



Lewes  
Town  
Council

### **Animal Welfare, Safety and Responsibility Policy**

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**Policy Maker** Laura Chrysostomou, Town Clerk

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#### **This information pack contains:**

<b>Animal Welfare, Safety and Responsibility Policy</b>
Policy Number 1
Procedure 1

## 1. Introduction

Lewes Town Council (The Council) believes that, in addition to its statutory duties and powers, it has a moral responsibility to acknowledge the welfare of domestic pets, livestock and wildlife and their habitats in so far as its activities and the actions of residents and visitors impinging upon them.

Lewes Town Council is well-placed to establish practices focused on the highest standards of animal welfare, safety and responsibility in accord with our existing commitments to planet and people, and to lend our voice to good work by other agencies. The Town Council can, for instance:

- promote the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) efforts to improve animal well-being and re-natured habitat
- promote the Countryside Code
- publicise organisations such as the RSPCA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals), Wildlife Trust and RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) animal welfare and responsibility initiatives
- support local farmers' safely grazing sheep and cattle and creating safe-havens for endangered species such as skylarks and dormice

The Council:

- supports actions and environments in the Town which enhance the welfare of pets, livestock and wild animals<sup>1</sup>, especially endangered native species
- expects residents and visitors to act respectfully with regard to animals and habitats
- considers that pet and livestock owners have responsibility for the actions of their animals

The Council notes the importance of the Animal Welfare Act (2006), which enshrines in law the requirement to protect animals from harm. The Council further considers that all animals have the right to enjoy five basic freedoms.

Freedom:

- from fear and distress;
- from hunger and thirst;
- from pain, disease and injury;
- to express normal behaviour;
- from physical discomfort.

The Animal Welfare, Safety and Responsibility Policy should be read in conjunction with other council policies, statements and guides which can be found on our website, including but not limited to: Farm Animal Welfare Statement, Fishing at Pells, Allotment

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<sup>1</sup> Where a wild species has overbred the capacity of the habitat, the Town Council will first seek to identify any human behaviours that may be exacerbating this. For example, in the case of rats, a primary cause of population explosions is human rubbish not being adequately disposed of. Unfortunately, rats cause problems in several areas of town – including disturbing ground nesting bird populations -- and while the Town Council will seek to focus on reducing human causes of population over-growth, it will work with other local authorities on humane approaches to population reduction where necessary.

Tenancy Agreement, Bee Keeping Policy, Ponds and Bog Garden Guide, and our Fairtrade Support Statement.

## **2. Policy statement**

Lewes Town Council aspires to uphold the highest standards of animal welfare, safety and responsibility and will produce policies and procedures with that in mind. Consideration of animal welfare, safety and responsibility will inform our work and decisions we make about who we work with. We encourage actions by residents and visitors that meet those standards, and the creation and maintenance of environments that are conducive to wild animal, livestock and domestic pet welfare.

## **3. Policy aims**

1. To set out the commitment of the Council, its Councillors and officers, to the principles of animal welfare, safety and responsibility as a framework for Council-owned properties and land and the provision of its services and activities, including the Council's representative and signposting roles.
2. To set out certain broad principles together with the Council's belief on the need for action in certain key areas.
3. That the establishment of the Council's views will be influential in advancing animal welfare, safety and responsibility both locally and more widely, including influencing the thinking of central government.

## **4. Scope**

This policy defines the Council's view on these key areas, acknowledging that the Council is not always in a position itself to take action or enforcement, but will work in collaboration with other agencies where possible to uphold the highest standards of animal welfare, safety and responsibility.

## **5. Policy objectives**

The Council will work to ensure the welfare and safety of animals and responsibility for animals in the following key areas:

1. Exercising control through policy decisions in relation to the activities and services for which it is responsible.
2. Providing information (for instance on outdoor signage and our website) and supporting education initiatives and information campaigns, such as promoting the Countryside Code (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code/the-countryside-code-advice-for-countryside-visitors>) and SDNPA's 'Take the Lead' campaign (<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/take-the-lead/>).
3. By working collaboratively with those authorities with direct responsibility to enforce existing laws.
4. Where restrictions are ignored on Town Council land and livestock, wildlife (or their habitats) or pets are injured or put at risk, the Council will actively pursue enforcement of penalties.

## 6. Principles, procedures and guidance

In practical terms the Council's Animal Welfare, Safety and Responsibility Policy will inform practices regarding the following areas:

### 6.1 Responsible domestic pet ownership

#### 6.1.1 Dogs

We will encourage responsible dog ownership by:

- improving signage on Town Council owned and, where possible, nearby land, for the requirement to have dogs on leads in fields with grazing animals, near domestic and farm fowl or in areas where for example wild bird species are at risk of nesting disruption (such as lapwings and skylarks)
- promote public education and information campaigns regarding dog fouling legislation, in accord with other guidance such as the Countryside Code and South Downs National Park Authority guidance (for instance, signage that explains why dog faeces should always be picked up)
- working with other authorities and/or organisations to provide free dog poo bags at various locations for example the Tourist Information office, Linklater Pavilion

#### 6.1.2 Cats

We will encourage responsible cat ownership by promoting guidance which seeks to reduce the numbers of wild animals killed by domestic cats, such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) campaign to help protect garden birds (details can be found on their website here: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/advice/gardening-for-wildlife/animal-deterrents/cats-and-garden-birds/stop-cats-catching-and-killing-birds/>). For instance, the RSPB suggests:

- cats wear a bell on a quick-release collar to reduce predation of birds and other species (NB. mammals are killed more often than bird species)
- birds are most active in the garden an hour after sunrise and an hour before sunset, so it is helpful to regularly feed cats indoors at these times

While the Town Council encourages cat owners to try a range of prey access reduction strategies, particularly where hunting impacts on threatened wild species, the Council also recognises that especially in some areas of the Town cats are working animals, actively encouraged to hunt for rodents.

#### 6.1.3 All domestic pets

We will lend our voice in support of other agencies that:

- encourage owners to have pets responsibly neutered/spayed, thereby reducing the number of unwanted animals
- support stronger legislation (further to the Breeding and Sale of Dogs (Welfare) Act, 1999) for licensing of breeding of domestic animals, and sterner prosecution of 'puppy farms' (i.e. breeding in conditions where strict animal welfare practices are not upheld). With Members' consent, the Council may write to our MP asking for price caps on the sale of animals, to reduce the incentives for animal theft and illegal breeding environments
- encourage prospective pet owners to ensure the credentials of any breeder by promoting for example the Kennel Club 'Assured Breeder' recommendations

We will support:

- the adoption of pets from local, recognised animal rescue charities. For instance, the Town Council might take part in partnership promotions, such as publicising the 'Rescue pet of the month' from Raystede or Lewes Football Club

## **6.2 Council emergency support plans**

In the case of emergency or major incident, for instance extreme weather events leading to displacement of residents, the Town Council will work with the emergency planning authorities and we will include venue or outdoor site provision for companion and other animals.

## **6.3 Wildlife and wildlife habitats**

- 6.3.1 The Council supports measures aimed at the conservation of wildlife through the establishment and protection of local nature reserves and conservation areas and improvement of wildlife-friendly habitat.
- 6.3.2 Management of the Council's land will be modified where possible to give greater priority to practices that enhance wildlife, especially protected species' habitats.
- 6.3.3 The Council, working in collaboration with the responsible authorities, will seek strict enforcement of legislation in respect of protected species and wildlife habitats.
- 6.3.4 The Council will provide advice to residents on the establishment of wildlife-friendly provisions. For instance, guidance to be issued by the Planning and Conservation Committee on swift boxes, hedgehog runs, wildflower/pollinator corridors. Information on Ponds and Bog Gardens, and wildlife-friendly practices on Town Allotments will be made available on our website.
- 6.3.5 The Council seeks to avoid or mitigate the destruction of wildlife habitats. When Lewes Town Council's Planning Committee considers planning applications as a statutory consultee, it will consider the implications any potential development will have on habitats. Developers, including homeowners seeking even relatively minor changes to their properties, will be advised to mitigate where damage or loss is unavoidable, for instance by providing a green roof on a new or larger footprint 'home office'. Such advice will be formalised.

## **6.4 Fireworks**

The Council is concerned by the levels of distress caused to pets, livestock and wild animals by fireworks. See for example the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) Bang-Out-Of-Order Campaign which can be found on their website here:

<https://www.rspca.org.uk/documents/1494939/0/Bang+out+of+order+-+fireworks+frighten+animals+%28PDF+706KB%29.pdf/ebcfb65c-40f4-58a0-88d2-0896845a3127?t=1571669349793>

- 6.4.1 The Council will signpost guidance from the RSPCA on caring for pets, and on pet owners' best preparation for Bonfire. This includes relocating affected animals away from the Town on Badge Night and Bonfire; or, in the home,

providing well-insulated 'safe space', using calming diffusers; and, where prescribed by a veterinarian, the use of medication.

- 6.4.2 The Council notes that livestock and wild animals do not currently have legal protection from noise from fireworks. The Council supports a voluntary noise level limit for fireworks of 90dB (the current allowed level for fireworks on sale to the public is 120dB).

## **6.5 Council provided catering, goods and services**

- 6.5.1 Where food is provided for Council events, the Council will seek to ensure that vegetarian/vegan meals are available and that any meat, fish or dairy products are Certified Humane, certified Animal Welfare Approved by the A Greener World (AGW) or equivalent and from local farms.
- 6.5.2 The Council notes that labels such as 'free range' may have limited meaning in practice and will make proactively informed, ethical decisions with regards to animal welfare issues (including habitat protection) when purchasing goods and services.
- 6.5.3 Where available, 'cruelty-free' products will be preferred to products without animal protection labels. Similarly, where products are differentiated by greater or lesser habitat protection, those with greater habitat protection will be preferred.
- 6.5.4 The Council will not use animal fur for any purpose, including ceremonial robes.

## **6.6 Animals and human well-being**

- 6.6.1 The Council notes that living and working with animals can be a factor in people's everyday sense of well-being.
- 6.6.2 Within reason, and considering Health and Safety matters, individuals' needs and preferences (for example allergies, anxieties) the Town Council is open to negotiation on bringing well-behaved and flea-treated canine pets to the Town Hall, whether for visits or as work companions.
- 6.6.3 The Council seeks to support groups that promote symbiotic animal and human welfare, for instance in the form of habitat-respectful 'nature walks', inclusive education on specific species, or on the benefits of a wider, healthy local ecology.

## **6.7 Animals as prizes**

- 6.7.1 The RSPCA and others warn that the spontaneous adoption of pets, even small pets such as goldfish, is often ill-considered and is at odds with basic animal welfare policy and practice.
- 6.7.2 The Council will ensure (through contracts and agreements) that live animals will not be given as prizes at events or activities on Council-owned property or land. This includes goldfish which, though considered 'easy-to-care-for', often die due to unsuitable habitats in the home or due to stress or oxygen loss during waiting or transport.

## **6.8 Horse riding and hunts**

- 6.8.1 The Council encourages safe riding of horses where permission has been expressly granted by land-owners and on Town bridle-ways.
- 6.8.2 The Council does not permit hunts of any type on its land. This is due to disruption and distress (whether or not intended) of wild and domestic animals caused. The Council will pursue prosecution of trespass.
- 6.8.3 The Council will work with other local authorities and will request for 'mixed-use' by-ways to promote a hierarchy of use in order to protect more vulnerable users such as pedestrians and wheelchair users, horse-riders, cyclists, and motorised vehicle drivers.

## **6.9 Fishing**

The Council issues fishing permits for limited fishing at the Pells Lake and expects fishing to be conducted in accord with best animal welfare practice as detailed on our website.

## **6.10 Farm animal/livestock policy**

The Council expects care of farm animals/livestock to be conducted in accord with best animal welfare practice. This policy confirms the Council's existing statement with regard to the welfare of farm animals and livestock which can be found on our website.

## **6.11 Animal disease and protection**

The Council will work in coordination with other authorities and agencies to put in place communication plans with regard to notifiable diseases such as avian flu, foot and mouth and swine vesicular disease, to limit the spread of disease and subsequent suffering to other healthy animals.

## **6.12 Habitat renaturing**

- 6.12.1 The Council will encourage residents to create environments conducive to the well-being particularly of threatened wild species. This includes, for instance, 'bee-line' corridors and establishment of native hedgerows.
- 6.12.2 The Council will work with other local authorities and voluntary groups to press for increased re-naturing of suitable public areas, such as maintained verges and council-owned properties, and residents' gardens.