

From the Chief Executive  
Mark Lloyd

Councillor Kevin Dodds  
240 Windsor Avenue  
Gateshead  
NE8 4PA

30 March 2017

Dear Cllr Dodds

Thank you for your letter of 17 March concerning the recent report of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee into the welfare of domestic animals.

The Chair of the Local Government Association's Safer and Stronger Communities Board, Councillor Simon Blackburn, gave evidence to the Committee in June 2016. In preparation for the session, the Board discussed a range of policy positions relating to the key themes of the inquiry, including the role of the RSPCA in enforcing the Animal Welfare Act. In light of the resource constraints facing councils and other public bodies, and given the reforms the RSPCA is putting in place to strengthen its prosecuting procedures, the Board took the view that it would be pragmatic to formally recognise the role of the charity in enforcing the Act. The EFRA Committee, as you know, took a different view and recommended that councils be subject to a fully funded statutory duty to enforce the Act. I am pleased to report that in its response to the EFRA Committee in January, the Government also expressed support for the RSPCA retaining its role in enforcing the Act.

We will of course maintain a watching brief on this issue, but at the current time we do not expect significant changes to the enforcement of the Act as a result of the Committee's report.

In regard to the proposal for professional dog walkers to be licensed, as I'm sure you're aware DEFRA recently undertook a separate consultation on proposals aimed at streamlining and modernising the existing controls. The National Companion Animal Focus Group, with whom the LGA liaises regularly, similarly recommended that the Government consider whether there is a need to bring a range of newer animal businesses, including dog walkers, within the scope of animal licensing framework. The Government's response to the consultation, again in January, did not suggest that at the current time it intends to do so. However, as you may have seen, some councils are using other tools <https://tinyurl.com/n4uyjs6> to seek to manage the activities of dog walking businesses and will I am sure continue to use creative approaches to ensure that they are run responsibly.

Yours sincerely



Mark Lloyd  
Chief Executive