

Department of Community and
Children's Services - Housing Division

PETS POLICY CONSULTATION: Information Booklet



Visit the webpage for
information on the consultation:
bit.ly/pets-policy



This booklet explains the proposed changes to the Pets Policy and how to participate in the survey.

What's happening?

- We're asking you about allowing dogs on your estates.
- We held workshops to hear your thoughts.
- The survey will determine the final recommendation to Committee, for a decision to be made.

How will the survey work?

- You'll receive a survey pack with this booklet.
- Vote by mail and return it in the pre-paid envelope.
- We aim for at least 500 responses.

Why can't we have different policies per estate?

- It would be unfair to residents based on location.
- It would make it difficult to manage.
- The survey result and final decision will apply to all estates equally.

What would a new Pets Policy look like?

- Residents would need approval to own a dog.
- Specific rules would apply, like lead requirements and waste disposal.
- At this stage, we do not anticipate an increase in service charges for managing dogs.

What about existing pet restrictions in leases?

- We're seeking to update leases for all residents.
- This removes the current pet ban and allows the new policy if approved", suggest "would mirror the pets policy.

Take action!

- Review this booklet and the survey questions.
- Vote by returning your survey.





Introduction

The City of London's Housing Division is currently consulting on our Pets Policy, as we have done every three years. We have held a number of workshops across our estates and online, working with CALM Mediation (an independent mediation service) to ensure that this consultation is done in a way that makes residents feel comfortable and involved.

Two key recommendations that came out of the consultation workshops were that we use a fair and independent ballot process that ensures as high a turnout as possible and delivers a fair result from a fair survey. The second recommendation was that we provide as much information as possible for residents to read before they take part in the survey.

We've partnered with Acuity, an organisation with over 25 years of experience in conducting fair and resident-focused surveys, to help us draft and run this survey process. This booklet provides as much information as possible on the topics raised during the consultation process to ensure you have a complete picture before completing the survey.



Summary of resident feedback

Calm Mediation held 10 in person workshops and 2 online.

Online:

- Thursday 7 March
- Tuesday 27 February

In person:

- Monday 4 March - Middlesex Street Estate
- Tuesday 5 March - Golden Lane Estate
- Wednesday 6 March - Dron House
- Monday 11 March - Holloway & York Way Estates
- Tuesday 12 March - Southwark Estate
- Wednesday 13 March - Avondale Square Estate
- Thursday 14 March - Windsor House

Specific workshops were held on the sheltered housing estates:

- Monday 18 March – Isleden House
- Tuesday 19 March – Harman Close
- Friday 22 March – City of London Almshouses

How will this survey work?

We are sending a survey pack to all residents by mail. This pack will include:

- This information booklet
- A cover letter from the City of London and Acuity
- A one-page questionnaire (A4 or A5) for you to vote on
- A pre-paid envelope for easy return

We're aiming for at least 500 responses based on the expertise of Acuity. This will ensure statistically significant results that accurately reflect the views of our residents.

During the consultation sessions, some residents suggested having separate surveys and potentially different pet policies for each estate. We appreciate the suggestion, but here's why a single survey with one policy for all estates makes the most sense:

- **Fairness:** Having different policies based on location could discriminate against residents. Someone living on one estate wouldn't be allowed a dog, while someone else living nearby could, simply because of their address.
- **Mobility:** Residents often move between estates, sometimes due to emergencies. Different policies could create issues in these situations.
- **Consistency:** A single policy ensures all residents have the same expectations and responsibilities regarding pets.

Therefore, we'll be conducting a single survey across all estates, with one vote per household. The final policy will apply equally to all City of London housing estates.

Potential future Pets Policy

It's important to understand that any new pet policy, including one allowing dogs, will be subject to ongoing review. However, reversing a decision to allow dogs would be a complex process. Therefore, the future focus of policy reviews will primarily be on managing the policy effectively.

In the next section, we'll outline what a potential future pet policy, allowing dogs, might look like based on resident feedback from the consultation sessions.

How would we manage dogs on your estate?

If the survey results allow dogs, here's how we propose managing them on your estates:

- **Resident Application & Approval:** Residents will need to apply for permission to own a dog, which will require City of London (CoL) approval.
- **Dog Register:** CoL will maintain a register of residents with dogs, including photos.
- **Ownership Agreement:** Residents must sign an agreement outlining pet ownership rules.
- **Dog Size & Breed:** The dog's size should be appropriate for the property, and dangerous or banned breeds will not be allowed.
- **Pet Requirements:** Proof will be required for microchipping, vaccinations and vet registration.
- **Home Visits:** CoL reserves the right to conduct home inspections as needed.
- **One Dog Limit:** Residents will only be allowed one dog per household.

Responsible dog ownership

If dogs were permitted, here's how we propose managing them on your estates:

- **Nuisance Behaviour:** Owners are responsible for their dogs' behaviour. This includes preventing them from disturbing neighbours or fouling in communal areas. Failure to comply could result in warnings, legal action, or even mandatory rehoming of the dog.
 - **Warning System:**
 - **1st Breach:** Verbal Warning
 - **2nd Breach:** Written Warning
 - **3rd Breach:** Legal Action
- **Dog Registration:** All dogs must be registered. Failure to register will impact your tenancy.
- **Leaving Dogs Unattended:** Residents must sign a document confirming their dog won't be left alone for extended periods due to work, education, etc.
- **Reporting Policy Breaches:** Residents can anonymously report breaches of the policy to the estate office.
- **Leash Requirement:** Dogs must be kept on a leash at all times within the estate grounds.
- **Restricted Areas:** Dogs are not allowed in children's play areas.
- **Exercise:** Dogs must be taken off the estate for exercise.

Impact on service charges

A common question at the consultation sessions was how service charges might be affected by policy change. Here's what we know:

- **Dog Waste Bins:** We anticipate a small increase in service charges to cover the cost of providing and emptying special dog waste bins across the estates if these are implemented. Plans to implement and the exact amount is still under review.
- **Policy Management:** Managing any changes to the Pets Policy itself is not expected to affect service charges. This will be handled within existing staffing structures.

Impact on Leaseholders

A key question that came out of the consultation with residents was how would this impact leaseholders who have a clause prohibiting pets in their lease? As a result, we have taken legal advice on the potential options going forward.

It has been advised that regardless of outcome of the survey, the City of London should look to update leases so that the clause is adjusted to one that means leaseholders will benefit from the City of London's Pets Policy, rather than a specific pets prohibition in their individual lease. This needs to be done as the leases do not reflect the current Pets Policy anyway, and the prohibition of all pets is unfair on leaseholders and their families. Consequently, regardless of any changes that may happen to the policy, updating the leases would be the best course of action.

Therefore, there is an additional question on the survey for leaseholders, which asks: *"Would you agree to the City of London updating your lease so that your property will benefit from the City of London Housing Services Pets Policy, instead of being bound by the current lease provisions?"*. If there are enough positive answers and we decide to update the leases, we will send further communications in due course about the process and actions to be taken to make this change.

