



CHELTENHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Animal Welfare Charter

Cheltenham Borough Council will work with all partners to ensure the welfare needs of animals are met. Welfare will be considered throughout our decision-making processes, business operations, procurement and by influencing others. Legal compliance will be met by way of engagement, education, encouragement and enforcement.

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Introduction

Cheltenham Borough Council (“authority” or “we”) believes it has a moral responsibility to all sentient species and for the protection of our ecosystem and calls upon all members of the public, businesses and voluntary organisations to support this charter and to draw to the attention of this authority any contraventions of the provisions contained within it. High standards of animal welfare are the hallmark of a civilised society. The authority will promote improvements in animal welfare by taking account of animal welfare issues in our operations, procurement, decision-making processes and through influencing other authorities, voluntary welfare groups and government agencies. Almost every area of human life has a direct or indirect impact on animals and as such, the authority will consider how best to avoid or reduce any negative impact on sentient species and on the wider natural environment of which all animals form a part.

In particular, the authority will:

- Support the view that all animals have the right to a life free from cruel treatment and unnecessary suffering recognising that animals are capable of feeling and enjoying a state of wellbeing and equally capable of suffering. They have the right to enjoy five basic needs as set out in the Animal Welfare Act 2006:
 - The need for a suitable environment
 - The need for a suitable diet
 - The need to exhibit normal behaviour
 - Any need it has to be housed with or apart from other animals
 - The need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease
- Administer and enforce the statutory powers we have in respect of animal health and welfare in line with the authority’s corporate enforcement policy.
- Promote development that is truly sustainable, giving full consideration to the welfare of wildlife and animals recognising clearance of native habitats, pollution, and climate change all greatly threaten the very existence of numerous species and ecosystems.

- Continue to fund a dog control service incorporating an animal welfare service.
- Promote responsible dog ownership both by enforcement and education by:
 - a robust enforcement regime in cases of non-compliance with local bylaws and legislation.
 - educational campaigns to promote responsible dog ownership and responsibilities regarding clearing up after your dog.
 - continuing to provide dog faeces bins throughout the town and to publicise their use.
- Liaise closely with other enforcement agencies to ensure a co-ordinated approach.
- Take full account of animal welfare issues in day-to-day operations and decision making.
- Respect the concerns of those who have adopted a lifestyle that recognises the many benefits of a vegetarian or vegan diet. We will provide vegetarian and vegan alternatives at our establishments and managed events wherever possible.
- Ensure that all pest control treatments are carried out humanely and by trained and experienced personnel. We will prioritise pest control in the interests of human health and safety and will not kill animals except as a last resort when this is necessary to protect health and safety; we will avoid the use of chemicals or poisons that have the potential to pollute the wider environment or damage nature recovery.
- Oppose the taking or killing of wild animals, or the inflicting of any suffering upon them, subject to the need to control pests and infectious disease.
- Oppose the use of snares and inhumane traps which cause suffering.
- Oppose all forms of farming which cause unnecessary and/or unreasonable distress or suffering; we will work with our Trading Standards colleagues to promote assurance schemes that ensure high standards of animal welfare.
- Promote improvements in animal welfare through the influencing role held by this authority and in association with other organisations.

- Liaise with voluntary welfare groups who operate peacefully within the law.
- Oppose the international shipment of live animals for slaughter and lobby the national government to ban the export and import of live animals for this trade.
- Lobby government departments, professional organisations, local authority associations and others to bring the views of the local community to their attention.
- Publicise this charter.

This charter does not cover every aspect of animal welfare, but it does outline the areas that we consider important in terms of where we can have influence as a responsible and representative public body.

1. Licensing

This authority has a statutory duty to licence certain establishments within the district under various legislation including The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018, The Animal Welfare Act 2006, The Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 and The Zoo Licensing Act 1981.

Activities requiring licences include:

- Pet Shops
- Dog Breeding Establishments
- Dog and Cat Boarding Establishments (including home boarders and day care)
- Hiring of Horses
- Exhibition Animals
- Zoos
- Owning a dangerous wild animal

We will continue to ensure that authorised officers of this authority, and a qualified Veterinary Surgeon where necessary, inspect these premises to ensure adherence to any licence conditions. Licences for zoos will be issued only when all statutory requirements are met and one of the following justifications can be demonstrated with reputable professional, scientific or academic verification:

- Conservation, research or training;
- Sharing conservation information;
- Captive animal breeding; and
- Helping repopulate or reintroduce species into the wild.

2. Procurement

We will aim to ensure that products and services we procure or purchase are ethically sourced, obtained in a responsible and sustainable manner, taking into account environmental impact and animal welfare practices.

3. Circuses, performances, exhibitions and displays of animals on land owned by the authority

Circuses, performances, exhibitions and displays involving animals on land owned by the authority will not be authorised unless the necessary licences are in place. Where a licence is not required, organisers will be required to demonstrate high standards of animal welfare for each species before we issue a land use agreement for the event.

4. Giving animals as prizes

Under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, it is an offence to sell any animal or give an animal as a prize to anyone under the age of 16 years. We will actively enforce this. It is our policy that the giving away of live animals as prizes to persons of any age is prohibited on any land owned by the authority as part of land use agreement and we will encourage other private premises and landowners to follow our lead.

5. Horse, pony and donkey rides

We will ensure that anyone offering horse, pony or donkey rides is subject to the licensing regime and we will ensure they adhere to any licence conditions, ensuring high standards of care and welfare for the animals involved.

6. Primates

We do not support the keeping of primates as pets. We welcome DEFRA's proposals for banning the keeping of primates as pets and the proposed introduction of a specialist licensing regime.

7. Hunting

Hunting is prohibited on land owned by the authority. We will work with partners and with legal, peaceful voluntary groups to prevent any illegal hunting.

Any hunting of wild game carried out on private land supplying food for human consumption at the primary production level will be in accordance with the statutory guidance issued by the Food Standards Agency for hunters, hunting parties and shooting estates.

8. Stray dogs

The authority has a legal responsibility to deal with stray dogs. All stray dogs will be identified where possible in an attempt to re-unite them with their owners. It is our policy to take reasonable steps to re-home all unclaimed stray dogs after the statutory seven days, unless there is veterinary advice to the contrary. We will give advice and information to owners on the return of their pet.

It is a legal requirement for dogs to wear a collar and tag when in a public place. It is a legal requirement for owners to microchip their pet and to ensure the details are kept up-to-date. In addition to micro chipping, there is the '[DNA protected](#)' service available to owners supported by Gloucestershire constabulary. We will support organisations like Cheltenham RSPCA that provide a micro chipping service.

9. Dangerous dogs

The authority will have due regard to DEFRA's Dangerous Dogs Law: a Guide for Enforcers, and share intelligence to support any police or RSPCA investigation into incidents involving dangerous or aggressive dogs. It is a criminal offence for a dog of any breed to be dangerously out of control. Authorised officers of the authority will investigate reports of irresponsible dog ownership involving dogs not under proper control in a public place and attacks on other dogs.

We will investigate any reports of failures to keep dogs under control or on a lead in a relevant area when asked to do so in areas subject to a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO).

10. Puppy farming

We oppose puppy farming and support the RSPCA in recommending that prospective dog owners only purchase puppies that are seen with their mothers and, if possible, their sires.

We would also encourage residents to consider homing a rescue dog rather than a puppy, in an effort to reduce the population of unwanted dogs. We will support national campaigns to raise awareness of issues associated with low welfare and the illegal supply of pets.

11. Responsible pet ownership

We encourage residents to be responsible pet owners and support local animal welfare organisations in their efforts to educate and assist pet owners.

We strongly advise that anyone thinking of getting a pet should have good knowledge of and take professional advice on the care of such animals before getting the pet. Responsible pet ownership should include means of identification (e.g. microchipping), registering with an appropriate veterinarian (for the species), regular health checks, including vaccinations where required, and the safe and hygienic disposal of all animal waste. Pet owners are encouraged to train and control their animals properly to avoid the possibility of them causing annoyance or distress to members of the public or other animals.

12. Animal hoarding

We encourage everyone to report any suspected instances of animal hoarding to us or the RSPCA. Officers who become aware of hoarding behaviours where the needs of an animal are not being met will work with all animal welfare agencies to resolve the issues found.

13. Civil contingency

We realise the importance of pets within family life and have therefore given them full consideration in our emergency planning arrangements. In the event of an evacuation, owners have the option of bringing their pets with them to places of safety or rest centres where an officer will be on hand to arrange suitable, temporary accommodation for their pet as well as safe and secure transport to the arranged destination.

14. Pet sitting services

We encourage responsible pet ownership and recommend that pet owners use only licensed boarding establishments and, if using pet sitting services, take up references, visit the service provider and contact animal welfare organisations for advice on membership of reputable associations.

15. Horses

We support the Trading Standards team at the Gloucestershire County Council in their role in enforcing the Equine Identification (England) Regulations 2018 which requires all horses to be identified with a microchip and passport and accompanied by their identification at all times. Horse owners are encouraged to comply with legal obligation to keep the relevant [details of their horse up-to-date](#).

We will support and encourage Cheltenham Racecourse, the Jockey Club and the British Horseracing Authority in their work to continually improve horse welfare and safety, including making changes to the visibility and safety of courses and jumps, strictly limiting the use of the whip and providing for the retirement of thoroughbred racehorses.

The Control of Horses Act 2015, and the Animals Act 1971, deals with fly grazing and abandoned horses. As a landowner, we will not allow tethering of any horse or ponies on our land unless it is for short periods of time and only to allow the animal to have access to grazing. We do not seek to define what we mean by “short periods” because each case will be determined on its individual merits. However, as a general guide, tethering must be kept to an absolute minimum period of time, for grazing purposes only and for the remainder of the day, the horses and/or ponies should have access to shelter and a space to run free.

We do not oppose an animal being tethered for short periods, e.g. for grooming, having a short break in a journey or working period, or in a field whilst boundary fencing is being installed or repaired. In all cases, lawful authority of the landowner is required and we remind owners that a tethered horse requires all its welfare needs to be met including adequate feed, water and the protection from pain. Under no circumstances should a horse less than two years old be tethered. We will work with the Police and the RSPCA on cases of neglect and abandonment.

16. The control of animals released into the wild

We are concerned at the potential threat to British wildlife, pets, people and ecosystems by the release of invasive alien animal species into the wild. We will provide advice and education to those owning or selling animals under the licencing regime and will work with Natural England and partners so that appropriate controls can be implemented. Retailers are prohibited from selling invasive alien species and they must not be used in exhibition or shows with public interaction.

17. Traps and snares

We support alternative and humane methods of pest control to remove unwanted animals or insects without killing them except in very exceptional circumstances where:

1. such alternative methods are unavoidable, impractical and/or ineffective;
2. there is a statutory requirement in law; and/or
3. there is a risk to public health and/or safety.

We encourage the Government to strengthen legislation and codes of practice on the use of harmful and inhumane snares and traps to reduce the suffering of target species and the capture of non-target species. We support the use of education to ensure best practice.

18. Angling

Anglers over the age of 13 must hold a valid rod licence. All anglers must comply with national and regional byelaws which protect freshwater fish and their habitats. All anglers on land owned by the authority require permission from our parks team. Fishing in Pittville Park requires an in season day permit available from the Boathouse. A closed season is supported to allow stocks to regain condition and spawn and to allow resident wildlife to raise their young with little disturbance.

Research has shown that fish are sentient and not only feel but also respond to pain. When issuing permits we give rules to anglers to ensure the welfare of fish. Anglers must follow these fishing rules at all times.

Our Park Rangers and Neighbourhood Officers will work together to ensure the fresh water fishing rules are complied with within all lakes within the parks.

We consider the safe disposal of fishing tackle as essential to prevent injury to both domestic and wild animals. The authority encourages the use of the [Anglers National Line Recycling Scheme](#).

19. Pest control

We will not seek to kill or control animals or pests purely for profit or commercial gain. We will only kill or control animals or pests where there is a statutory duty or where they pose a risk to human health and safety.

We will promote and support the use of safe and humane methods of pest control. We will not use glue traps, which can cause unnecessary suffering to rodents. Householders are encouraged to seek professional advice on pest control rather than using over the counter preparations. This will prevent harm to non-target species. We provide a Pest Control service to households to ensure that an affordable, professional and safe treatment is readily available.

20. Pigeons

Overpopulation of pigeons in built up areas can cause health and safety problems. The authority encourages the safe and hygienic disposal of all residential and commercial waste to prevent such overpopulation. Where populations have to be controlled, only humane methods will be used with the appropriate licence in place.

21. Gulls

We will provide advice to residents and businesses on how to deter gulls and reduce the problems that may arise. The predominant species in Cheltenham are the herring gull and the lesser backed gull. It is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to intentionally injure or kill any bird, including gulls and they and their nests are protected by law. Disturbing the birds at or close to their nest or their dependent young is an offence which the authority will report to the police. In exceptional circumstances and as a last resort where populations need to be controlled for reasons of public health and safety then this will be done in accordance with any licence issued by Natural England.

22. Foxes

The authority does not control the population of foxes and discourages the killing of foxes. We will work with partner agencies in the event of any reports of sick or injured foxes or any wildlife crimes.

23. Pollinators and other invertebrates

We recognise that insect pollinators and invertebrates perform a vital function in our ecosystem, and we will not purposefully destroy them or their habitats. In addition to pollination invertebrates also help clean our waters, create and maintain our soils, cycle carbon and provide food for the birds and mammals we love. It is recognised some invertebrates are considered pests, but they are also food for other invertebrates and mammals therefore given a supported ecosystems and time pests can be subject to natural biologically control and the ecosystem can balance out. Pollinators (including wasps) and

other invertebrates will only be targeted for destruction in exceptional circumstances where there is a risk to human safety, where the ecosystem is unbalanced, and intervention is required to save a specific habitat or where planning requirements demand a change in habitat thereby causing an incidental loss.

We will be proactive in supporting work, initiatives and campaigns that will enhance the natural habitats of pollinators and other invertebrates including, but not limited to, community gardens, allotments, flower-rich parks and green spaces, composting projects, mulching, habitat maintenance, reducing mowing and avoiding use of harmful chemicals.

24. Planning

We are committed to using the planning system to ensure that animals, plants and their habitats and ecosystems are protected and positively promoted especially those species which are at risk in accordance with their protected status and in view of the growing threat of climate change. As a landowner and regulator, we will aim to be a national exemplar in delivering nature recovery and climate change adaptation including meeting and wherever possible exceeding national targets for Biodiversity Net Gain.

We will ensure developers avoid loss of habitat, before during and after the planning application process, and will work with partners to promote nature recovery. We will protect and promote wildlife habitats, especially for protected and vulnerable species, and take action to deter and punish those who destroy such habitats.

25. Use of pesticides and herbicides

We are reducing our use of pesticides and herbicides in the public realm and employing alternative mechanical and manual methods to control weeds. We encourage other land managers to do the same. Herbicide is used where controlling weeds solely by mechanical or manual means on a large scale is not practical. We may also use herbicides to control invasive, persistent or notifiable weed. We encourage tolerance of naturally occurring vegetation where it is not causing nuisance or damage and acknowledge the benefit to biodiversity (particularly pollinating insects) of plant diversity and naturally occurring plant communities.

26. Litter

Apart from being unsightly, litter can cause great harm to both domestic and wild animals. This authority requires that all litter is disposed of safely in the waste facilities provided

throughout the borough. We will strictly enforce littering offences through fining persistent offenders and/or those who refuse to pick up litter when directed by an authorised officer.

27. Livestock/farm animals

We believe that the live export of animals intended for food is not necessary and that the slaughter of animals should take place as close to where they are reared as possible. We support the role of Trading Standards in enforcing roadside checks of livestock in transit to ensure compliance with legislation designed to protect animal welfare. We support police action with regards to the enforcing of speed restrictions and checks of vehicles transporting live animals.

Gloucestershire Trading Standards enforce the legislation designed to protect livestock and farm animals from cruelty and avoidable pain and distress. For animal welfare livestock complaints call 01452 887667 or email tradingstandards@gloucestershire.gov.uk for out of hours emergencies call 03000 2000301 and ask for the duty vet. We will work with the Food Standards Agency to ensure any on farm slaughter has the necessary approval and any domestic slaughter is carried out humanely.

28. Cruelty to animals

Those dealing with children or vulnerable adults who have suffered physical and or mental abuse recognise that there is a link between animal and people cruelty. We and our animal welfare partners are members of the Gloucestershire Animal Welfare Technical Sub-Committee. The Committee formed an agreement in April 2014 that all information relating to animal neglect where there are children or vulnerable persons also present at the property, or vice versa, will be shared between the relevant authorities.

We encourage the Government to support all research by other agencies on the link between animal and child and or vulnerable adult abuse in an effort to reduce both animal cruelty and serious crime.

29. Fireworks, balloons and lanterns

We support all actions which reduce the harm caused to animals by fireworks, releasing balloons and/or lanterns. We will not allow land owned by the authority to be used for fireworks and releasing balloons and/or lanterns.

We support campaigns by the RSPCA and others to educate people in firework use, discourage the most polluting and loudest fireworks and support greater regulation of their use. We will highlight such campaigns throughout our events process. In particular we would welcome the introduction of legislation to limit the permitted noise level to 90dB, limit the sale of fireworks to specified dates in the calendar, introduce a licensing system for the purchase and sale of fireworks by members of the public and introduce firework control zones in vulnerable areas.

Where possible, we request those planning to let off fireworks either use silent ones or notify their neighbours well in advance of the event. Display organisers are encouraged to consider the benefits of drone light displays or other alternatives instead of conventional fireworks. We actively encourage the responsible use of fireworks around animals in accordance with guidance issued by Defra and which is supported by the Blue Cross.

30. Authorised officers

In addition to officers generally authorised to enforce legislation specified in this charter, the authority has Environmental Health Officers (EHO) specifically trained and authorised as Animal Welfare Inspectors under Section 51 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006. In conjunction with partner agencies, they will investigate any reports of animal at licenced and unlicensed premises.

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