

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: 10th MARCH 2015
title: DOG RUN AREAS
submitted by: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
principal author: MARK BEVERIDGE

1 PURPOSE

1.1 In accordance with minute ref: 199 (2/9/14), this report provides information for members to consider as requested in relation to the provision of a larger dog run area at Mardale.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities

- Community Objectives – To sustain a strong and prosperous Ribble Valley
- Corporate Priorities - To encourage economic development throughout the borough, with specific focus on tourism
- Other Considerations – To develop, with relevant partners, measures to support the visitor economy

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Following the implementation of dog control orders across Council owned open spaces last year where football pitches are located, a petition was received from dog owners at Mardale asking for a space to be assigned and fenced off to the side of the football pitches there.

2.2 This request was made to enable large or energetic breeds of dog to be exercised off the lead. The existing dog area at Mardale is deemed too small by some owners of such dogs.

2.3 Since the implementation of the control orders, a common sense approach has been adopted by the Council's Environmental health section. Whereby owners have been permitted to walk their dogs around the perimeter of the open spaces which contain the football pitches, providing they keep off the pitches themselves and keep the dog(s) on a lead. The requirement to pick up their dog mess still applies.

3 ISSUES

3.1 If dog owners wish to allow their dogs off a lead, the concern remains that if it fouls on the open space away from the owner, especially on the football pitches, the dog mess would be not be picked up. Not least because a dog could be some distance away from the owner and therefore identifying the actual location would be difficult.

3.2 Creating another dog area at Mardale would cost up to £10,000, as the fencing would need to be designed to prevent any dogs from exiting the area as well as being sufficiently robust to address potential vandalism and general wear and tear.

3.3 The cost of putting the fence up would be a one off capital sum, however there would be ongoing maintenance costs associated with the fence and the cost of grounds maintenance would increase for the area. Currently the area is gang mowed with a tractor pulled unit. That would be too large for an enclosed space and that would require a smaller ride on machine to be used, accompanied by strimming or weed spraying around the base of the fence posts.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications

- Resources – There is no available budget to construct a second dog area at Mardale
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – The current Dog Control Orders are in place giving powers to Council staff to issue fixed penalty notices to the owners of dogs which are left to foul open spaces and decline or refuse to pick up the mess.
- Reputation – The Council is keen to encourage people with or without dogs to enjoy the open spaces it manages. However there is a requirement to ensure that the activity of one group does not have a detrimental impact on others.

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 Due to the current pressure on the Council's limited resources, it appears that this request cannot be delivered at the present time.
It should be noted also that even if resources were available, this request has not been tested against other bids for priority in the Council's capital programme.
Given that the reasonable approach to enforcement seems to be working, it may be that Committee would wish to stay with the status quo, unless/until funding for a scheme is identified.

RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

6.1 Note the report and decide how they wish to proceed with regard to the petition received for an additional dog area at Mardale.

MARK BEVERIDGE
HEAD OF CULTURAL AND LEISURE SERVICES

JOHN HEAP
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS: Dog Control Order Reports; 21/5/13, 14/1/14. 27/5/14
Dog Petition Report 2/9/14

Agenda Item 5, Community Services Committee 2nd September, 2014

For further information please ask for Mark Beveridge, extension 4479.