

Public Space Protection Order (Dog Control) the Banning of dogs from sports pitches Consultation

Summary Report

Public Spaces Protection Orders were introduced by the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 and can be used to regulate activities in particular public places to ensure that the law-abiding majority can use and enjoy public spaces safe from anti-social behaviour. As such, these Orders provide an opportunity to enhance the Council's enforcement ability to respond to public opinion regarding dog fouling.

In September 2017 Cabinet approved and adopted the Public Spaces Protection Order 2017; the Order includes the following restrictions:

- Excluding dogs from all enclosed children's play and multi-use games areas
- Requiring dogs to be kept on leads in enclosed memorial gardens
- Requiring dog owners to remove dog faeces in public places
- Requiring dog owners to carry an appropriate receptacle for dealing with the waste that their dogs produce (that is to always have the means to pick their dog faeces)
- Requiring dog owners to put their dogs on a lead when directed to do so by an authorised officer on any public land where the dog is considered to be out of control or causing harm or distress to prevent a nuisance.

At its meeting on 22nd July 2020, Cabinet received a report presenting a review of the current position regarding dog fouling since implementation of the original Order. Cabinet resolved to undertake a 10 week public consultation exercise on the proposal to amend the Public Spaces Protection Order 2017 to include a provision to exclude dogs from marked sports/playing pitches when it becomes possible to carry out meaningful consultation with the public and relevant stakeholders.

Method

The consultation was open to residents and stakeholders from the 11th June 2021 for a period of 10 weeks.

The consultation period was preceded by wide scale communication via the Council's website and social media accounts. Communication continued through a variety of media throughout the consultation period with a view to raising awareness of the consultation and increasing the response rate.

The key consultation tool was a questionnaire (Annexes to this report). Due to the restrictions imposed due to Covid 19 the consultation was carried out primarily online.

The survey was made available bilingually to residents for online completion via the Council's Website and shared on social media. Posters were displayed in prominent locations at main parks. Paper and alternative formats were available on request and provided to local libraries throughout the Borough.

Stakeholder groups were also contacted directly via e-mail and invited to respond to the survey. Those contacted include the Kennel Club, Dogs Trust, RSPCA, Farmers Unions, Horse Society, Open Spaces Society, Ramblers, Countryside Alliance, Keep Wales Tidy, Town and Community Councils.

Key Findings

Overall 1540 respondents completed the questionnaire. 96% of these were residents in Caerphilly County Borough and 65% who responded were dog owners.

85% of respondents to the survey agreed with keeping the current restrictions within the PSPO.

The response to the proposal to ban dogs from marked sports pitches was mixed with just over half of respondents 53.5% of the respondents agreed with the proposal of banning dogs from marked sports pitches whilst 43.8% disagreed, while 2.7% did not know.

The main reason given for supporting the proposal were to ensure a safe and clean environment for children and adults to exercise and to further encourage responsible dog ownership. There was an overall support for the proposal to reduce risk to the health and safety of sports pitch users especially children. Those involved with sports clubs and parents also highlighted how often games are delayed or halted to deal with dog excrement on the pitch due to the risk to the safety of the players.

The main reasons given for those the 43.8% that disagreed was that this unfairly punished responsible dog owners who pick up after their dog and the proposals restrict areas where dogs can be adequately exercised. Another reason for those disagreeing was that this will unfairly affect the elderly and those with limited mobility who are not able to travel further to exercise their dogs. However the proposed exclusion of dogs will only apply to marked council owned sports pitches in parks.

Therefore it should be noted however there will still be areas in the local parks and green spaces other than the sports pitches where dogs can be exercised.

Summary

The consultation responses to the issue of the banning of dogs from marked sports pitches was mixed with those for and against, however the majority of those who responded supported the proposal.

A summary of responses and full digest of comments is contained in the Annexes to this report.

Annexe 1: Questionnaire

Annexe 2: Summary of responses

Annexe 3: Full digest of Comments from Survey English

Annexe 4: Full digest of comments from Survey Welsh

Annexe 5: Other written responses