



Annual General Meeting 12 March 2015 Minutes

Present

Mark Fisher, Marita Keremezo, Fabien Ho, Carly Clarke, Scott Davies, Philip Herlihy, Katherine Marshall Hanne Jourdan, Charlotte Cole, Murray the dog

Apologies

Peter Keelan, James Bushell, Sarah Mooney, Claire Scott-Shala, Olwen Dale, Leticia Molera Vasquez, Anna Martynowska, Diane Courtney

Agenda

Chair's welcome and introduction

Treasurer's report

Activities' reports:

- Dog control orders

- Garden Party change to rules

- Our events

- Paws Friendly

 - Stickers

 - Website

- Lost & Found Dogs register

- Save Fifi

Changes to constitution

Election of committee members

AOB

Minutes

Chair's welcome and introduction

Mark reflected on how far we'd come – from a small group of dog owners concerned their views weren't being represented as Waltham Forest Council brought in new dog control orders, to a group of nearly 800 people who give each other advice and support, reunite dogs, who have saved a dog from being put to sleep due to BSL legislation, and who continue to promote

responsible dog ownership and liaise with council about issues relevant to dog owners. Mark emphasised how important it has been for the group to be a legally constituted body who are recognised by the council, as it means we can effect greater change as a united voice. Importantly, WF4D should continue to work with the Council to ensure sensible implementation and interpretation of the DCOs.

Treasurer's report

In 2013 we had income of £97.50, outgoings of £59.50 leaving a balance of £38.

In 2014 we had income of £535, outgoings of £306, leaving a balance of £229 together with the £38 making the amount brought forward for 2015 £267.

To date, in 2015, we have spent £98.38 for website hosting, room hire for AGM and hire of beach hut leaving a balance of £168.62

In addition to our own funds we were helping the Save Fifi account with collecting funds through our bank and PayPal accounts. The Save Fifi campaign collected █████, so far paid out £412 and has a current balance of █████ but waiting for an invoice from LBWF.

Figures be uncovered after the council's invoice has been received. Before then, please contact the Treasurer for info.

As we are proposing to abolish membership and will instead raise funds through campaigns as and when needed, any donations are always welcome.

Activities' reports

Dog control orders

We had a full update as this is our first AGM for over a year. This was our original campaign, in 2013, in response to the council's lack of consultation with dog owners over proposed changes to the borough's dog control orders. In our three-week campaign we gathered 520 petition signatures, and this led to consultation with the council over the DCOs. As a result, the DCOs that came into effect from January 2014 are fairer to responsible dog owners and well-behaved dogs than they might have been.

Action: to continue to monitor any incidents and promote responsible dog ownership with a view to being in a great position to advocate for less restrictions when the dog control orders are next reviewed by the council.

Garden Party change to rules

Fabien reported on how this was a great example of how social media got a quick response from the council. When the two-day Garden Party in Lloyd Park was announced, dog owners were shocked for two reasons. 1) that a local, much used park would be closed to them for four days, 2) that an outdoor 'family event' would be closed to dogs in the first place. The council responded swiftly, and dogs were able to use the park on the Friday and Monday and come to the weekend event.

The DET informed us the 'non invite' was due to a different part of the council organising the event. New 'Dog at events' guidelines have now been created saying 'Our general approach is to welcome well-behaved dogs on a lead at our events'. We were pleased to see that organisers @Create_London tweeted: @WF4Dogs @BarbicanCentre the dogs behaved themselves very nicely we thought and were a credit to the borough x (27/07/2014 21.13)

Our events

Katherine updated us on our successful events so far. We attended two May Day Fairs in Lloyd Park, raising £490 on our tombola last year towards our 'Paws Friendly' stickers (see below). We have also had two very fun Christmas Pawty's at the Rose and Crown.

This year, coming up we have: 1) WF4Dogs first trip to the beach, 2) another May Day Fair event in the pipeline, 3) our now annual Christmas Pawty, with other events sure to appear during the year.

Actions: In particular, we want to encourage those new to dog owning who want to meet more local dog owners to come along to our events.

Paws Friendly

We wanted to make dog-friendly Waltham Forest more visible, so Fabien created 'Paws Friendly' stickers for local businesses.

Actions: We would like more businesses from Chingford and Leyton/stone to be involved with the scheme. We need to call for volunteers from those areas to visit cafes, pubs, restaurants and shops asking about their policy, giving them a sticker and inviting them to be featured in our website directory.

Website

The website began as somewhere to host our directory of Paws-Friendly local businesses, but it has become much more. Created by Katherine, Scott Davies' sister and Charlotte, it also includes updates on our various campaigns, listings of all local dog services, inspiration on where to walk your dog, and lots of info on what to do when you have lost your dog or found a stray dog. It also has lots of links back to our Facebook page.

Actions: 1) Include our Twitter feed on the home page, for up-to-date info on what's happening. 2) Add information for residents on what they can do if their dog is seized under BSL. 3) Add info on signing up for our newsletter.

Lost & Found Dogs register

Katherine and Marita visited the council to discuss how they could help reunite lost dogs quicker by greater use of social media. They agreed to have a weekly updated Found Dogs Register available at Sycamore House. And just this week they started tweeting Found Dogs on the Council's twitter feed @wfcouncil.

Actions: We want to continue encouraging the council to be as proactive in reuniting dogs as other DETs in the country – Norfolk is a brilliant example with a Facebook page and detailed website: www.facebook.com/pages/Animal-Warden-Services-Norfolk-Dog-warden/1900824577359 & www.animalwardenservices.co.uk. Many others have great Facebook pages, e.g. Darlington (<https://www.facebook.com/darlingtondogwarden>) and Middlesbrough (<https://www.facebook.com/facebarkmiddlesbrough>), or complete registers online: <http://www.rushcliffe.gov.uk/environmentalhealth/dogsandotheranimals/dogs/straydogregister/>. In the meantime, we will continue retweeting, setting up doglost.co.uk pages, including details on our Facebook pages – using this method we have reunited many dogs since we began. We were pleased to note that Enfield DET have recommended our Facebook group to those who have lost their dogs.

Save Fifi

Perhaps our biggest success story as we helped save a dog's life. Fifi was seized by the Council in October 2014 as she was considered 'pit bull type' under BSL (breed specific legislation). Fifi was a nine-month-old puppy, with a very sweet temperament. Due to our campaign Fifi was exempted in February. Now fourteen months old, and having spent five months of her life in kennels, Fifi is slowly adjusting used to her new environment. Many of our members, including dog trainer Carly Clarke, have offered their time to support Fifi and Anna.

Actions: 1) The Council's invoice hasn't yet arrived. More fundraising may be needed at this point. 2) To signpost members to impartial information on what to do if their dog is seized under BSL. 3) Have a subcommittee to campaign against this widely thought of unfair law.

Changes to constitution

We voted in two revised clauses to our constitution.

6) Membership on payment of annual subscription. We don't need substantial sums of money, preferring to ask for donations for specific campaigns. Instead those signed up to our Facebook page or newsletter are considered members. We also feel we will reach a broader selection of dog owners that way. The clause will therefore be changed to: Membership of WF4D will be through joining our Facebook page and/or signing up to the WF4D newsletter.

8) With no membership fees we no longer need a Membership Secretary and therefore this position is redundant from the committee. Instead of the Membership Secretary we will create a third position 'without portfolio'.

Election of committee members

Chair - Mark Fisher was voted in again.

Treasurer - Marita Keremezo voted in again.

General Secretary – Peter Keelan stood down due to other commitments. Charlotte Cole was voted in.

Additional members:

Sarah Mooney - voted in again.

Fabien Ho - voted in again.

Katherine Marshall – nominated and voted in.

AOB

There was no other business and Mark thanked everyone involved in WF4Dogs, whether they are committee members or not, for making it such a great group and declared the meeting closed.