

Subject:	Deputations		
Date of Meeting:	12 June 2008		
Report of:	Director of Strategy & Governance		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Martin Warren	Tel: 29-1058
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Key Decision:	No		
Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:**

1.1 To receive the following deputation presented at Council on 13 March 2008 and any deputations presented directly to Cabinet.

9. (i) To receive the following petition presented at Council on the 13 March by Mr Karl Lester:

Deputation concerning the proposals to ban dogs from all Brighton & Hove beaches in the high season and to unnecessarily restrict dogs elsewhere.

Mr Karl Lester (Spokesperson)

“Since its inception in late February, ‘The Barking Mad Campaign Group’ has gathered over 2,100 signatories to our petition, including Celia Barlow MP, Caroline Lucas MEP and twenty of your goodselves, Councillors from all political parties.

We totally support the need for there to be some designated dog-free beaches as currently in place and we understand the need to have dog free zones in parks and to restrict dogs in cemeteries and children’s play areas. We accept that not everybody loves dogs and that there are genuine concerns over dog mess in our public places. But we absolutely oppose the sledgehammer proposals to ban dogs from all our beaches in the high season and to unnecessarily restrict and ban them from elsewhere in the city.

We are concerned that the current consultation has not been clear or well publicised. Many of the hundreds of people who we have spoken to in the last few weeks were totally unaware of these proposals and it shocked me personally that many Councillors were not aware of them either.

We are concerned that the recent council efforts to publicise the proposals have been misrepresentational. The full page notice in the February edition of 'City News' has the headline: 'Help us become a more Dog Friendly City' and has a graphic of a dog, a cute dog at that, and a heart shape. If this were an advert it would surely be guilty of misselling and would most likely be banned by the consumer watchdog, for there is nothing friendly about these proposals.

It would seem clear that the council's efforts to ensure proper public consultation have been woefully inadequate and have misrepresented the details of the proposals.

As tax-payers we reserve the right to enjoy our open spaces. We are deeply concerned that these proposals would severely impede our ability to adequately exercise our dogs. Indeed, Chris Laurence, who is the Veterinary Spokesman for the RSPCA, was quoted in 'The Argus' recently as saying: "For dogs, exercise means going somewhere where they can gallop around. A beach is a perfect place for this and banning them for five months of the year is just excessive."

The current proposals are not only unfriendly towards dogs, they are unfriendly towards families with dogs, of which there are many. And what of the many thousands who visit Brighton each year with their dogs? The Campaign is deeply concerned that a planned family trip to Brighton will leave reluctant owners with no alternative but to leave their beloved pets in hot stuffy cars or else leave Brighton and take their tourist pound elsewhere.

We totally support any effective measures to crack down on fouling, but feel the current proposals will only penalise the vast majority of law abiding and responsible citizens. Does the council really think that those who *do* allow their dogs to foul will take any notice of these new restrictions? Only the law abiding majority will suffer and that is both unfair and unjust.

The way to effectively tackle the problem of fouling is threefold:

- Education.
- Enforcement.
- Easy disposal of dog waste.

There are posters available from the 'Keep Britain Tidy' campaign that the council could display in public spaces. There should be dog wardens enforcing the current bye-laws on fouling. The council should continue its efforts to make it easy for us to dispose of dog waste by placing more bins and should also consider having dog bag dispensers in problem areas as other councils have introduced. The little known fact that the Environmental Health Department issues packs of free bags ought to be publicised more widely.

Let us all work together to keep Brighton and Hove truly dog and dog owner friendly. We urge you to scrap the current proposals and start a new public consultation on effective measures to reduce fouling, with 'The Barking Mad Campaign Group' as a contributor.

I thank you for your kind attention.”

RESPONSE FROM COUNCILLOR THEOBALD

“When you say here we are concerned that current consultation has not been clear or well publicised, well I have to say this to you that when this came to the Environment Committee, to update our bye-laws we decided to consult and that was agreed.

The response to the consultation was very limited and indeed some of those who responded said we should go further. I then decided that was not sufficient, we needed to reconsult and we then put it in 'City News' and I have to say that I am absolutely delighted because if anything this really proves a point that 'City News' has really addressed the people because it had a very big response. Something that did not happen before. The consultation has not finished yet. Once that consultation has been finished, all the points will be noted down by officers and I will email a list of what people say. Many people agree with every word you say Mr Lester but there are people out there, with dogs, who do not agree with what you say.

Now once the consultation is over then a decision will be made but thank you very much for coming in and all that you have done to promote your cause in a very nice way.”

