

DESCRIPTION OF OPTION

This option proposes that the Council Kennels/Warden Service should consider being part of the Merseyside consortium service for the collection and retention of dogs.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

The council operates a collection service during office hours and a standby service outside normal hours.

A Merseyside Consortium (Liverpool, Knowsley, Halton and Sefton) jointly pay a private contractor to deliver both the out of hours and kennelling service.

The members of the Merseyside Consortium pay approximately £235,000 for this service which operates from Halewood. This contract is due to be re-tendered and should Wirral be included, would provide the potential to meet statutory requirements at lower cost than the existing council service.

IMPACT

There are likely to be a number of logistical and practical hurdles to investigate if this option was pursued and to meet its statutory obligations the authority. Five employees are at risk from this proposal, though Wirral may have to still employ one Dog Warden supplementary to this contract (as in Sefton model)

Under these arrangements the kennels in Wirral would close and owners would need to travel to Halewood to collect their pet. This could be a disincentive to such reclaims.

The capacity of any new arrangements would also need to be considered so as to ensure that there is proper capacity to cope with demand and to retain animals for a suitable period.

In terms of implications for voluntary, community and faith groups, the "Friends Group" will have a particular interest in this proposal and should be specifically included in the consultation.

In addition to the above, the transport of dogs to the site in Halewood would increase carbon emissions from road transport.

This proposal could potentially have a one off saving of £100,000 in year 2014/15.

MITIGATION

There are additional options as to how this service could be delivered differently. These include:

The potential to reduce the operating costs of the service through reducing the availability of the acceptance point arrangements from 24 hr availability to a cut off at 10pm or later.

The Kennels operating through an RSPCA affiliated organisation at Cross Lane. Discussions have taken place concerning co-operation between the council and that organisation.