

Devon and Cornwall Police Authority

23rd April 2010

Open for the purposes of FOI

Report of the Chief Executive

Police Dog Welfare Scheme Annual Report 2009-10

Recommendation(s):

- (i) That the Authority notes the content of the report.

Introduction / Summary

1. This report summarises the output from the Devon and Cornwall Police Authority Police Dog Welfare Scheme for the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010.

Background Information

2. The purpose of the Police Dog Welfare Scheme is to enable an independent observation, comment and report on the conditions under which police dogs are housed, trained and transported with a view to securing greater public understanding and confidence in these matters. This arrangement also provides an independent check on the way police dog handlers carry out their responsibilities with regard to the welfare of animals in their care.
3. Devon and Cornwall Police Authority has administered a Police Dog Welfare Scheme since 1 March 2003.

Number of Police Dogs seen during the period

4. Independent Animal Welfare Visitors may request any police dog handler who is on duty in the area that they are visiting to attend the police station. If the dog handler is unable to attend, for example if he/she is engaged on a specific incident, a full explanation is given to the Independent Animal Welfare Visitor and the explanation is recorded by the visitor in their report.
5. In addition, Independent Animal Welfare Visitors regularly attend Police Headquarters Middlemoor during planned police dog training sessions to check on the welfare of the police dogs that are in training and make a report.
6. The following table shows the number of police dogs seen by Independent Animal Welfare Visitor(s) during the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010.

| Police Station | Number of requests/visits to see dogs | Number of dogs seen |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Barnstaple | 6 | 0 |
| Camborne | 5 | 6 |
| Exeter (Heavitree Road) | 17 | 9 |
| Exeter (Middlemoor) | 8 | 29 |

| | | |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|
| Newquay | 4 | 0 |
| Plymouth | 6 | 4 |
| Torquay | 13 | 5 |
| Launceston | 7 | 3 |
| Exmouth | 1 | 0 |
| Newton Abbot | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 68 | 57 |

Main issues arising from police dog inspections

7. At the conclusion of each visit and before leaving the police premises, Independent Animal Welfare Visitor(s) (IAWVs) are required to complete a report form to provide details of the visit. A completed report form includes the name of the dog seen, the name of its handler and any matters raised.

Below shows issues raised throughout the period that this report covers:

- Air Conditioning**
 Numerous points were made regarding air conditioning in Police Dog vehicles, many IAWVs felt that Police Dog Handlers should have their own designated vehicles to enable them to transport their dogs in an air conditioned vehicle at all times, not only at work but to and from work as well.
 They also felt that the dog cage got increasingly hot especially during the summer months and it was not keeping the dogs sufficiently cool. They felt it would be beneficial to have air conditioning in the dog cage and when necessary direct the air conditioning to the dog cage only i.e. if the officer has left the vehicle with the dog inside.
 The above has been put forward to the Force for consideration and we are awaiting a response.
- The poor state of the kennel floor at the Police Dog Training School, Middlemoor, Headquarters**
 IAWVs reported that the kennel floor at the Police Dog Training school is in a poor state due to the thick paint currently on the kennel floor lifting and leaving bare concrete. For the welfare of the dogs kept in the kennels, it would benefit for them to have a sealed surface. This is expected to be repaired if funding is secured along with the wall surfaces in August when the kennels will be closed down.

General comments noted on the report forms include:

- Dogs healthy, happy and alert.
- Dog appeared to be in good health and very friendly and active.
- Dog was in excellent condition, bright eyed, alert and keen to work.
- Dog in good condition, very friendly and obviously well.
- The Dog Vans were in excellent condition and had good supplies of water
- The enthusiasm of all handlers and their willingness to answer any questions IAWVs may have

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