

Committee:	Dated: 12/01/2021
Housing Management and Almshouses Sub-Committee	
Subject: Pets Policy Review	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	1, 12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	£
What is the source of Funding?	
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N
Report of: Director of Community and Children's Services	For Decision
Report author: Liam Gillespie, Head of Housing Management	

Summary

The Housing Division's Pets Policy has been re-evaluated as part of the ongoing housing management policy review. A resident consultation exercise was held which generated 348 responses from residents.

More than half of residents who expressed a firm opinion were in favour of retaining the current policy on dog-free estates. Officers propose that the current policy is retained, though Members may wish to indicate whether they think further consultation is required on this issue in future.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Approve the reviewed Pets Policy for use by the Housing Division
- Indicate whether further consultation is considered necessary on any aspect of the Policy

Main Report

Background

1. The Pets Policy was last approved by this Sub-Committee in 2017. It was reviewed as part of the project to refresh our housing management policies, which started in 2018.

2. Historically, residents on City of London housing estates were not permitted to keep cats or dogs, other than assistance dogs, with some limited exceptions. Other pets have been allowed for many years without permission being required.
3. In recent years, following resident consultation, the policy was relaxed in relation to cats and residents may now keep up to two house cats, though the prohibition on dogs has remained in place.
4. Previous consultations on the issue of dog ownership have resulted in most residents supporting the dog-free estates policy.
5. We consulted residents again in October and November 2020 on the current policy and the results are contained in **Appendix One**.

Current Position

6. We received 348 responses to the question about dog ownership; 49% of respondents were against dog ownership, 45% were in favour. The remaining 6% did not express a preference either way.
7. Across all estates, most respondents favoured retaining the current policy on dog ownership, though Members will note that the result was very close (155 in favour of dog ownership, 171 against).
8. The picture varied by estate, with some estates being in favour of allowing dog ownership. In some cases, however, this is based on relatively low numbers of responses.
9. The results on exotic pet ownership were clearer, with almost 70% of respondents on all estates in favour of retaining the current prohibition.
10. A summary of comments made by respondents is contained in **Appendix Two**. Some themes emerge:
 - Those in favour of dog ownership tend to point to the health and wellbeing benefits of dog ownership, especially for isolated people or children and families
 - Those against dog ownership tend to be concerned about nuisance caused by irresponsible dog ownership, fouling of green spaces and animal welfare concerns around keeping dogs in flats with no outside space
11. It can also be noted from the comments that some residents want a 'no pets' policy and expressed regret that cats had been allowed.

Proposals

12. Given the result of the consultation in relation to dogs, it is proposed that the current policy on dog ownership is maintained until the policy is next reviewed. The draft policy is submitted on this basis.
13. Approving the draft policy would not prevent officers from conducting further consultation on the issue of dog ownership at an appropriate point in the future, should Members consider this desirable. This could take the form of a more in-depth consultation, with independent facilitation and a more detailed discussion with residents around the themes that emerged from the recent consultation. Any consultation exercise could include some proposals from the Housing Division on how it might manage dog and cat ownership among residents, were the policy to be relaxed.
14. Many local authorities allow dog ownership subject to permission being sought first. Any permission is normally conditional on the breed of dog being suitable for the type of home in question, and the owner looking after the welfare of the dog and ensuring it does not cause a nuisance. This approach aims to balance animal welfare and housing management considerations with the enjoyment that residents would get from keeping a dog.
15. It will be noted that the policy in relation to sheltered housing is that neither dogs nor cats are currently permitted. This issue could also form part of any future consultation exercise, given the potential benefits of pet ownership to the wellbeing of people who live alone (as many of our sheltered housing residents do).

Corporate & Strategic Implications

16. This policy supports the Housing Strategy outcome of “well-managed estates that people are happy and proud to live in”, as it assists officers in effectively managing pet ownership which, if not managed properly, can adversely affect residents’ enjoyment of their homes and estates.

Conclusion

17. Following a consultation exercise, the Housing Division’s Pets Policy is re-submitted for approval. A majority of respondents to the consultation supported the existing policy in relation to dogs, though the picture differed by estate.
18. The Policy has been submitted on the basis that the position on dogs remains unchanged, though Members may wish to consider whether they consider that further consultation might be desirable in relation to dog ownership or any other aspect of the Policy.

Appendices:

- **Appendix One:** summary of responses to consultation
- **Appendix Two:** respondents' comments
- **Appendix Three:** draft Pets Policy (version 2.0)

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