

Rother District Council

Report to: Cabinet

Date: 23 May 2022

Title: Stray Dog Contract

Report of: Head of Environmental Services, Licensing and Community Safety

Cabinet Member: Councillor Field

Ward(s): All

Purpose of Report: To seek approval to procure and appoint jointly with Hastings Borough Council, a contractor for stray dogs.

Decision Type: Key

Officer

Recommendation(s): It be **RESOLVED:** That:

- 1) as set out in Option 1 below, officers work with Hastings Borough Council to jointly procure and appoint a stray dog contractor with an estimated annual cost to Rother District Council of £40,000 and Wealden District Council of £40,000, for a term of three years with an option to extend for a further two years; and
- 2) delegated authority be granted to the Deputy Chief Executive to undertake all necessary actions to appoint a contractor.

Reasons for

Recommendations: There is a statutory requirement for a stray dog service to continue throughout the district.

It is believed that joint procurement with Hastings Borough Council will provide economies of scale and an efficient service to meet the needs of the community.

Introduction

1. The Council's current stray dog control service is carried out by a private contractor. The contract expires in March 2023.

Background

2. In 2018 the Council entered into a three-year contract with Animal Wardens Ltd, which included the option to extend the contract by two years to 31 March 2023. This option was enacted.
3. The service falls into three main areas of work:

- (i) the collection and transportation of stray dogs within four hours of being notified, including the provision of a customer contact centre;
 - (ii) the kennelling and care of dogs for up to seven days; and
 - (iii) the re-homing of unclaimed dogs after the seven-day period.
4. The Council is legally obliged to seize dogs and kennel stray dogs for seven days, after which time the dog becomes the property of the Council. The contractor can seek to recover the costs of the kennelling and transportation of the dog from the owner, if the owner reclaims the dog. The service complies with the statutory code of practice and currently costs the Council £36,000 per annum.
5. The procurement will be undertaken using the East Sussex Procurement Hub and will include Hastings, Rother and Wealden Councils. There is a possibility that Eastbourne and Lewes Councils will also take part. It is anticipated that this joint procurement will minimise any increase in costs.
6. The environmental health shared service management agreement with Wealden District Council (WDC) includes this service. The cost being re-charged to Wealden.

Options

7. There are two options:
- i. Work with Hastings Borough Council (HBC) and the East Sussex Procurement Hub to procure and appoint a new contractor based on a similar specification and with limited modification as referred to in paragraph 3 above. This has proved successful during the last 15 years, both operationally and economically.
 - ii. Carry out the service in-house by employing dog wardens directly. Three dog wardens would have to be employed to provide a twenty-four-hour service. This would still require the Council to have a contract with a kennels and make arrangements to rehouse dogs, not reunited after 7 days. This would present risks to the Council if kennels could not be procured at an economic cost over 3 to 5 years. This option would be cost prohibitive as well as operationally less efficient.

Conclusion

8. Approval is sought to tender the stray dog control contract this year, as the contract expires in March 2023 and this is the most cost effective way of providing this statutory service.

Financial Implications

9. The 2022/23 budget includes provision for expenditure of £40,000 on this service.

Legal Implications

10. RDC and HBC will work with the Procurement Hub to appoint a contractor in accordance with procurement legislation.

Human Resources Implications

11. Officers within the environmental health service will work with HBC officers to support the drafting of the specification and procurement process.

Risk Management

12. Failure to approve the authority to tender for a stray dog contract will mean the service ceases in March 2023 and Rother District Council will have to employ its own dog warden, kennelling and re-housing service to meet its statutory obligations, at a cost much greater than would otherwise be achieved through joint procurement.

Environmental

13. Failure to control stray dogs would have a negative impact, in that dogs roaming uncontrolled may foul pavements, bite persons or get injured by vehicles etc.

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	No
Crime and Disorder	No	Consultation	No
Environmental	Yes	Access to Information	No
Risk Management	Yes	Exempt from publication	No

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Appendices:	None
Relevant Previous Minutes:	CB17/31
Background Papers:	None
Reference Documents:	The Environmental Protection (Stray Dogs) Regulations 1992 (legislation.gov.uk)