

Darlington Responsible Dog Owners Action Group

Proposal to Darlington Borough Council

We believe that the introduction of PSPO's as proposed to cabinet on 5th November 2019 are not necessary and that an alternative approach would benefit the residents of Darlington.

PSPO's divide communities, create resentment, criminalise normally law-abiding citizens, create wider welfare concerns for dogs and generally Councils are ill equipped to enforce legislation. Consequently, the issues remain un-addressed. This is evidenced within the Kennel Club reports on PSPO's and by campaigning Government for a rethink on how dog controls are managed.

The impact assessment produced for cabinet does not demonstrate any evidence of anti-social behaviour involving dogs, it does not provide any evidence of an Equalities Impact Assessment, evidence of discrimination against assistance dogs, evidence of displacement of activity, evidence of environmental impact, or evidence of additional cost to DBC. More crucially it does not provide any communication of how to identify problems, due cause and effect, or solutions into how to deal with dog related issues other than to produce sweeping borough wide legislation which fails to meet the legal tests required for PSPO's. Dog fouling is an issue for the borough but the current strategy by DBC is inadequate and fails to address the current problems.

Prior to the introduction of the Statutory Consultation process DBC is required to contact affected bodies, businesses and national organisations – it has failed to do so.

We believe that the current consultation process is not fit for purpose although it clearly meets the statutory requirement within the Home Office protocol.

We have come together as a group of individuals, both dog owners and non dog owners, businesses that work with dogs and businesses that facilitate dogs to ask DBC to consider an alternative proposal. Our group has the energy, expertise, experience and contacts to enable DBC to provide a coherent dog policy for the residents businesses and visitors to Darlington.

We have secured a unique opportunity for DBC as national organisations such as Dogs Trust and The Kennel Club have declared that they will provide resources, media and support to an alternative strategy, so that DBC can be seen as leading the way. (The support from The Kennel Club will only be available if DBC suspend the Statutory Consultation process)

We urge you to engage with the following objectives

- 1) To engage key stakeholders to form a Dog Policy working group for Darlington
- 2) To produce an inclusive resident survey together with input from all stakeholders to ensure that welfare, disability, education, animal welfare, displacement, cause and effect, are identified and represented.
- 3) To agree a strategy to deal with dog related issues, both legislative and how to deal with and effectively target offenders
- 4) Schools education programme delivered by The Dogs Trust
- 5) Promotion of good citizen scheme for dog owners with marketing support
- 6) Kennel Club manager from Keep Britain Tidy scheme will assist in management and assist in promoting DBC as council of excellence in dog policy management.
- 7) Best use of resources and engage business sponsorship to deal with dog fouling and create environmental green solution to dog waste.
- 8) Promotion of Darlington as open for business to paw pound (UK pet industry is worth c £ 4billion)