



Report of the Cabinet Member for Environment Services

Tethered Horses Scrutiny Working Group
31st January 2018

The keeping of horses on tether on public land in Swansea

Purpose:	To provide an update on how the Authority has dealt with the issue of horses that are tethered on public land.
Content:	<p>This report provides an update of the actions taken by the Council and it's partners and the current situation in relation to horses tethered on public land.</p> <p>This report will be of interest to Elected Members, animal welfare organisations and members of the public. The report will demonstrate the Councils continued role in protecting local communities and the welfare of animals.</p>
Councillors are being asked to:	Consider the report as part of their continued review of horses being tethered on public land in Swansea
Lead Councillor:	Councillor Mark Thomas – Cabinet Member for Environment Services
Lead Officer	Peter Richards Manager for Building Control, Trading Standards, Bereavement and Registration Services.
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1. Background

- 1.1 There has been a long tradition in Swansea of tethering horses on public land. This practice tends to happen in urban areas particularly on public land associated with the Authorities Council estates. The Council does not permit horses to be kept on public space, however

there are a number owners that continue to tether their horses without permission.

- 1.2 In 2015 /16 this authority was asked to respond to a petition from an animal welfare pressure group who were seeking to prevent horses from being kept on Council land without permission. This matter was referred for scrutiny following which it was agreed that interested parties should work together in order to bring about a reduction in the number of horses, a reduction in tethering and protection of the welfare of the horses
- 1.3 Tethering a horse is not illegal, however there is a code of practice which should be observed by the owner. The Council has statutory responsibilities for horses in respect of their identification under the Equine Identification (Wales) Regulations 2009. This requires that horses are properly identified with a “passport” and for horses born since 2009 with an electronic chip inserted under the skin.
- 1.4 Other applicable legislation is the Control of Horses (Wales) Act 2014. This Act contains statutory powers in terms of “Fly Grazing”. The Council has adopted these powers which are utilised when it is necessary to consider impounding, which is usually when a horse is contributing to a public risk, a nuisance or on a public highway.
- 1.5 The powers of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 are also utilised in cases where horses have suffered neglect. These powers are also exercised by partner organisations such as the RSPCA.
- 1.6 Council officers respond to complaints from the community involving horses which may be endangering the public or suffering from neglect. These officers are specialists in terms of animal welfare and are able to make measured judgements on the condition of horses before deciding whether it is necessary to intervene on the grounds of welfare.

2. Working in Partnership

- 2.1 In order to bring about a reduction in incidents of tethering and welfare it was necessary to work in partnership with interested parties.

Organisations targeted to drive improvements were –

- The RSPCA
- CHAPS (POBL)
- FOSH (Friends of Swansea Horses)
- Lluest Horse and Pony
- Pettifor Trust

3. Agreed Actions

- It was essential that all “hotspot” areas where horses were being tethered without permission were identified and documented.
- Identify sanctuary space for unwanted / impounded horses.
- A process to educate owners was needed, to ensure that they clearly understood the needs of their horses and their legal responsibilities.
- Improve signage at known “hotspots” which stated clearly that horses were not permitted.
- Impound horses on public land without permission.
- Take action using regulatory powers in appropriate cases.
- Use the press and PR to reinforce messages about horses kept on land without permission.
- Create a “Swansea Equine Forum” made up of partners which meets 2/3 times a year to maintain communication and improvement.
- Investigate setting up a community facility on land identified by the Council to be used to assist in the education of owners without access to land.

4. The Current Position

- 4.1 Hotspot areas have been identified and action taken to inform the public that horses are not permitted. These locations are now monitored on a monthly basis. The number of horses across these locations has reduced by sixty percent since May 2016.
- 4.2 The Council has developed a knowledge of horse owners and is targeting individuals in a proportionate manner to seek improvement in co-operation which may involve them renting or taking possession of private land with permission to use for their horse.
- 4.3 Education was within the remit of CHAPS which unfortunately has disbanded. However prior to CHAPS being disbanded contributions were made to assist in improving knowledge of owners and improvements in horse identification by way of horse passports.
- 4.4 Signs have been posted by Council staff to raise awareness that permission to use land is not granted.
- 4.5 The Council has continued to impound horses using powers under the Control of Horses (Wales) Act 2009.
- 4.6 Regulatory action is being taken in a proportionate manner by the RSPCA and the Council.

- 4.7 PR is used by each organisation to convey appropriate messages and collective messages have been used in appropriate circumstances.
- 4.8 Swansea Equine Forum has been established and has met four times.
- 4.9 Land was identified by the Council that may be suitable for a community grazing scheme but CHAPS has been disbanded so no proposal has been brought forward by them, although one of the former lead figures of CHAPS is still trying to raise funding to assist in establishing a place of sanctuary.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Council has statutory responsibilities for horses in respect of their identification under the Equine Identification (Wales) Regulations 2009. This work is undertaken to minimise the risk caused to the general public and to deal with the abandonment of neglected horses.
- 5.2 Legal action is taken where considered appropriate in the circumstances when owners are identified. This can include advice and guidance, use of formal improvement procedures and in the worst cases prosecution for identification and welfare issues.
- 5.3 There are proactive programmes of work in place in addition to a reactive response to the general public's complaints which are both designed to make individuals aware of their responsibilities, which help reduce the impact on communities and safeguard the welfare of horses.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 There is no dedicated budget for this type of work which continues to be a considerable drain on council resources. Service costs are estimated to be approximately £60,000. Approximately £4000 pounds in fees are recovered from horse owners.

Background papers: "Round and Round" Tethered horses in Swansea a report by Friends of Swansea Horses (FOSH).

Appendices: None