

# Companion Animals Advisory Committee Meeting Record 10 March 2021



Location:	Zoom Meeting	
Date:	10 March 2021	
Time	Started at: 2.03pm	Closed at: 3.02pm
Chair	Sara Foster – Unit Manager Business Support and Systems,	
File Ref	F2019/00998	

**Present:**

Allan Benson (arrived 2.16pm), Louise Harding, Velma Harris, Greg Kelman, Te're Melrose

**External Representative present:**

Marilyn Jurlina – SOCARES Animal Care Facility Charmhaven, Deanna Walton – Central Coast Animal Care Facility, Kim Pickavance – Central Coast Animal Care Facility

**Council Staff present:**

Sara Foster – Unit Manager Business Support and Systems, Warren Murphy – Section Manager Contracts and Projects, Kelly Drover – Advisory Group Support Officer

**Item 1 Welcome, Acknowledgement of Country and Apologies**

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Apologies received: Scott Cox – Director Environment and Planning

The Chairperson declared the meeting open and completed an Acknowledgement of Country and Connection to Land Statement.

**Item 2 Disclosures of Interest**

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The Chair called for any Disclosures of Interest.

No disclosures were received.

**Item 3 Confirmation of Previous Meeting Record**

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The Advisory Group confirmed the Meeting Record from 26 November 2020.

The Advisory Group reviewed the Action Log.

In regard to Action Item 35:

*Director Environment and Planning to take on notice the matter of the Erina Facility being full and residents being diverted to Charmhaven and report back to the Advisory Group at the next meeting.*

Sara provided an update that whilst she is aware there may have been instances where this occurred, it has been investigated and she is confident it is not happening on a regular basis, however, would be happy for any examples of it to be brought to her attention.

#### **Item 4                    Pound Statistics – Lost Dogs Impounded (Standing Item)**

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Warren Murphy (Section Manager Contracts and Projects) discussed concerns about animals from out of area being impounded at our two facilities and provided the following statistics:

On average, dogs and cats combined, we receive 152 animals per month for rehoming. 14% of those are out of area (coming from kill facilities). Most animals that are picked up or surrendered are within our LGA. We had 133 animals go through the two facilities in February 2021. There is a high return to owner rate across both facilities. It was discussed that it would be beneficial for a consistent set of statistics to be provided to the Advisory Group prior to each meeting. The consistent statistics will also enable the group to observe trends in the data to support discussion & decision making.

The Advisory Group discussed the high number of animals in the area vs the number of rangers and the associated challenges. Given the high population of dogs in the LGA & the limited number of Rangers, Council must ensure a Policy is in place as well as an education & communication strategy to address the broader issues relating to companion animals and support the Rangers in the field.

**Action:** Warren Murphy to provide a consistent set of statistics to the Advisory Group. The statistics to be provided to Advisory Group members with the Agenda.

#### **Item 5                    Update on Review of Dog Parks/Off Leash Areas (Action 31)**

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Warren Murphy (Section Manager Contracts and Projects) advised that he has spoken with Open Space and Recreation staff regarding a review of Dog Parks/Off Leash Areas. They are in the early stages of developing a *Dogs in Open Spaces Strategy*. That draft strategy will be ready for public consultation in 12 months' time. Warren has requested that the Companion Animals Advisory Group be consulted on the policy prior to it going out for public consultation.

The following 3 items were key topics identified that need to be considered in this strategy:

- Fencing
- Interactions between large breeds and small breeds (separation of sizes and different breeds)
- Signage and education

It was suggested that Michelle James, a Ranger from Camden Council be contacted as their Council have a lot of different areas for different size dogs. Newcastle is another Council who has done a lot of work in this area, including a recently upgraded dog park at Belmont.

**Action:** Sara Foster to speak with Open Space and Recreation staff to provide suggestions and feedback from the Advisory Group.

## **Item 9                    General Business and Close**

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- a) The Advisory Group discussed the formulation of a Council Policy on roaming, menacing and dangerous dogs. Sara advised that we are looking at creating an overarching 'Responsible Pet Owners Policy' which would include pet ownership, roaming, menacing and dangerous dogs etc. A Community Working Group will be formed as part of the process in developing the new policy with a view to commence Mid-April 2021. The idea is to have this overarching policy completed first, then the Dogs in Open Spaces Policy would piggyback off this.
  
- b) The Advisory Group discussed aggressive dogs and that a dog can still be deemed aggressive even if a bite doesn't take place. There is a tiered approach to determining whether a dog is nuisance, menacing or dangerous, however contact doesn't need to be made for it to be dangerous or menacing, there just needs to be the 'rush at' component which is still considered an attack.
  
- c) Greg Kelman advised that there has been a change with dogs being desexed and Council Registrations. Dogs now need to be desexed by 6 months for people to register their dog at a decreased rate. In the event that an animal can't be desexed before 6 months, a visit to the vet is still required for the vet to make this determination and provide a letter to the owner so they can still get the reduced rate when registering their dog.
  
- d) The Advisory Group discussed Health and Safety policies at our two facilities. Sara advised that the contractors from Charmhaven and Erina both sent through all their procedures which were reviewed by 2 separate vets from Green Point. The vets were happy that as long as everything that is documented in the policy and procedures is actually taking place then that is more than adequate to deal with the health and welfare of the animals at the facilities and they had no additional recommendations.
  
- e) In regard to discussions at a previous meeting about the \$200,000 allocated to a design and concept project for a regional facility, Sara advised that this funding is no longer available however she has made a bid for funding for the next financial year for signage, education and comms.
  
- f) It was requested that given Council Elections are in September and we will go into caretaker mode in August, which will mean Advisory Group meetings cease in July, and we are behind on a number of topics, that it be considered having 2 additional meetings in the next few months.

The meeting closed at 3.02pm

**Next Meeting:            TBC**