors had been positive, and all minor issues had been addressed. One request was for the dog handlers’ work mobile numbers to be circulated. DD to send an updated list to CH for circulation.  NW advised the meeting that PD Max, had not been seen for a long period by visitors, having been at home with his handler, who was on long term leave. More recently, PD Max had been kennelled at Waterton where he received a priority visit in March from our visitors, no issues of concern were raised.  NW thanked the visitors for conducting the visit at short notice. Confirmation was received in April from the Scheme Manager in South Wales PCC’s office that their AW Visitors had also conducted a visit to PD Max and no issues were raised. However, an issue was raised when PD Chip was visited that he had cherry eye. DD to follow this up and provide an update.  DD informed the meeting that PD Max had recently developed a lump, and that the handler would be seeking medical attention.  A typo was noted on the date PD Max was last visited, CH to amend the date.  NW informed the meeting that sadly, PD Maui had passed away since our last meeting. Our condolences were passed on to his handler.  NW informed the meeting that PD Ruby was also visited in April and no concerns were raised.  NW advised the meeting that no major issues of concern had been raised in the animal welfare visitor reports provided to the OPCC since the last meeting. NW referred to the reporting of a cage being damaged in January and requested an update. AW informed the meeting a visit had been conducted, and an issue raised that 1 cage out of 2 in the handler’s vehicle was damaged but it was not a major issue due to the handler only having 1 PD. AW advised that the handler had reported the damaged cage.  DD informed the meeting that all defects were the responsibility of the handler to report. In an emergency the handler would be issued with a replacement vehicle. If it was not a major issue the defect would be corrected when the vehicle was serviced.  NW informed the meeting following the visitors’ 3 yearly review, the following feedback and questions were raised.   1. NW asked how long it is acceptable to keep the PDs in a vehicle?   DD confirmed there were no guidelines set and that the handlers exercise the PDs between operational call outs. On hot days the vehicle would be parked in the shade and all vehicles are fitted with vent locks.  SL asked whether all handlers were trained to use a dart gun. DD advised not all handlers were.   1. NW asked whether the PDs are ever in a permanent state of attack and how the handlers keep the PDs calm.   DD explained that the PDs were trained, well-balanced and respond to commands ensuring they were not in a constant state of excitement or aggression, meaning they can switch between different tasks as required without unnecessary stress or aggression.Their training includes socialisation standards where dogs must be able to walk through crowded areas on a lead without reacting aggressively, ensuring they were well-adjusted and manageable in different environments.   1. NW asked if there were areas to let the dogs exercise freely when they had been kept in the vans for long periods or wind down.   DD advised there were no dedicated areas for exercising the PDs and that they would be exercised anywhere within the Gwent area such as secure fields, disused industrial areas, on the lead or off which would be risk assessed by the handler.   1. NW asked if handler equipment was stored for replenishment or replacement or if the items ordered when required and whether this had an impact on service requirements.   DD informed the meeting there was a secure store available within working hours and an area within Maindee Police Station for out-of-hour use which all handlers had access to. The Sergeant would be informed when items were taken, and they would then be replenished.   1. NW asked if handlers home kennel checks had been carried out.   DD advised the home kennel checks were a work in progress; 3 checks had been carried out for the new handlers.  DD confirmed the new PDs who were in training were included in the list of dogs to be visited but noted as not currently operational, these PDs would be included in visits once training had been completed and they were fully operational.  NW advised the meeting that it had been raised that some kennel staff in Waterton kennels were reluctant to walk the PDs. DD had not been advised of any concerns. NW to request an update from the Scheme Manager in South Wales.  NW informed the meeting that visitors had advised some handlers had given permission for their PDs to be off the lead for animal welfare visits. Visitors had been advised that they should be observing the PDs whilst on the lead.  DD advised the meeting that the handlers were responsible for any interactions with the PDs. If the handler risk assessed the PD and thought it was appropriate, they would have to justify it.   1. NW asked DD if there were any public training events that the visitors could attend.   DD advised the meeting there were no planned public events but would advise the OPCC if this changes in the future.  DD informed the meeting that a handler had attended the Regional Trials in Avon and Somerset which was a public event.   1. NW asked DD if there could be any debriefs after attending an operational call out, so training could be amended if necessary. 2. She asked whether there were any issues with sharing knowledge and how often briefings took.   DD confirmed that debriefs took place and that all learning was shared.  NW informed the meeting that feedback from the visitors was that the handlers were very knowledgeable about their dogs and accommodating when visits were carried out. | **All visitors**  **DD**  **DD**  **CH**  **NW** |
| **4.** | **Operational Update from the Dog Section** |  |
|  | DD informed the meeting that PD Kai had retired to their handler. PD Missy had retired to their handler following the handler being promoted to another department. PD Rizo had been re-handled to another handler as a result of his handler leaving the organisation.  DD informed the meeting of the potential PDs who were currently on the general-purpose training course were: Denni, Max, Jack, Freya and Lando.  DD informed the meeting that the potential PDs had come from a breeder.  ES raised a concern about whether the breeder was a licensed, registered breeder and governed by the local authority. To ensure the breeder was not breaking licensing laws, DD would follow up.  DD informed the meeting that Police Support Unit (PSU) training was carried out annually and was currently taking place. All PDs would then be reaccredited on PSU tactics.  DD advised the meeting that potential PDs Chase, Chip and Reggie were undertaking their training, and all 3 dogs were sourced from the Dogs Trust.  DD informed the meeting of several positive operational results which included PD Misty locating one of Gwent’s most wanted who had failed to stop. PD Misty tracked, traced and located them.  PD Kona located a suicidal missing person following a 15-minute track.  PD Vesper tracked and traced 3 individuals who had decamped from a stolen vehicle.  PD Rizo tracked and located a suspect following a robbery by tracking through multiple surfaces; through woods, a housing estate and a building site and located the suspect in hiding amongst building materials.  DD informed the meeting that dog specific first aid kits had been secured and were awaiting delivery.  The first aid kit would be kept in the handler’s vehicle and a smaller first aid kit that the handler would carry on them in a drop-down leg harness. This would mainly be for use on the suspect but would contain items to aid the dog until the handler was back at the vehicle. First aid training for using the kits was scheduled to begin in the coming months. The training would equip handlers with the necessary skills to use the first aid kits effectively. The training would be conducted by Veterinary Task Force Limited, a company run by ex-military vets with extensive experience in emergency first aid.  DD informed the meeting that all new handlers would undertake the Dogs Trust 21 modules on looking after a dog followed by general-purpose training, the first aid training and a dangerous dog awareness course.  SL thanked the visitors for their persistence in addressing the need for dog first aid kits.  NW asked DD if there had been any issues with securing accommodation for the increase in dangerous dogs being seized.  DD advised the meeting this was a national issue and that seized dogs were kept in licensed kennels and cared for appropriately.  ES asked if the dogs were neutered. DD informed the meeting that female PDs were neutered once their training had been completed.  DD would bring a first aid kit to the next panel meeting for all to see. | **DD**  **DD** |
| **5.** | **AOB** |  |
|  | CH to circulate an updated list of dogs.  DD informed the meeting that he would be retiring in November 2025 and assured the meeting that handover process would be in place.  DD informed the meeting that the Policing model would be changing, and an update would be provided in due course in relation to the dog section and Roads Policing Specialist Operations.  Visitors asked if they could attend homes of handlers to conduct a visit. NW advised the meeting that visitors were unable to carry out handler home visits due to security and data protection reasons.  NW to discuss with the Police and Crime Commissioner about attending a visit.  NW to request an update on any improvements being made to the Waterton kennels and feedback to the visitors.  NW to send DD the visit report from Waterton carried out by The Dogs Trust.  DD informed the meeting that if following the Authorised Professional Practice (APP) guidelines all PDs should be issued with bedding unless otherwise recommended by the Veterinary practitioner. This had previously been a decision made by the handler.  DD informed the meeting that all enrichments and the welfare records of the PDs were recorded. | **CH**  **DD**  **NW**  **NW** |
|  | **Date of Next Meeting** |  |
|  | The next meeting will be held at **6pm, on 7th July 2025.** |  |

**Meeting concluded at 7:33pm**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Jane Mudd, Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent** | |
| I confirm I have considered whether or not I have any personal or prejudicial interest in this matter and take the proposed decision in compliance with my code of conduct.  Any such interests are recorded below.  The above decision log has my approval. | |
| Signed | Date  23.09.2025 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Contact Officer** |  |
| Name | Nicola Warren |
| Position | Governance Officer |
| Telephone | 01633 642200 |
| Email | Nicola.warren@gwent.police.uk |
| **Background papers** |  |