SUBJECT: Getting tough on dog fouling – Creation of Dog squad

1. Synopsis

1.1 The creation of a dedicated “dog squad” of enforcement officers drawn from our contractors NSL and Parkguard is proposed. At 22 staff, it is believed to be the largest dedicated dog fouling enforcement team of its type in Britain. Their task will be to challenge the behaviour of those who do not clean up after their dogs by issuing offenders with fixed penalty notices (FPN). They will be supported by the Council’s street management officers whose role will be to promote Council’s key messages concerning responsible dog ownership and Council’s zero tolerance of dog fouling.

2. Recommendations

2.1 To create a dedicated “Dog squad” to undertake an intensive three month enforcement campaign from May 2012 against dog fouling in Islington.

2.2 To agree that the Service Director Public Realm will review the effectiveness of the campaign in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment at week eight and decide if it should be extended.

3. Background

3.1 Islington residents have become increasingly concerned about the level of dog fouling in public places caused by a small minority of irresponsible dog owners. Islington Council is on it side of its residents and will use all its power to free Islington people from the scourge of dog fouling.

3.2 The behaviour of people who fail to clean up after their dog has fouled is anti-social, unhygienic and in breach of the council’s dog control order and therefore also illegal. In order to tackle the behaviour of those who fail to clean up after their dog, the Council is asked to approve an unprecedented enforcement campaign.
3.3 The proposal is for 16 Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) to be deployed on a daily basis Monday to Sunday between the hours of 06.00 to 22.00, and taking guidance from an existing supervisor for situations out of the ordinary or for support. Park Guard will provide support to the CEO’s and provide information, advice and enforcement against the range of dog control order offences. The support will be provided by 3 teams of 2 staff, working 12 hrs per day, 7 days per week.

3.4 Park Guard will also provide four Top Dog training/advice events during the campaign to support the initiative by providing advice to dog owners, including those issued with FPN’s.

3.5 The council will monitor the performance of the contractors and provide back-office support to process the penalty notices, consider appeals and arrange court action against those who fail to pay the fixed penalty notices.

3.6 Council will take a tough line against anyone who commits an offence and refuses to pay the fine, because if the council does not prosecute these offences, the message will be sent out that our enforcement has “no teeth” and dog fouling will continue at current levels.

Council should publicise its policy of pursuing offenders through the courts, the amount of convictions it secures in the court and name and shame individuals who do are successfully prosecuted in the courts for non payment of dog fouling fines.

3.7 It is expected that local hot spots across the borough will be patrolled in a systematic way and the deployment of resources will be undertaken by utilising local intelligence and pro-active and reactive patrols in parks, open spaces and streets. The patrolling officers will use covert and overt techniques and will use a mixture of plain clothes and high visibility patrols.

3.8 The support of local residents will be crucial to identifying local hotspots and potential offenders.

The ‘Shop a Dropper’ campaign would be aimed directly at those engaged in dog fouling and would encourage local people to contact a dedicated ‘hot line’ where relevant information could be left in confidence. This campaign will involve extensive use of posters and social media. The campaign would heavily promote the fact that council has a dedicated team of enforcement officers that are seeking to enforce fines.

By promoting a ‘local call to arms’ through the Shop a Dropper campaign and the hot line, local people would be empowered to contribute their streets being cleaner.

3.9 If agreed, it is envisaged that the campaign will start in May for an initial three month period. This will cover the spring and early summer months with their longer hours of daylight.

3.10 Although the main objective of the project is to tackle the problem of dog fouling, including where necessary the issuing of fixed penalty notices to offenders, the contractor will also be able to issue tickets for littering. The purpose of the campaign is to improve the environment and condition of Islington’s streets and open spaces for the benefit of Islington residents

4. Implications

Financial implications:

4.1 The three month campaign will cost around £210k. Based upon current levels dog fouling, FPN issues and recovery rates it is estimated that the campaign will be self-financing with the income collected covering the £210k costs. However if there is a swift and sudden change in public behaviour, the cost of the dog squad and the enforcement campaign will not be recouped, this will in turn lead to a budget shortfall within the Environment & Regeneration department.

The additional back office support could cost an additional £30k. Initially it is hoped that this can be maintained utilising existing capacity but may lead to an additional budget pressure.
Legal Implications:

4.2 Fixed penalty notices may be issued to people committing an offence under the Fouling of Land by Dogs (London Borough of Islington) Order 2008. The Order may by enforced both by Council officers and also by employees of the Council’s contractors authorised by the Council to carry out the function of giving notices.

The level of resources deployed towards enforcing the provisions of the Order relating to dog fouling is a matter for the Council to determine but should be reasonable having regard to the extent of the problem that needs addressing.

Equality Implications:

4.3 The EIA was completed as part of the previous Dog Control Order consultation and development.

5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

5.1 Dog fouling is high on the list of local people’s environmental concerns. This three month campaign will enable the Council to gauge the effectiveness of a dedicated resource targeted at changing people’s behaviour through a concerted enforcement campaign.

5.2 The recommendations are to agree to the three month enforcement campaign and to review its effectiveness at week eight in order to decide whether the dog squad campaign should be extended for another three months.

Final report clearance:

Signed by:

Paul Smith

8.3.12

Executive Member for Environment Date

Received by:

Head of Democratic Services Date

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