

# **Review - Policy on Dogs and Dog Management Bylaw**

**Meeting:** Council Briefing  
**Date of meeting:** 7 April 2021  
**Reporting officer:** Mark Schreurs, Policy Analyst

## **Purpose/Ngā whāinga**

To present the findings of a review of the effectiveness of Council's Policy on Dogs (the Policy) and Dog Management Bylaw (the Bylaw).

## **Context/Horopaki**

Council's current Policy and Bylaw were adopted on 27 June 2019. At that meeting, Council also directed the Chief Executive to undertake a review of the effectiveness of the Policy and Bylaw and to report back to Council. Originally this report was requested for July 2020, but due to delays in implementing the Bylaw, particularly around signs, the report was deferred to April 2021 to include the 2020/2021 summer period.

This report reviews the effectiveness of the Policy and Bylaw, based on complaints, enquiries and comments from the community and associated feedback from Council's Animal Management Officers (AMOs) and other relevant Council staff, including Council's customer services staff.

The Policy and Bylaw cover a range of topics, including the confinement of dogs, neutering and dogs in vehicles. A further key component of the Policy and Bylaw are the 'dog access rules'. These are the rules that determine where in the District dogs are prohibited or are allowed on a leash, or off a leash and also includes rules for beaches where dogs are not allowed during certain times of the day. Much of the discussion during the 2018/2019 review focused on the dog access rules, and it is considered that the directive to report back was with a focus on this area of the Policy and Bylaw in particular.

It should be noted that the implementation of the Policy and Bylaw coincided with Council's dog control service being brought 'in house', including the appointment of new AMOs. The AMOs therefore had limited, if any, exposure to the previous Policy and Bylaw and as such are unable to provide detailed responses regarding the efficiency of the new Policy and Bylaw as compared to the previous one.

## **Discussion/Ngā kōrerorero**

The review has found the Policy and Bylaw are generally working well. Common complaints about dogs continue to be about dogs fouling and to a lesser extent about wandering dogs, however the number and nature of complaints has not changed significantly since July 2019. There have also been a range of complaints about various dog behaviours, however these matters are largely provided for directly under the Dog Control Act 1996 rather than the Policy or Bylaw.

The feedback received indicates that the key issues of concern relate to the dog access rules in two locations.

### **Pahi**

There are some issues in Pahi regarding a lack of understanding where exactly on the beach the on-leash areas start and stop. However, this is considered an issue with interpretation and signage rather than with the dog access rules themselves. An immediate solution is to improve the signs to determine if this resolves the issue, rather than consideration of changing the dog access rules in Pahi.

## **Mangawhai**

Mangawhai's rules appear to be causing some confusion, with many different dog access rules (e.g. on-leash, off-leash) in a small area. Council's AMOs report this makes it confusing for the public and for the AMOs to understand what rules apply where and when.

A complaint from a community member considered the (then new) on-leash rules on the Lincoln Street reserve and adjoining beach were too restrictive. Historically there were no rules preventing a dog from being exercised off leash in this area. Dogs in this area are now required to be kept on a leash between 10am and 5pm.

Other complaints from the Mangawhai community have called for more restrictions on dog access to protect the interests of other people using these public places, particularly beaches.

Solutions to these concerns may include improved signage.

Few, if any, issues have been raised which were not already raised and considered by Council as part of the statutory consultation process that informed the current Policy and Bylaw. 240 submissions were received during March and April 2019 and Council deliberated on the issues raised at length.

Dependent on Council's views on this report, there are three main options that could be considered at a future Council meeting for a resolution as a result:

1. The existing Policy and Bylaw continue unchanged (i.e. the status quo). This would reflect that the scale and scope of comments, feedback and complaints indicate there are no significant issues arising from the existing Policy and Bylaw.
2. Council may wish to consider consulting on proposed amendments to the dog access rules for Mangawhai to simplify them or make them more workable. The analysis for this report suggests there may be scope for such amendments. While very few matters have been raised that were not considered through the previous submissions and deliberation process, Council could reconsider if the interpretation of these issues into the existing dog access rules was the most appropriate. Changing the dog access rules would mean amending the Policy, which requires consultation using the special consultative procedure before Council makes any final decision.
3. Council could bring the next statutory review of the Policy and Bylaw forward from 2029. All aspects of both these documents would then be reviewed in accordance with the legislative requirements. Under section 160 of the Local Government Act 2002, the outcome of the review would then be subject to public consultation, regardless of the outcome, even if the review outcome is to retain the Policy and Bylaw in their current form. Under this option, all aspects of the Policy and Bylaw would be subject to review and feedback, not just the dog access rules.

## **Next steps/E whai ake nei**

Depending on the feedback received at this briefing, staff will prepare a formal report to be presented to a future Council meeting.