



COMMUNITY COUNCIL LIAISON COMMITTEE SUB-COMMITTEE – 23RD APRIL 2008

1. FLOWER DISPLAYS AND LOCATIONS

- 1.1 Sites this year will include all previous locations with one or two amendments, colour and planting schemes have been drawn up during the autumn of 2007 by Parks Officers, specific plant numbers have been procured and are presently being grown to order.
- 1.2 Some changes are being adopted this year to some locations in order to try and provide a greater all year round feature in terms of colour, including autumn colour and shape with height to the beds location. These plantings are more cost efficient by providing greater protection against theft, more resistance to hot temperatures in summers and during cold windy periods in the winter. The main criteria for the chosen locations is land ownership, the land has to be within the ownership of the authority, normally land under the control and responsibility of the parks section within the Directorate of the Environment.
- 1.3 Other locations are sometimes used, such as highway roundabout locations, the higher maintenance and associated costs are funded by our sponsors, i.e. town councils and private organisations. Signs are erected on such locations conforming to the Chief Engineers guidance.
- 1.4 Where new displays are created at a new location held by parks services, these are normally either a new sponsored site or occur as a result of a similar site being removed in the locality due to persistent vandalism or theft of plants/displays or the loss of the land due to highway changes or sale for development.
- 1.5 Finally, other factors used in our evaluation include the aspect of the area chosen for the new flower bed display, this includes its orientation to surrounding buildings and mature trees, its openness to sun light in the summer and the impact to our public as a visual amenity throughout the year.
- 1.6 The move to more permanent planting schemes is in line with the national trend to provide sustainable colourful features to the public, with water conservation and the supplying companies now openly looking at restrictions on councils and organisations using clean water to maintain floral features, the challenge to us in parks services is to try and develop greater use of "grey water" provision, especially for hanging baskets and street trough displays.
- 1.7 Parks Officers are currently exploring the opportunities to fund such systems, building on the one system we operate out of Morgan Jones park in Caerphilly.

2. CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL ANIMAL TRESPASS SERVICE

- 2.1 This report provides information on the animal trespass service following a request by the Community and Town Council representatives. It does not cover the actions taken by the Council with regard to straying dogs. It relates mainly to sheep, cattle and horses.

LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 2.3 The Council has objectives to maintain and improve the living environment, health and wellbeing. Straying animals present a danger particularly on the highway and a nuisance within residential areas. The Council therefore utilises discretionary powers to control this problem.

INTRODUCTION

- 2.4 Whilst the local authority does not hold any statutory responsibility for straying animals, there are discretionary powers it is able to use to address this neighbourhood problem. The Animals Act 1971 and Mid Glamorgan Act 1987 allow the local authority to collect and impound straying animals and charge a reasonable fee for the release to the owner.
- 2.5 The Animals Act contains provisions based on common law and relates to livestock belonging to any person straying onto land in the ownership or occupation of another person. That person can then hold the livestock and recover expenses reasonably incurred from the owner. If detained for 14 days and not reclaimed by the owner, the animals can be disposed of by sale at market or other means.
- 2.6 The Mid Glamorgan Act applies to part of the County Borough and is similar to the Animals Act but specifically gives powers to the local authority to collect straying animals and only requires animals to be detained for 7 days before disposal if unclaimed. There are procedures for notifying the owner, if known, of the animals that have been collected.
- 2.7 The semi rural nature of the County Borough and large tracts of common land close to communities has resulted in historic problems of straying animals, particularly sheep. The causes range from poorly maintained and vandalised fencing together with the difficulties of maintaining the enclosure of large areas of common land.
- 2.8 The current animal trespass service is a team of two officers supported where necessary by four other officers who undertake dog warden and pest control duties. The Council has a facility for holding strays and appropriate vehicles for the collection of animals. The officers will patrol known hot spot locations and respond to requests, targeting specific times when known to be a problem. They will also carry out small items of repair work to fences where identified.
- 2.9 The service will be operated during the standard flexible office hours 7am to 7pm. However, if a problem is identified and confirmed, and is regularly occurring at other times of the day, such as early morning, in the evening or on a weekend, then targeted patrols will be scheduled for these circumstances, to collect the animals and achieve a resolution.
- 2.10 The Council reviewed its arrangements in 2002 when it was concerned that the collection and release arrangements to the owner did not reflect the actual costs of providing the service and therefore did not present an adequate deterrent. At that time the fees were raised significantly to reflect actual costs and this had an impact on reducing the problem.
- 2.11 The current charges for release of collected strays are £40 impounding fee per animal and £22.50 daily charge. Only a few animals collected are reclaimed by the owners, and this suggests that the charges remain such that the value of the animal will be less than the charge for release. It is therefore not considered beneficial at this time to alter these charges. Costs are recovered from the sale of animals not retrieved, usually through sale at market.

2.12 The following table provides the details of the service activity.

	2007/8	2006/07
Number of requests or service	317	304
Number of stray animals collected	43	47
Number reclaimed by owners	7	0
Number of dead animals collected	15	10

2.13 The team regularly patrol the district concentrating on a limited number of 'hotspot' locations. These include Upper Rhymney Valley, A467 Newbridge to Aberbeeg, A467 Cwmcarn to Abercarn and Brynmynach, Tredomen.

2.14 The patrols will look for strays as well as signs of damage to fencing. The collection of strays will be practical if they can be shepherded to a safe location where they can be loaded onto the vehicle. The team will use their discretion and the use of the sheep dog in these circumstances. Often on the highway this cannot be carried out safely. In these situations the officers will achieve the best practicable solution, for example, by shepherding the animals back into a field and carrying out some temporary fence repairs. The officers are often able to identify the owners of the animals from markings and will routinely contact them to bring any problems of straying to their attention, to warn them of the costs of retrieval if the animals are impounded and to request responsible ownership and regular maintenance of fencing.

2.15 The contact with the owners and regular patrols therefore hopefully acts as a deterrent. Problems still occur from irresponsible owners and issues such as vandalism. Regular offenders have been required to attend formal meetings at the Council offices to discuss resolution of the problems. These meetings are followed up in writing stating the legal responsibilities of the owner.

2.16 The 2008/9 animal trespass element of the pest control, dog warden and animal trespass service budget is estimated to be £ 61,231 and this mainly covers the cost of salaries, vehicles and the animal pound.

CONCLUSION

2.17 Animal trespass continues to occur in the County Borough for a number of reasons. Although discretionary, the Council is continuing to fund a team to respond to requests and collect strays.

2.18 The Council would welcome any comments or suggestions regarding the service and Information on specific locations and times where the officers can concentrate their attention to address new problem areas.

3. REAR LANE REFUSE COLLECTION

3.1 One of the issues requested to be included on the agenda relates to the areas whereby residents are required to bring their bins through their houses as collections could not be made via rear lanes.

3.2 Many rear lanes are not suitable for use by heavy goods vehicles and even those that can be accessed by these vehicles could then involve crews working in very confined areas which not only raise unnecessary Health and Safety risks for the public (large vehicles required to reverse and manoeuvre in narrow lanes) but it also increases the risk of injury to employees and the possibility of damage to property.

3.3 The Health and Safety Executive has, within the last 2 years, undertaken work with all Welsh Authorities' and we have been encouraged, where there is a suitable alternative, to avoid collection locations that require additional reversing/manoeuvring and unfortunately this again has steered us away from rear lane collections. Unfortunately we have to balance the minor inconvenience of residents taking their waste to a safer collection point against the risk of causing damage to property or risk of serious injury to members of the public or employees if we increase the use of rear lanes for waste collections.