* The effectiveness of the Act in reducing the number of out of control dogs/dog attacks in Scotland.

Comments.

In general the Act has been effective in helping to respond effectively to an increasingly problematic area of work. However the number of cases reported has risen dramatically as public awareness of the legislation has risen. The Act is/can be an effective tool for dealing with out of control dogs and this should be seen as a very positive step.

However the rise in the number of cases reported has placed increased demands on staff time and added considerably to workloads, sometimes detracting from other areas of work.

* How well do you think Local Authorities are carrying out their duties under the Act?

Aberdeen Council Dog Wardens are comfortable in their use of the legislation and routinely issue Dog Control Notices when appropriate. Breaches of these notices are now being reported to the Courts.

Investigations can be demanding of limited staff resources however our responses are commensurate with the importance of the legislation.

Police Scotland are referring cases to the local authority for service of DCNs as an alternative to prosecution of offending dog owners. This reduces costs and burdens on Court time.

* What challenges you think local authorities face in carrying out their duties under the Act.

In general terms the increased workload has placed considerable demand on staff time. This relates in particular to initial responses to complaints and follow up enforcement action/monitoring when necessary. Reporting cases to the Court also demands considerable staff time and expertise.

GDPR regulations can impede investigations when information is required from Police Scotland. Previously personal details, addresses etc, were readily available however this is not now the case.

Information sharing protocol would be beneficial in this area.
No provision exists in the Act to use car registration details to assist in the tracing of dog owners. (Particularly useful in rural cases.)

* If there are any weaknesses in the Act or any specific changes you would like to see.

As DCNs are classed a “civil actions” Officers are prevented from advising victims of the course of action followed eg if a DCN has in fact been served. Perception is the “nothing has been done”.

Local authorities should be able to obtain information from the DVLA in relation to vehicles used by dog owners.

* Any other issues relating to the Act you wish to bring to the attention of the Committee.

No.