



## MEETING PAPER

Meeting: Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee (agenda item 10)

Date: Tuesday 18 June 2024

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~/NON-CONFIDENTIAL

### Introduction

An agenda item has been requested for the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee to consider possible dog control measures in parks, following a dog attack on a swan in Fen Park, which led to the swan being euthanised.

### Details

The Sub-Committee may wish to consider some or all of the following suggested measures:

- **Social media campaign** – A page on our website to appeal to dog owners to be responsible and mindful of other visitors to our parks and the wildlife that lives there. Regular Facebook posts, particularly through the bird nesting season and summer season, reminding dog owners to be responsible, and providing contact information for people to report any dangerous dog incidents.
- **Signs/leaflets** – Installation of signs with a positive message to encourage responsible dog ownership, for the benefit of shared enjoyment of our parks and open spaces. Specific signs during bird nesting season where relevant, requesting that dogs be kept on the lead. Production of leaflets giving information about nesting birds on our sites, requesting that visitors be respectful of them. Leaflets can also provide information about responsible bird feeding, and contact details for the RSPCA for the reporting of any incidents.
- **Fencing** – There have been discussions previously about the pros and cons of erecting fencing around play areas, and this is something the Sub-Committee may wish to continue to keep in mind. Where play areas are being refurbished, this can be considered on a case by case basis. Fencing surrounding the pond in Fen Park and the swan nesting site has been suggested, but it may be difficult to provide effective fencing without it potentially exacerbating the issue by making it difficult for wildlife which uses the pond to enter and exit the pond safely.
- **Public Space Protection Order** – This is an order which identifies a public place and prohibits specific things being done within the restricted area. If the Town Council were minded to, it could seek to have Public Space Protection Orders in force in its parks to stipulate dogs must be kept on leads. Breach of a Public Space Protection Order is a criminal offence, which carries a fine. These can be enforced by the Police, Council Enforcement Officers or any other authorised officers. If Council were minded to explore this option, it would need to consider carefully which specific parks/open spaces it would like the Public Space Protection Orders to apply to. I have contacted East Suffolk Council for more information about Public Space Protection Orders generally and the process for applying for one.

I have emailed the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, giving details of the specific incident in Fen Park and asking if they have any other suggestions for measures which can be taken to protect the wildlife in our parks.

### Recommendations/Decisions

The Sub-Committee is asked to consider the measures suggested above, and any other measures members may suggest, to ensure effective dog control in our parks and responsible behaviour by dog owners when visiting the parks with their pets, to ensure our parks can be enjoyed by all who visit them, and that they provide a safe habitat for wildlife.