

URGENT ITEM

RURAL, ECONOMIC & ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

25 JANUARY 2017

REPORT OF HEAD OF COMMUNITIES & NEIGHBOURHOODS

PET FRIENDLY TOWN UPDATE

1.0 PURPOSE

To update members on the progress on developing the Pet –Friendly Town following support of the presentation to members prior to their meeting of 2ND November 2016.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that members:-

2.1 Support the ‘Pet Friendly Town’ initiative working with Mars Petcare with a view of submitting a Pet Friendly Town Award application.

3.0 BACKGROUND

Mars Petcare have produced the following Briefing paper, which also outlines the key milestones should members approve the recommendation in the report

At Mars Petcare, we’ve always known that pets make our lives better – and there’s research that proves pets are good for us. For example, we know that:

- Pet owners experience a significant reduction in minor health problems vs non-pet ownersⁱ
- Pets reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease and increase survival rate for serious heart attacks vs non-pet ownersⁱⁱ
- Children are less likely to suffer allergies, asthma, or eczema if they are exposed to pets at an early ageⁱⁱⁱ
- Cat owners have fewer bad moods than those who don’t have pets^{iv}
- Reduced levels of loneliness and improved mental functioning in older adults when they have contact with dogs^v
- Pet ownership is associated with less depression following spousal bereavement^{vi}
- Pets are associated with improved children’s performance and greater attention to the teacher^{vii}
- Pets act as social catalysts and build interaction in communities^{viii}

We also know that they’re great for business:

- Those who own dogs are almost twice as likely to regularly visit local shops and businesses than those who do not own a dog. If these businesses allow dogs inside this is likely to increase further. (Kennel Club Open for Dogs Survey 2011)

- 72% of dog-owners said they would holiday in the UK more frequently if there were more options for their dog. This rose to 77% when looking solely at the high earners (£40k+ salary) (Kennel Club Holidaying With Your Dog survey 2015)
- Four out of five companies say that they noticed business (including income) improve after expanding their customer base to include canines. (Kennel Club Business Survey 2009)
- Dog owners spend 16% more on eating out and drinking in pubs than cat or non-pet owners. (Kennel Club Open for Dogs Survey 2011)

Next year, we want to bring the benefits of human-animal interaction to life here in Melton Mowbray. Along with this, we want to use our expertise to make Melton Mowbray the **UK's number one pet friendly town** because we believe it is only through creating a pet-friendly society that we will see the economic benefits of pets realised.

We've chosen Melton because we've been making Petfood in the town since 1951 and we're proud of the community we live and work in. We also know, that it has fantastic potential. There are already lots of pet friendly businesses, groups and people that exist – next year we want to bring them together to make a big difference.

Since our last meeting, we have spoken to a number of different groups within Melton Mowbray (from local vets, to local schools and business owners), and with their support, we've come up with an activity plan that aims to turn Melton Mowbray truly pet friendly and celebrate the part that pets play in our local community.

We expect that the activity plan will evolve throughout the year, and we actively want to encourage initiatives from local groups. We would be delighted to come and speak in your January meeting to answer any remaining questions you may have and get final sign-off for this to go ahead in 2017.

The below plan is built around 5 pillars:

1. Driving pet friendly tourism
2. Improving physical health through pets
3. Improving mental health through pets
4. Driving social cohesion and building communities
5. Encouraging responsible pet ownership

Timing	Activity	Target	Potential partners
February	Launch event to announce our commitment to become UK's number one pet friendly town	Local media coverage and community awareness	Melton Council Melton Times Melton Country Park
February & November	Measure pet sentiment and perceived pet friendliness	Increase in pet sentiment and awareness of facilities in MEL	N/A
February-July	Engage the community to capture the pet friendly activities	Number of photos	Melton Photographic Society
February	Make local businesses aware	Number of grants	Dog training clubs

onwards	that they can apply for our Mars in the Community Grants to deliver pet friendly initiatives (eg. free dog training classes, teachers' dogs in the classroom)	given out/initiatives that are delivered	
February onwards	Educate local pet owners on how to keep their pets happy and healthy through evening seminars	Number of attendees	WALTHAM Melton Learning Hub Melton Vets Melton Police
March onwards	Use our Associates who are trained as Pets as Therapy volunteers to bring their pets into local old people's homes	Number of visits	Silpa Jethwa (Intensive Housing Management Team Leader)
March-June	Help local businesses understand the value of being pet friendly and give those that are a PAW print. Use these to create a map of pet friendly facilities for council website	Increase in number of local businesses that are pet friendly	Shelah Core (Town Centre Manager)
March-June	Deliver our Pet Ambassador Programme to Melton primary school children	Deliver the programme in every primary school in Melton	Melton Mowbray Primary Schools
March-June	Work with local students to design campaigns to drive dog fouling awareness	Campaign live	Melton in Bloom Brooksby College
April-June	Using our Mars Associates, turn Melton Country Park pet friendly	Include clear signage, clear paths and some sensory engagement play/trails	Raman Selvon (Waste and Environment manager)
April-June	Build sense of community through promoting dog walking groups (vets, GPs etc)	Increase in attendees in attendees at dog walking groups	Melton agility club Town dog walking clubs
July	Celebrate our achievements and awards opening with a Party in the Park	Local press coverage and number of votes	Melton Times
September	Press release on outcome of Pet Friendly Town awards	Local press coverage and ranking	Melton Times

ⁱ Serpell, 2011

ⁱⁱ Anderson et al 1992; Friedmann & Thomas 1995

ⁱⁱⁱ Hesselmar 1989

^{iv} Turner et. al 2003

^v Banks & Banks, 2002; Kawamura et. Al, 2007

^{vi} Garrity et. Al, 1989

^{vii} Kotrschal et al. 2003; Gee et al. 2007, 2009, 2010

^{viii} Wood et al. 2015

Contact: H Rai- head of Communities & Neighbourhoods