

# City of London Corporation Committee Report

<b>Committee:</b> Natural Environment Board	<b>Dated:</b> 11 Dec 2025
<b>Subject:</b> Responsible Dog Ownership – City Gardens	<b>Public report:</b> For Decision
<b>This proposal</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes</b></li> <li>• <b>provides statutory duties</b></li> <li>• <b>provides business enabling functions</b></li> </ul>	Dynamic Economic Growth Leading Sustainable Environment Providing Excellent Services Flourishing Public Spaces
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	No
<b>If so, how much?</b>	N/A
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	N/A
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	N/A
<b>Report of:</b>	Katie Stewart
<b>Report author:</b>	Jake Tibbetts

## Summary

Following the February 2024 report to Committee concerning dog-related issues at Bunhill Fields, a new City Gardens Keeper role was created to enhance byelaw enforcement and promote responsible dog ownership. Since the appointment of the Keeper in October 2024, there has been a significant and sustained improvement in compliance and behaviour among dog owners.

Data collected over the first year demonstrates a sharp decline in issue-based interventions and aggressive incidents, with no further issues recorded after June 2025. Dog fouling incidents remain at a low level and are primarily observed during periods when the Keeper is not on site. Feedback from stakeholders, including the Friends of City Gardens, indicates that the presence of the Keeper has greatly improved the overall atmosphere and safety of Bunhill Fields.

Data from other City Gardens sites highlights that while most sites experience low levels of irresponsible dog ownership there are two sites (West Smithfield Rotunda and St Barts the Great) which would benefit from the same approach employed at Bunhill.

Given these improvements and the current low level of incidents, it is not considered necessary or proportionate to pursue a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) at this stage.

## **Recommendation(s)**

Members are asked to:

**Endorse** the continuation of the current proactive and relationship-based approach to promoting responsible dog ownership at Bunhill Fields and across City Gardens sites.

**Agree** that the introduction of PSPOs should not be pursued at this time, but the situation should be kept under review, with a further report brought to Committee should issues re-emerge.

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. During the pandemic there was a significant rise in dog ownership across London including the City of London. In 2022 and 2023 we received an increase in dog related issues being reported to us as well as concerns raised by staff and volunteers. In particular there was a concentration of issues located in Bunhill Fields.
2. In February 2024, a report was presented to this committee in which Members were asked to:
  - Endorse the creation of a **City Gardens Keeper** role to enforce byelaws and legislation across City Gardens sites, initially focused on Bunhill Fields.
  - Support the **exploration of PSPOs** and other enforcement powers to improve user experience.
3. Members agreed to the above proposals and asked that a report to update on the effectiveness of the approach be brought back to committee after one year so that approaches could be adapted as required.

### **Current Position**

4. Following committee approval, a Keeper was recruited and commenced duties in October 2024. The post holder adopted a proactive, educational approach, focused on promoting responsible dog ownership through:
- Face-to-face engagement with dog owners.
  - Distribution of leaflets explaining expected behaviour.
  - Improved and updated signage.
  - Use of chalkboards for informal messaging (example in Figure 1)
  - Relationship-building with regular dog owners and early intervention where needed.



Figure 1: Example of Chalk Board

### Recorded Data (Jan–Oct 2025):

5. As part of the role, the Keeper recorded actions and interventions made under the following headings:

- Intervention – No Issue; Speaking to dog owners where no issue has arisen.
- Intervention - Issue; Dog issues where intervention was required, these are where dogs have been off the lead in beds or shown aggression to other dogs.
- Dog mess – Where dog faeces have been found

	Intervention - no issue	Intervention – Issue	Dog Mess
Jan	6	13	4
Feb	10	10	5
Mar	30	7	14
Apr	3	1	5
May	2	2	15
Jun	0	0	15
Jul	0	0	11
Aug	0	0	3
Sep	1	0	3
Oct	1	0	0
Grand Total	53	33	76

Table 1

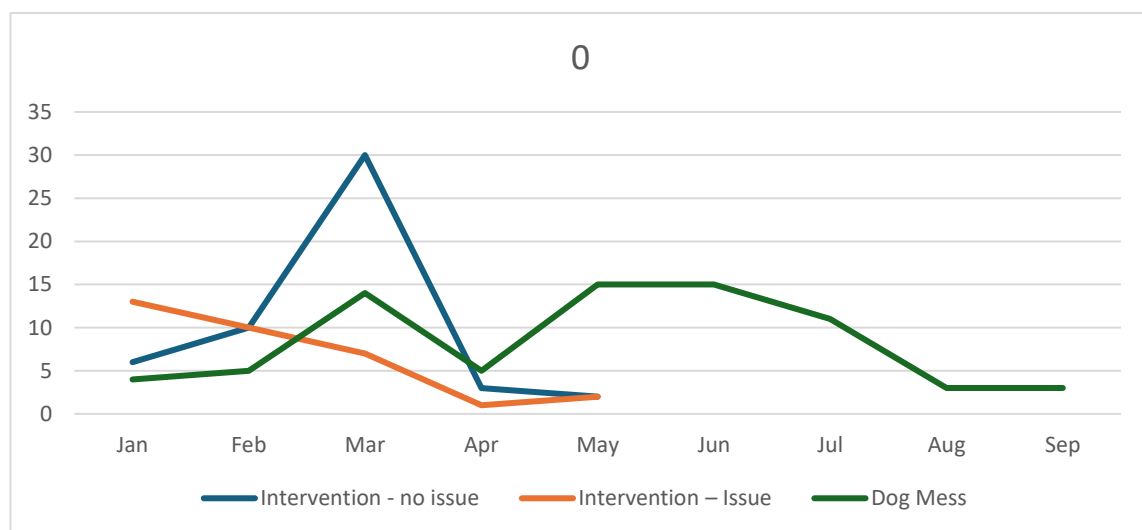


Chart 1

## Key findings:

6. Issue-based interventions steadily decreased month-on-month until June, after which no further issues were reported. There were two incidents of dog aggression which were recorded early in the year; and there have been none recorded since then. Dog mess incidents occur mainly during weekends when the Keeper is not on site and are now considered low level.

## 2.4 Stakeholder feedback:

7. The introduction of a keeper at Bunhill Fields has been widely welcomed from various stakeholders. This includes both dog owners and the wider community. The Chair of the Friends of City Gardens, who undertake a significant amount of work in Bunhill Fields provided the following statement.

*“Since the new Keeper at Bunhill has been in post there has been a significant improvement in the behaviour of dog owners and other members of the public in Bunhill Fields. The Keeper is very much more visible on site because his shifts include late afternoons and some weekends. He has used leaflets, and hand drawn notice boards to explain what responsible behaviour means in practice and has engaged directly with many of the regular dog owners to build a relationship. I have noticed that the garden is much calmer and feels safer. Dog owners no longer throw balls into flower beds and keep their dogs under control and away from volunteers working in the public area or children playing.*

*– Chair, Friends of City Gardens*

## Data from Other City Gardens Sites

8. Data, gathered by the City Gardens team from other sites across the City, provides a valuable wider context. While most sites report minimal issues, Smithfield Rotunda Garden accounts for almost 80% of all recorded incidents of irresponsible ownership. St Bartholomew the Great also shows elevated levels of dog fouling. Both sites would benefit from targeted engagement or short-term deployment of the Keeper resource to replicate the success achieved at Bunhill Fields.

Row Labels	Irresponsible Ownership	Dog Mess
Barbican Estate	1	8
Beech Gardens	0	0

Finsbury Circus Gardens	2	0
Postman's Park	2	0
Smithfield Rotunda Garden	59	2
St. Bartholomew the Great	10	16
Thomas More Garden	1	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>25</b>

**Table 2**

### **Consideration of Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs)**

9. PSPOs, introduced under the *Anti-social Behaviour, Crime, and Policing Act 2014*, can be used to regulate behaviour related to irresponsible dog ownership in public spaces. However, PSPOs require:
  - Evidence of persistent, detrimental behaviour affecting public safety or well-being.
  - A formal consultation process and justification of necessity.
10. Given the marked improvement in compliance and the absence of a demonstrable problem across the majority of sites, pursuing a PSPO would not currently be justified or proportionate.
11. Notably, only 25 dog mess incidents were recorded across all other City Gardens sites over the past year, half of which were concentrated in a single location.
12. A review of the existing byelaws is recommended to ensure they remain relevant and enforceable in relation to dog ownership within City Gardens.

### **Options**

#### **1. Option 1 - Continue with the current approach – Recommended**

To maintain the educational and engagement-based strategy that has proven successful at Bunhill Fields. In addition to this, replicate the approach across other City Gardens sites.

#### **2. Option 2 - Introduce PSPOs across City Gardens sites – Not Recommended**

This would enable stronger enforcement powers but given the current low level of incidents and the positive results already achieved, this approach could be considered disproportionate and it is also unlikely, given the evidence that the threshold for obtaining a PSPO would be reached.

## Proposals

13. Option 1 is the recommended approach as it has already demonstrated its effectiveness with a sharp decline in issue-based interventions, showing a clear behavioural shift among dog owners. The number of dog fouling incidents has also stabilised. Though still present, they are low-level and primarily occur when the Keeper is off-site, indicating the Keeper's presence is a strong deterrent.
14. Pursuing a PSPO would require formal consultation, legal justification, and enforcement infrastructure, which is disproportionate given the current low level of incidents.
15. The current approach is cost-effective, community-oriented, and adaptable without the requirement for legal enforcement.
16. It is proposed that the team continue to record and monitor the situation both at Bunhill Fields and other City Gardens sites. This will allow for responsive adjustments if issues re-emerge, without prematurely resorting to punitive measures.

## Corporate & Strategic Implications

17. **Financial implications** – Minimal, as the current approach makes efficient use of existing resources.
18. **Resource implications** – Potential for flexible redeployment of Keeper resource to identified hotspots.
19. **Legal implications** – contained within the body of the report.
20. **Risk implications** – Low, with monitoring in place to detect any emerging trends.
21. **Equalities implications** – Positive; promotes equitable use of public space.
22. **Climate implications** – Neutral.
23. **Security implications** – N/A.

## Conclusion

24. The appointment of the City Gardens Keeper in October 2024 has led to sustained improvement in dog owner behaviour at Bunhill Fields.

Responsible ownership has increased markedly, and aggressive incidents have been eliminated since June 2025.

25. Data from other City Gardens sites shows that, while most areas remain low risk, a small number would benefit from targeted attention. Expanding the principles of the Bunhill Fields model to these sites represents a proportionate and effective next step.
26. The current proactive, educational, and relationship-based approach has proven highly successful and should continue to form the cornerstone of the City's approach to responsible dog ownership across City Gardens.

## **Appendices**

None

## **Background Papers**

Dog Control Within City Gardens

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