

Consideration to introduce a Dog Walking Registration Scheme

Licensing Committee

Date: 15 March 2018

Author: Licensing Manager

Wards: All

Parishes Affected: All

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 To seek the agreement of the Licensing Committee to endorse a Code of Conduct for Commercial Dog Walkers in Swindon, and to commend the policy to Council for adoption.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Endorse the proposed Code of Conduct for Commercial Dog Walkers, and commend it to Council for adoption.

3. Detail

- 3.1 Swindon Borough Council is fortunate to have a large number of parks and open spaces within the Borough which are enjoyed by residents and visitors alike.
- 3.2 The Council recognises that the spaces are also used by commercial enterprises such as professional dog walkers.
- 3.3 Although the Council does not wish to discourage small businesses it is noted that there has been a steady increase in commercial dog walking in the Town's parks and open spaces over the last couple of years.
- 3.4 Most of these are professionally run without incident nevertheless occasional complaints or queries have been received generally regarding the number of dogs being walked or the dogs exiting vehicles.
- 3.5 Currently commercial dog walking is not covered by any national legislation and is not a licensable activity. Whilst the level of complaints generally received is not considered enough to meet the threshold for introducing restrictive measures such as Public Spaces Protection Orders, the activity of some commercial dog walkers can cause nuisance to the public.
- 3.6 The calls received are generally from members of the public asking how to find a dog walker and what things to look for. A request for some kind of registration was also raised as part of the recent consultation for the Animal Welfare Charter.
- 3.7 In order to promote best practice and quality assurance it is suggested that a voluntary registration scheme be introduced for commercial dog walkers, which would include a code of conduct.

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- 3.8 Such a scheme can assist in minimising impact of commercial dog walkers on local parks and their other users.
- 3.9 This would be similar to a successful regime introduced by Edinburgh Council in 2013. This is a more regimented system in that commercial dog walkers had to register in order to be able to use the parks and open spaces in the city.
- 3.10 It is considered that at this time a less restrictive approach would be more appropriate given the low level numbers of complaints. This would encourage professional dog walkers to sign up.
- 3.11 Professional dog walkers can provide an invaluable service to dog owners and set a positive examples to other dog walkers.
- 3.12 A list of those that have signed up to the scheme and promised to abide by the code of conduct can made available to the public.

Consultation

- 3.13 Consultation on the proposal took place between 24th January 2018 and 23rd February 2018. This included a press release, sharing on social media, discussion on local radio and contacting local animal related businesses.
- 3.14 The Kennel Club were also contacted and through this we were made aware of East Lothian Council who had also implemented a similar scheme with great success
- 3.15 248 responses were received on the consultation. Of these 59 were anonymous. Personal details were requested to ensure multiple responses were not received that affect the consultation's results. Therefore these 59 responses have been excluded from the details but are summarised in Appendix 3 for completion.
- 3.16 A full breakdown of the responses is available in Appendix 2 but in summary:
 - 87% were in favour of a voluntary registration
 - 79% felt it should be mandatory
 - 75% were in favour of registered walkers carrying an ID card confirming their registration although a fifth of these felt it should be optional.
 - The responses were favourable for all the suggested inclusions for the code of conduct. These are discussed below
- 3.16 One of the most common queries regarding dog walkers is how many dogs they should walk at a time. The Council recognises that this can be impacted by many things such as the individuals' knowledge and experience, the individual dogs

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being walked e.g. their temperament, how well they know each other, how well they know the walker, what training they have had etc. This can also include the environment in which they are being walked – clearly there is a difference between a popular town park and a countryside location although the latter can bring its own concerns such as livestock.

- 3.17 Control of the dogs is the most important part to consider but there is also the matter of clearing up after them. Dog fouling was highlighted by multiple respondents as something they were concerned about especially if dogs were off lead as it would be difficult to monitor multiple dogs.
- 3.18 We asked how many dogs it was felt appropriate to be walked at a time and the highest response by far was 4 dogs with 54% of the vote. It became more split when we asked how many dogs should be allowed off lead at any one time with 2 and 4 dogs having the highest votes at 30% each.
- 3.19 We also asked if being walked with other dog walkers what should be the maximum number off lead in total. This again quite evenly split between the responses with 4 just slightly ahead at 26% of the vote.
- 3.20 For licensed home boarders the maximum number of dogs allowed at any one time is five including any resident dogs. If there are no resident dogs the absolute maximum number of dogs allowed is four.
- 3.21 In considering all the responses including the comments but taking into consideration the requirements for home boarders we suggest a maximum number of 5 dogs, with up to 4 dogs being allowed off lead at any one time including if walking with other dog walkers. If two dog walkers are together they may have up to 10 dogs with them but only 4 can be off lead at one time.
- 3.22 We also suggest that commercial dog walkers try to walk independently from each other but do accept that for safety and other reasons it may be preferable for them to walk together especially in rural environments.
- 3.23 Insurance is another important consideration for commercial dog walkers. £5 million is the minimal level of cover required by Swindon Borough Council for other commercial activities such as exercise classes that take place on Council land. 59% were in agreement with the rest split between unsure and rejecting the suggestion. Alternative amounts were suggested in the comments by several people who felt the level of cover was too high.
- 3.24 In line with the Parks Department and given commercial dog walkers will often be using Council land, the recommendation is to maintain a requirement of a minimum of £5 million cover and proof should be provided with the application for registration.

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- 3.25 Commercial dog walkers should be knowledgeable in both the handling and care of dogs. 92% were in agreement that they should demonstrate knowledge of dog behaviour either through experience and/or training. The Council only endorses positive reward based training.
- 3.26 86% were in agreement that commercial dog walkers should attend an animal first aid course and provide proof of this with their application.
- 3.27 It is therefore recommended that both of the above are included in the code of conduct.
- 3.28 A requirement of East Lothian Council is that a first aid kit is kept readily available by the dog walker. Many dog walkers already carry portable kits on their walks so it is proposed that this as a reasonable addition to the Code of Conduct.
- 3.28 Transportation is an important consideration. Transporting animals as part of a commercial enterprise can follow restrictions and guidance under the Welfare of Animals in Transport Order 2006 but most commercial dog walkers will not meet the threshold for specific restrictions due to journey times. Advice will be given by the Council at the time of applying along with other related legislation.
- 3.29 It is felt important that dogs should be properly and safely secured in the vehicle and 87% of respondents agreed. The same amount also agreed that dogs should be taken out and returned to the vehicle on lead and 90% agreed that general care should be taken when arriving and leaving green spaces.
- 3.30 It is also recommended that a requirement of East Lothian Council be added in that the vehicle should be fit for purpose. We would consider this to be a vehicle in which all dogs transported could be safely and suitably secured.
- 3.31 97% agreed that all commercial dog walkers should abide by all relevant legislation. Details will be given to applicants at the time of issuing.
- 3.32 83% agreed that commercial dog walking should take place in quieter areas to minimise impact and 98% agreed with the suggestion that they should be mindful of other park users and their feelings towards dogs.
- 3.33 In the other suggestions there were comments regarding walking with young children and that dog walkers should require signed permission from owners before allowing dogs off lead.
- 3.34 These are both requirements for those who board dogs including at their own home. We therefore recommend that children under the age of 10 are not permitted to accompany commercial dog walks and that dog walkers should note details of the animals they are responsible for including written permission to be allowed off lead.

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- 3.35 It is recommended to the Committee that registration should be for three years whereupon it would be reviewed. Details of insurance must be provided each year.
- 3.36 Some form of identification should be provided and therefore it is proposed that an ID card be issued and carried by the walker.
- 3.37 The suggested application fee is £40 for 3 years.
- 3.38 List of approved dog walkers would be available on the Council's website and companies may be removed should there be substantiated complaints.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 Not to introduce the voluntary dog walking registration

5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the report

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 Legal and Human Rights considerations have been taken fully into account in compiling this report. It is considered that the recommendations of this report are compatible with Convention Rights. The Council is required to comply with the statutory provisions referred to in the report. All other legal and human rights implications have been considered in the preparation of this report.

All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.3 There are no other implications

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.4 A DIA has been completed and is available on request

6. Consultees

- 6.1 The Board Director, Resources (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 Animal Boarding Establishments Act 1963
- 7.2 Animal Welfare Act 2006

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7.3 Welfare of Animals in Transport Order 2006

8. Appendices

8.1 Draft Code of Conduct for Commercial Dog Walkers

8.2 Consultation Responses

8.3 Anonymous Consultation Responses

8.4 Proposed Code of Conduct for Commercial Dog Walkers

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Appendix 1

Draft Code of Conduct for Commercial Dog Walkers for the consultation

With large numbers of dogs, professional walkers have the potential to cause a significant and negative impact on the park environment and the enjoyment and safety of other users.

By subscribing to the following code of conduct, professional walkers can minimise this impact, set a positive example to other dog walkers and deliver a safe and quality service for their clients.

Commercial dog walkers acting in the Borough of Swindon agree to:

1. Abide by all dog related legislation including but not restricted to the Dogs (Fouling of Land) Act 1996, Dogs Act 1871, Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, Protection of Livestock Act 1953, Animals Act 1971, Antisocial Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 and Animal Welfare Act 2006
2. Minimise the impact that exercising multiple dogs could have on other park users. Quiet parks, or quiet areas within parks, should be used over busy parks and spaces near children's play areas. Parks with sensitive wildlife areas should be avoided as well as care taken to not disturb nesting birds and other wildlife.
3. Take extra care when arriving and leaving parks and greenspace to minimise issues for other users. All dogs should be walked away from and returned to the vehicle on a lead.
4. Provide public liability insurance cover for their service.
5. Only exercise the number of dogs that are covered by their insurance policy, typically this is no more than 6 dogs.
6. Have a good knowledge of dog behaviour and reliable skills in training and handling dogs. The Council encourages the use of positive reinforcement methods as universally endorsed by behaviourists, charities and veterinarians.
7. Be respectful of other park users and their feelings towards dogs.

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Appendix 2 Consultation results

Consultation Responses

Q 1 Do you agree with the proposal for voluntary registration of commercial Dog Walkers?

Yes – 165 (87%)

No – 17 (9%)

Unsure – 7 (4%)

Q2 Do you feel the registration should be mandatory not voluntary?

Yes – 150

No – 27

Unsure – 12

Q3 We will endeavour to keep any cost for registering as low as possible to encourage businesses to sign up. For a small charge we could include an ID card walkers can carry showing that they are registered. Do you think this would be useful?

Yes I'd like for registered walkers to carry a card – 116 (61%)

No, as long as its on the Council website that should be enough - 38

I'd like the option to have a card at a small additional cost – 27 (14%)

Other (please specify) – 9

Of the others responses, 7 felt it was a money making exercise and two asked for armbands instead of ID cards so would be more visible.

Q4 The following questions consider some suggestions for what the content of the code of conduct should be. One of the most common queries regarding commercial dog walkers is regarding the number of dogs they walk. What do you feel should be the maximum number of dogs that can be walked by a commercial dog walker at any one time?

2 – 28

4 – 102

6 -19

8 – 1

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As stated by their insurance (typically 6-8) – 21

Other – 19

The other responses were 7 people voting for no more than 3 dogs, 2 further votes for 4 dogs, singular votes for 1, 2 and 6-8 dogs and the rest stating it was dependent on the dogs and the situation (e.g. quieter areas vs high footfall areas).

Q5 Further to Q4, what do you feel should be the maximum number of dogs that can be allowed off lead by a commercial dog walker at any one time?

0 – 18

1 – 7

2 – 57

3 – 13

4 – 57

5 – 3

6 – 11

Other – 24

The other responses were almost exclusively stating it would depend on the individual dog, the walker's ability and the environment. One person stated in this answer it should be 0, one stated 4 dogs and one did not put an answer

Q6 Commercial dog walkers agree to: "Walk independently of each other. Contact with others is permissible but only a maximum of X dogs are to be allowed off lead when walking with others" Do you agree with the above suggestion?

Yes – 118 (62%)

No – 45

Unsure – 27

Q7 What do you feel should be the maximum number of dogs that can be allowed off lead by a commercial dog walker if walking with others?

0 – 26

1 - 5

2 – 35

3 – 11

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4 – 49

5 – 1

6 – 25

Other – 38

The other responses were almost exclusively stating it would depend on the individual dog, the walker's ability and the environment.

Q8 Commercial Dog Walkers agree to (a) "Ensure that all members of the public are given right of way at all times." (e.g. if walking along a footpath, to step aside for member of public to pass) Do you agree with the above suggestion?

Yes – 112 (59%)

No – 48

Unsure – 30

Commercial dog walkers agree to (b) "Be respectful of other open space users and their feelings towards dogs. "Do you agree with the above suggestion?

Yes – 185 (98%)

No- 2

Unsure – 2

Q9 Commercial Dog Walkers agree to "Ensure they have suitable and sufficient public liability insurance (minimum £5million cover). Evidence of this shall be provided as part of their application. "Do you agree with the above suggestion? NB £5 million is the minimal level of cover required by Swindon Borough Council for other commercial activities that take place on Council land. If you feel the level of cover should be different please comment below what you feel the minimal level of cover should be

Yes – 112 (59%)

No – 48

Unsure – 30

Level of cover – 5 responses felt generally £5 million was too high, 4 respondents suggested 2 million, 1 person suggested 3 million and 6 respondents suggested 6 million.

Q10 Commercial dog walkers agree to "Minimise the impact that exercising multiple dogs could have on other park users. Quiet parks, or quiet areas within

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Kathryn Ashton, 01793 466113, KAshton@swindon.gov.uk.

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parks, should be used over busy parks and spaces near children's play areas. Parks with sensitive wildlife areas should be avoided as well as care taken to not disturb nesting birds and other wildlife." Do you agree with the above suggestion?

Yes – 156 (83%)

No – 15

Unsure – 19

Q11 Commercial dog walkers should (a) "Take extra care when arriving and leaving parks and greenspace to minimise issues for other users. "Do you agree with the above suggestion?

Yes – 170 (90%)

No – 19

(b) "All dogs should be walked away from and returned to the vehicle on a lead." Do you agree with the above suggestion?

Yes – 164 (87%)

No – 14

Unsure - 12

Q12 "Dogs should be suitably secured in a vehicle. Consideration should be given to whether dogs should be separated whilst travelling". Do you agree with the above suggestion?

Yes – 164 (87%)

No – 7

Unsure – 19

Q13 Commercial dog walkers should "Have a good knowledge of dog behaviour and reliable skills in training and handling dogs. The Council encourages the use of positive reinforcement methods as universally endorsed by behaviourists, charities and veterinarians." This may be measured as part of the application process to include details of experience, qualifications (if applicable) and training methods. Do you agree with the above suggestion?

Yes – 173 (92%)

No – 6

Unsure – 11

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Q14 Commercial dog walkers agree to “Have a certificate in animal first aid and details of this should be provided on application”. It is recommended that this be a practical course. Do you agree with the above suggestion?

Yes – 163 (86%)

No – 16

Unsure – 11

Q15 Commercial dog walkers agree to “Abide by all dog related legislation, further details can be obtained from Swindon Borough Council.” Do you agree with the above suggestion?

Yes – 184 (97%)

No – 3

Unsure – 2

Other comments/suggestions:

These were generally positive in support of the registration scheme. A few comments suggested that these rules should be in place for all dog walkers – whether dog owners or professionals. A few negative comments suggested that this was believed to be a money making scheme for the Council.

A selection of the comments is shown below.

I strongly believe either a no children policy should be implemented or a no children under 12 years

All persons working within the animal industry should be regulated

All walkers should have their brand visible i.e. on their t-shirts or vans

Anyone who walks dogs should have a licence if they don't I feel they shouldn't be able to walk them and should be shut down. I had a very bad experience with a dog walker and seems like what she did to me she has done to others

As a previous boarding kennel, owner I was licenced and had to ,abide by various rules and regulations. Too many people are thinking that animal care is a way of earning easy money without any knowledge of the animals in their care.

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As an ex dog walker in Wiltshire I had previous experiences with dog handling and behaviour but I have seen many 'cowboy' dog walkers who haven't got a clue how to handle their dogs on and off lead

Canine Behaviourists are seeing an increasing number of problems caused by dogs walking in large groups or dogs repeatedly encountering large groups of dogs. This is a booming industry and the impacts of walking large groups is having a very negative influence on other users.

Dog mess will need to be addresssed in the rules..walking dogs for money must mean the usual responsibilities are increased.

Be mindful if other open space users such as horses and have full control of all dogs at times

Commercial dog walkers should be well trained in all aspects of dog handling, insurances etc to maintain good reputation. Why would you think they haven't? SBC will get the above passed, then start picking on dog owners generally ... it's a start ... soon we'll be banned from certain parks, or forced to keep dogs on leads. YOU CAN'T EXERCISE DOGS ON LEADS! Then your parks will be empty and then you can build houses on them! Grouping some of the questions e.g. On wildlife areas nasty as an Excuse to stop us walking around any lakes eg Coate Water. And on top of everything, we will eventually have to pay to park. Tax upon tax. Happy days ...

Consult canine professionals - dog walkers don't count as in the majority of cases they are not professionals. People will try and push for more dogs per person as this means more money but when it goes wrong it's usually catastrophic. Responsible professionals will give you sensible answers.

Dog walkers often have access to peoples houses a crb check is essential

Far too many dogs all being walked together at present. As a parent and a dog owner it's frightening and off putting seeing a huge pack all walking together - very intimidating

For the safety of the dogs & road users dogs should be properly restrained in the vehicle & never by their necks, always with a harness properly attached to the vehicle

How on earth would this becPoliced? You currently cant Police dog poo bins and fly tippers. This is is a hair brained scheme to make £. Ill thought out and not at all easy to implement. Go back to the drawing boards!

I am a professional dog walker and I am fed up with the behaviour of other dog walkers. I frequently see walkers with 7 or 8 dogs off lead which I'm not sure they can get insurance for. I've seen a dog walker's van left with dogs in it unattended. Dog walkers that group together with loads of boisterous dogs. I would personally welcome, and be happy to abide by all council regulations and think registration should be mandatory.

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Kathryn Ashton, 01793 466113, KAshton@swindon.gov.uk.

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I don't think should be labelled wholly to dog walkers all public should respect each other's use of open spaces and public areas! Dogs should have as much right to run around as humans!

I also think walkers should have written consent from owners to let the dog off the lead,

1) The maximum number of dogs that a commercial walker can walk at any time is 4 small dogs or 2 medium/large dogs. 2) All commercial dog walkers must have public liability insurance of £5,000,000. 3) The maximum number of dogs that can be transported to dog walks at any one time are 4. 4) Dogs from different owners must be separated during transport.

some form of logo to add to a website or advertising page to allow people looking online to see that they are legitimate.

I have a dog walker and trust them completely. I do not think the above rules should be an issue to a respected dog handler.

i think the council should supply local dog parks that are fenced in and secure just basic patch of grass with poo bins, it would be low maintainance, hard to vandalise unlike the childrens parks, and it will keep dogs safely away from the public parks that people use

If you restrict number of dogs that are walked at anyone time I feel a need to state that no dogs should be left in a vehicle. So there is no temptation to pick up more dogs and then do 2 or more walks. This I feel would be stressful to the dogs left behind.

Please put this in place!

This is a booming industry, rules must be kept tight to avoid the chancers.

Please bear in mind that it can be very difficult for pro dog walkers to make a living if they walk fewer than 6 dogs per walk. We offer a valued service to our clients and not all of them are wealthy so increasing our prices is not always an option. The license fee should be reasonable and reflect that for those who are individual operators.

This seems to be the next idea the council has to make money. And spending a load of money on consultations and meetings around it I bet.

There definitely needs to be some sort of monitoring for dog walkers.

Appendix Three - Anonymous consultation results

Consultation Responses

Q 1 Do you agree with the proposal for voluntary registration of commercial Dog Walkers?

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Yes – 43

No – 8

Unsure – 8

Q2 Do you feel the registration should be mandatory not voluntary?

Yes – 38

No – 14

Unsure – 7

Q3 We will endeavour to keep any cost for registering as low as possible to encourage businesses to sign up. For a small charge we could include an ID card walkers can carry showing that they are registered. Do you think this would be useful?

Yes I'd like for registered walkers to carry a card – 39

No, as long as its on the Council website that should be enough - 13

I'd like the option to have a card at a small additional cost – 4

Other (please specify) – 3

Of the others responses, 1 didn't agree at all, the other two said there should be no charge.

Q4 The following questions consider some suggestions for what the content of the code of conduct should be. One of the most common queries regarding commercial dog walkers is regarding the number of dogs they walk. What do you feel should be the maximum number of dogs that can be walked by a commercial dog walker at any one time?

2 – 9

4 – 21

6 - 6

8 – 0

As stated by their insurance (typically 6-8) – 1

Other – 3

The other responses were 1 person voting for 1 dog at a time, 1 person voting for 3 and the other saying it was dependent on the size of dog.

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Q5 Further to Q4, what do you feel should be the maximum number of dogs that can be allowed off lead by a commercial dog walker at any one time?

0 – 5

1 – 5

2 – 16

3 – 7

4 – 9

5 – 2

6 – 7

Other – 4

The other responses were almost exclusively stating it would depend on the individual dog, the walker's ability and the environment.

Q6 Commercial dog walkers agree to: "Walk independently of each other. Contact with others is permissible but only a maximum of X dogs are to be allowed off lead when walking with others" Do you agree with the above suggestion?

Yes – 34

No – 10

Unsure – 11

Q7 What do you feel should be the maximum number of dogs that can be allowed off lead by a commercial dog walker if walking with others?

0 – 7

1 - 3

2 – 9

3 – 2

4 – 15

5 – 3

6 – 8

Other – 7

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The other responses were almost exclusively stating it would depend on the individual dog, the walker's ability and the environment.

Q8 Commercial Dog Walkers agree to (a) "Ensure that all members of the public are given right of way at all times." (e.g. if walking along a footpath, to step aside for member of public to pass) Do you agree with the above suggestion?

Yes – 28

No – 19

Unsure – 5

Didn't respond - 7

Commercial dog walkers agree to (b) "Be respectful of other open space users and their feelings towards dogs." Do you agree with the above suggestion?

Yes – 51

No- 1

Unsure – 0

Didn't respond - 7

Q9 Commercial Dog Walkers agree to "Ensure they have suitable and sufficient public liability insurance (minimum £5million cover). Evidence of this shall be provided as part of their application." Do you agree with the above suggestion? NB £5 million is the minimal level of cover required by Swindon Borough Council for other commercial activities that take place on Council land. If you feel the level of cover should be different please comment below what you feel the minimal level of cover should be

Yes – 37

No – 5

Unsure – 10

Didn't respond - 7

Level of cover – 1 said £10 million minimum and 2 said £5 mill was excessive.

Q10 Commercial dog walkers agree to "Minimise the impact that exercising multiple dogs could have on other park users. Quiet parks, or quiet areas within parks, should be used over busy parks and spaces near children's play areas. Parks with sensitive wildlife areas should be avoided as well as care taken to not

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disturb nesting birds and other wildlife.” Do you agree with the above suggestion?

Yes – 42

No – 6

Unsure – 4

Didn't respond - 7

Q11 Commercial dog walkers should (a) “Take extra care when arriving and leaving parks and greenspace to minimise issues for other users.” Do you agree with the above suggestion?

Yes – 40

No – 10

Didn't respond - 9

(b) “All dogs should be walked away from and returned to the vehicle on a lead.” Do you agree with the above suggestion?

Yes – 39

No – 7

Unsure – 4

Didn't respond - 9

Q12 “Dogs should be suitably secured in a vehicle. Consideration should be given to whether dogs should be separated whilst travelling” Do you agree with the above suggestion?

Yes – 40

No – 5

Unsure – 5

Didn't respond - 9

Q13 Commercial dog walkers should “Have a good knowledge of dog behaviour and reliable skills in training and handling dogs. The Council encourages the use of positive reinforcement methods as universally endorsed by behaviourists, charities and veterinarians.” This may be measured as part of the application process to include details of experience, qualifications (if applicable) and training methods. Do you agree with the above suggestion?

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Yes – 37

No – 6

Unsure – 3

Didn't respond - 13

Q14 Commercial dog walkers agree to “Have a certificate in animal first aid and details of this should be provided on application”. It is recommended that this be a practical course. Do you agree with the above suggestion?

Yes – 31

No – 8

Unsure – 7

Didn't respond - 13

Q15 Commercial dog walkers agree to “Abide by all dog related legislation, further details can be obtained from Swindon Borough Council.” Do you agree with the above suggestion?

Yes – 39

No – 3

Unsure – 4

Didn't respond - 13

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Appendix Four – Proposed Code of Conduct for Commercial Dog Walkers

Code of Conduct for Commercial Dog Walkers

By subscribing to the following code of conduct, professional walkers can minimise this impact, set a positive example to other dog walkers and deliver a safe and quality service for their clients.

Registered Commercial dog walkers acting in the Borough of Swindon agree to the following:

Not to walk any more than 5 dogs at any one time unless on private secure land. No more than 4 dogs are to be off lead at any one time.

To ensure they have suitable and sufficient public liability insurance (minimum £5million cover).

To walk independently of each other. Contact with others is permissible but only a maximum of 4 dogs in total are to be allowed off lead when walking with others.

Children under the age of 10 should not accompany commercial dog walks

Accurate records should be kept of dogs they are responsible for including signed permission for dogs to be allowed off lead

Be respectful of other park users and their feelings towards dogs.

Quiet parks, or quiet areas within parks, should be used over busy parks and spaces near children's play areas. Parks with sensitive wildlife areas should be avoided as well as care taken to not disturb nesting birds and other wildlife.

Have a good knowledge of dog behaviour and reliable skills in training and handling dogs. The Council encourages the use of positive reinforcement methods as universally endorsed by behaviourists, charities and veterinarians.

Have a certificate in animal first aid. It is recommended that this be a practical course and a first aid kit should be available on walks.

Abide by all dog related legislation. Further information is available from Swindon Borough Council.

Dogs should be suitably secured and transported in a vehicle fit for purpose. All dogs should be walked away from and returned to the vehicle on a lead. Extra care should be taken when arriving and leaving parks and greenspace to minimise issues for other users.