

Calling foul on dog owners

The City of Edinburgh Council is calling on tougher laws to help crack down on the issue of dog fouling in the city. Time and again this comes up in residents' surveys as a problem in many areas of the city.

A report to the Transport and Environment Committee suggests the Scottish Government raises the Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) currently handed out to dog fouling offenders, as well as an increased maximum fine for dog owners taken to court.

The report also recommends a new approach to monitor perpetrators' future behaviour, designed to bring about a long term change and reduce dog fouling in Edinburgh.

Measures would add to a series of campaigns held by the Council to tackle the issue, which is consistently identified by local residents as one of their top priorities.

✘ In 2011 the council announced that their 'hard hitting' campaign had been a major success and that complaints about dog fouling fell by 80% after a three week long focus on dog owners.

Environment Convener, Councillor Lesley Hinds, said: "Dog fouling is an issue which continues to blight our streets, creating not only an eyesore but a potential health and safety risk.

"We are committed to tackling this, and it is important that we do everything in our power to deter irresponsible owners from committing the offence.

"That's why we're calling on harsher punishments for offenders, as well as long-term monitoring, to reflect the significance of the crime but also to discourage repeat offending."

If approved, the Council will formally approach the Scottish Government to request an increase to the amount charged for on-the-spot FPNs, currently £40 (rising to £60 after 28 days) in line with FPNs for littering and fly-tipping, which were updated earlier this year.

In addition, the Council will request an increase in the maximum fine on summary conviction in court, currently £500, to reflect "the seriousness or prominence of the offence".

Proposed measures also include investigating a long term approach to persistent dog fouling, similar to the Control of Dogs (Scotland) Act 2010, which was introduced to address the behaviour of dogs deemed to be out of control. This involves the issue of Dog Control Notices imposing specific requirements with which offending owners must comply, followed by a monitoring period to address the behaviour of owners who repeatedly fail to pick up after their dogs.

As well as lobbying for legislative changes, the Council plans to work with the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service and the Scottish Court Service with the aim of securing Publicity Orders for convicted dog fouling offenders in Edinburgh. It is hoped the use of the Order, requiring individuals to publicise their conviction in a specific way, would discourage repeat offending.

In the last year, 231 FPNs have been handed out to dog owners across the city, with 82 people reported to the Procurator Fiscal for dog fouling offences.

On Tuesday, councillors will consider the various approaches to resolving the issue, as well as assessing ongoing campaigns like the South Neighbourhood's Don't Blame the Dog initiative, which aims to raise awareness of the problem as well as targeting enforcement action in hotspots identified by the public.

For more information on the Council's approach to dog fouling,

and how to report it, visit the Council website.