**Decision log: PCCG-013-2024**



**MINUTES OF THE ANIMAL WELFARE VISITING SCHEME**

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

**8th JULY 2024 at 6:00 PM**

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

Steve Lewis - Animal Welfare Visitor – (SL)

Andrew Watkins – Animal Welfare Visitor (AW)

Victoria Waite – Animal Welfare Visitor (VW)

Kirsty Buckland – Animal Welfare Visitor (KB)

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

Emma Smith – Inspector – RSPCA

Louise Crawford – Dogs Trust

Ceri Hiscox – Assistant Scheme Administrator, OPCC (CH)

**The meeting commenced at 6:05 p.m.**

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|  | **Notes and Actions** | **Action** |
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| **1.** | **Apologies** |  |
|  | Apologies for absence were received from Helen Lawless, Linda Mason, Kirsty Buckland, Sarah Fowler and Inspector Leighton Healan. |  |
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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.  **Actions**  DD informed the visitors that a twelve-week basic general-purpose dog training course was planned for September and January and a refresher training course was scheduled for early December, which visitors were welcome to observe. DD to confirm training dates, CH to circulate to the visitors.  DD advised the meeting a recruitment campaign was planned for August, and this would be an opportunity for the visitors to attend and observe the different stages of the recruitment process. DD to provide dates for circulation. | **DD/CH**  **DD/CH** |
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| **4.** | **Chair and Vice Chair Nominations** |  |
|  | NW informed the visitors there had been no nominations received for the roles of Chair or Vice Chair. SL confirmed he would be happy to accept the role as Chair, there were no objections from the meeting.  NW congratulated SL on accepting the role. NW would continue to undertake the role of Vice Chair. |  |
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| **5.** | **Scheme Update** |  |
|  | NW informed the meeting that a member had left the scheme as she was unable to commit to the time required for the role. We wished her well in her future endeavours.  NW advised the meeting there were seven members on the scheme and asked if they were happy to continue conducting monthly visits with that number or if they would prefer, she ran a recruitment campaign to increase visitor numbers. It was agreed by all members to remain with seven members and for NW to monitor going forward. ES offered to assist with covering a visit if required. NW thanked her for her assistance.  NW reminded visitors about the gifts and hospitality policy. The offer of gifts from volunteers can place the officers in a difficult position and that it was important for them to remain independent.  NW informed the meeting that seven dogs out of twenty-three had not received a visit within a year: one since 10th August 2022, three since the end of February and early March 2023 and three since June 2023. There were also new dogs who had recently joined the handlers so they would also need to be seen as a priority.  NW advised the visitors that two visits had been postponed due to the dog handlers being called out for operational duties just before the visit.  NW asked DD if it would be possible to have two handlers per visit instead of one to ensure a visit could take place in case one was called away for operational duties. DD confirmed providing resilience was a possibility, but it could be problematic at times with operational cover and annual leave.  NW informed the meeting a visit was conducted at Waterton Kennels and positive feedback was received from visitors in relation to the high level of care the police dogs received whilst staying there.  AW informed the meeting four Gwent Police (GP) dogs were visited at Waterton Kennels. All dogs were well looked after and in an exercise yard. The kennels were well organised and it was an impressive visit.  NW advised the meeting that GP dogs were housed there at times, so a visit could be undertaken every six months to check on their welfare. NW asked the visitors if they were interested in conducting a visit at Waterton in addition to the usual rota, to please contact her.  NW asked if there was an update in relation to kennel inspections at dog handlers’ homes as they were due. DD informed the meeting that inspections of home kennels would commence within the coming months.  NW asked visitors to continue to advise the Scheme Manager or Scheme Assistant when visiting arrangements had been confirmed.  NW advised the meeting that the Dogs Trust kindly offered online enrichment and dog welfare training sessions and congratulated the visitors who had completed the training. The training was interesting and informative and gave the opportunity to converse with other Scheme Managers and visitors. NW thanked the visitors for attending and the Dogs Trust for providing the training.  NW informed the visitors a newsletter from the Dogs Trust had been circulated with information regarding further online training. ES stated they had not received the letter and NW confirmed she would res-send.  DD advised the meeting that all dog handlers would be completing the online training modules.  NW asked visitors to inform the Scheme Manager when the training had been completed so it could be recorded in their visitor training record.  NW informed the meeting that no major issues for concern had been raised in the animal welfare visitor reports that had been provided to the OPCC since the last meeting. Two issues that had been raised were:   * Long waiting time for dogs in vehicles when awaiting officer to administer dart for dangerous dog. * Only one place to clean vehicle at police headquarters during office hours.   DD informed the members that since the new XL Bully legislation had come into force there had been a significant increase in the number of dangerous dog cases which had been time consuming. There were three handlers trained to use the Dart Gun with three more attending a course in October.  When the handlers were trained there would be a handler on each shift so this shouldn’t be an issue in future. In cases when a trained handler was not available, then an external vet would assist.  DD advised there were very few periods where the dogs were waiting in cars for long periods of time.  DD informed the members that when dangerous dogs were seized, they were transported to contracted secure kennel accommodation.  ES asked if a vet was present when a dart gun was administered. DD advised the members a specific area within the Cwmbran station had been registered as a veterinary outlet which allowed storage of the medication required for the dart guns. Before a handler could deploy a dart gun, authorisation from a vet was required and there was a vet available on call 24/7 to assist with the authorisation requirements.  DD advised the meeting when a dart gun had been deployed, the handlers had a duty of care for the seized dog and the dog would be transported to secure kennels. If the seized dog had any adverse reactions to the administered drug, it would be transported to the vet who would monitor the dog and the dog would then be taken to the secure kennels when stable.  DD informed the visitors there had been occasions when the secure kennels had been at full capacity and the dogs would be taken to private secure accommodation for a short period of time and would be transferred to the main secure kennels when available.    DD advised the meeting that handlers could travel within the force during their shifts to use the wash facilities. There was a caged area next to the dog bath at Blackwood that dogs could be placed into whilst the vehicle was being cleaned as well as a portable cage in Cwmbran. There was also an exercise yard in Maindee that can be used whilst the vehicle was being cleaned. However, there was no accommodation at Ystrad Mynach to put the dogs in but a spare cage from an old van was available, that could be taken there.  DD informed the members there were several wash facilities available around the force area that could be utilised outside of core office hours so there was no requirement for the handlers to have out of hours access to the facilities at Headquarters.  DD informed the members that whilst the seized dogs were in the secure kennels the force were responsible for them.  The force had a Dangerous Dogs Manager who would ensure the kennels were following legislation and also oversee the investigation and court process. | **All visitors**  **NW**  **All visitors** |
| **6.** | **Operational Update from the Dog Section** |  |
|  | DD informed the members that several Police Dogs (PD) had retired and there were several new PDs.  PD Mink had retired to his handler but unfortunately within a month of retirement he had a medical issue and sadly the decision was made to put him to sleep.  A decision was made to reduce the number of explosive PDs and PD Jim was retired and rehomed to an ex-explosives officer within another force area.  PD Chuckie and PD Freddie’s handler was retiring in the coming months, and they would be retiring with their handler.  PD Simba had developed psychological issues and was displaying signs of distress and anxiety whilst in the handler’s vehicle. A veterinary assessment was carried out which found no medical issues and following advice from the vet, the decision was made to retire Simba. The Force are still looking for a retirement home for Simba.  Following his surgery, PD Ralph had made a full recovery but unfortunately not enough to enable him to be operational and had been retired and rehomed.  PD Missy had retired with her handler as a result of handler promotion. However, due to a change in circumstances, the handler had returned to the section and PD Missy was reinstated as operational.  PD Ruby was retiring in the coming months.  DD advised the members four new PDs had completed the basic dog training course, namely PD Drago, PD Akela, PD Neo and PD Hades.  NW asked if the dogs were sourced from rescue charities. DD advised the members the new PDs had been sourced from a breeder.  DD advised the meeting that PD Jerry and PD Floyd would be attending the Olympics this year on a mutual aid operation.  DD informed the meeting of several positive operational results by the dogs which included PD Akela catching and detaining an offender using track and trace after the offender decamped from a stolen vehicle. PD Neo was also successful in locating a vulnerable person using track and trace.  DD informed the meeting there was no format for advertising the retired PDs looking to be rehomed. An internal notice would be advertised as well as an advert placed on social media forums.  DD requested that members contact him should they be interested or know anyone that would be interested in rehoming a retired PD.  DD was asked what protocol was in place for rehoming retired dogs. DD informed the meeting several due diligence checks and assessments would be conducted prior to a PD being rehomed.  LC informed the meeting that the Dogs Trust have a formal policy available for rehoming retired PDs.  DD confirmed the force would be open to adopting a policy from the Dogs Trust. DD to contact LC for a copy of the policy.  NW informed the visitors an updated list of PDs would be circulated. | **DD**  **CH** |
| **7.** | **AOB** |  |
|  | LC encouraged members to sign up to the Dogs Trust online training forum so the members would be notified of all new modules when added. She advised that training would only be free for this financial year. |  |
|  | **Date of Next Meeting** |  |
|  | The next meeting will be held at **6pm, on 14th October 2024.** |  |

**Meeting concluded at 6:53pm**

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| **Actions from Meeting dated 8th July 2024** | |  |  |  |
| **Minute Number** | **Action** | **Owner** | **Update** |  |
| **2.** | DD to confirm training dates, CD to circulate to the visitors. | **DD/CH** |  |  |
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| **5.** | NW asked the visitors if they were interested in conducting a visit at Waterton in addition to the usual rota, to please contact her. | **All visitors** |  |  |
| **5.** | NW asked visitors to inform the Scheme Manager when the training had been completed so it could be recorded in their visitor training record. | **All visitors** |  |  |
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