

Policy on Ipswich Borough Council housing tenants keeping pets and animals

Introduction

Ipswich Borough Council (IBC) recognises that the keeping of pets and animals can improve a person's wellbeing and life enjoyment. This policy statement outlines its approach to the keeping of pets and animals by IBC tenants.

Scope

Under the Council's Tenancy Agreement tenants must obtain written permission before keeping any animal, bird or reptile at their property. This policy explains how IBC will manage requests for permissions and deal with complaints from tenants and neighbours relating to pets and animals. It also explains how IBC will respond to and manage queries about pet and animal ownership for tenants who already had a pet or animal before September 2015 and have not received written permission.

Related documents

- IBC Tenancy Agreement 2016
- Tenants Handbook 2016
- A Fairer Ipswich: Equality Scheme 2012 – 2015

Definitions

"Animal" is defined as a domestic animal which depends on a human for food, water and shelter

"Dangerous dogs" are pets covered by the Dangerous Dogs Act 1981

"Dangerous animals" are pets or animals covered by the Dangerous Wild Animal Act 1997

"House pet" is defined as a pet that does not go outdoors

"Pets" refers to pet animals such as a cat or a dog

"Tenants" refers to sole and joint tenants

"Tenancy" refers to introductory and secure tenancies

Permissions

Tenants must obtain written permissions to keep pets and animals in their homes. This includes the breeding of animals at the property. The granting of permission is within the Council's discretion and, if granted, may be subject to conditions. Permissions will not be unreasonably withheld.

When a request for permission is received checks will be made to confirm:

- the type of property occupied under the tenancy;
- the facilities available such as the size of the garden and whether there is open space nearby;
- the type, breed and size of the animal they are wanting to keep;
- the total number of animals that will be in the property; and
- any existing tenancy issues.

Permission is given on a case by case basis. It will be given in writing and any conditions applied will be included. Permission is normally granted for the life of the individual pet or animal. A copy of this policy will also be provided.

All permission is conditional on the tenant making sure the pet or animal does not:

- stray or roam;
- damage anybody's property, including their own home;
- injure, annoy or frighten anybody else;
- cause nuisance to anybody else, for example, by making too much noise or causing a smell; nor
- breed in the property;

All permission is also conditional on the tenant making sure that:

- the pet or animal is properly looked after¹. This includes making arrangements for their care if they go away overnight;
- they provide an emergency contact number if the pet or animal is left in someone else's care if they go away for longer than 24 hours; and
- dogs, including puppies, are micro-chipped.

Additional conditions may also be imposed where appropriate. These will not be imposed unreasonably and will be detailed in writing. Conditions may also be imposed after permission has been granted if they are appropriate to deal with issues that have arisen. These will be set out in writing.

IBC reserve the right to withdraw permission or request that a pet or animal is removed from the property if the tenant has not kept in line with this policy or the tenancy agreement.

Where there is evidence of neglect or mistreatment or it has been brought to our attention that there could be, the RSPCA² will be made aware and asked to investigate.

¹ Includes ensuring litter trays are cleaned regularly and faeces immediately removed from the property and garden

² Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

Support dogs

IBC may require evidence from a recognised agency that a Support Dog has been provided to a tenant. Where the property is not usually suitable for keeping a dog a transfer to an appropriate property may be considered. In some circumstances tenants living in properties that are not deemed suitable for a dog to live may be given permission for a Support Dog.

Pets in Sheltered Housing

Only Sheltered Housing tenants who live in neighbourhood schemes, bungalows or have a ground floor flat, and have a door enabling them to leave the premises without walking through the communal areas, will be permitted to own a cat or a small dog and specific conditions will be applied.

Refusals

The Council will not grant permission for cockerels, dangerous dogs³ or dangerous animals⁴.

Permission to keep a pet or animal will normally be refused in the following circumstances (this list is not exhaustive and permission may also be refused for other reasons not listed):

- The property is a flat or maisonette without the sole use of, and direct access to, a garden;
- The tenant or another household member has any convictions for, or past history of abandonment, cruelty, neglect or mistreatment of animals, or convictions for any offences under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 and/or the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1996;
- The animal has ever caused injury to a person, or if it is dangerous in any other way, for example, a poisonous snake;
- The tenant or a member of their household has previously abandoned a pet or animal when they moved out of a Council property or if they have previously had enforcement action taken against them in relation to previous ownership of pets or animals;
- The animal is not a domestic animal, such as horses, livestock or poultry;

³ As set out in the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 including dogs placed on Index of Exempt Dogs

⁴ As set out in the Dangerous Wild Animal Act 1996

- The tenant wishes to keep racing pigeons and is not a member of the Royal Racing Pigeon Society or is a member but cannot provide adequate accommodation for them;
- The pet or animal requires a structure to be placed in a communal area to home them; or
- The tenant wishes to keep too many animals for the type of property.

In all cases, where permission is refused, the reasons will be set out in writing.

Visiting pets

Council tenants are responsible for visitors to their property and this includes any pets they bring with them.

They should not allow visitors to visit with their pets if their property has a communal entrance. This is to avoid the problems of noise nuisance, damage or fouling in communal areas. An exception to this is if the visitor has a support dog from an approved agency outlined at section x above.

Where a tenant already has a pet at (start date of policy)

For those tenants who already had a pet or animal before xxxx a request for written permission will not be necessary as it will be deemed that permission has been granted.

This permission will be only for the life of the pet or animal.

Apart from sub-section 7.5.4

'Permission will not normally be given to keep a dog (other than a guide or hearing dog) if the property is a flat or maisonette without the sole use of, and direct access to, a garden.'

All of the other conditions in section 7.5 (Animals and Pets) will apply and appropriate action will be taken if it becomes necessary.

Tenancy Management issues

When a complaint is received about a pet or animal owned or being looked after by an IBC tenant, the matter will be dealt with, in the first instance, by the Housing Officer.

If an investigation of the complaint confirms that there is a breach of this policy or the tenancy agreement then appropriate action will be taken. This can include but is not limited to, informal interventions and mediation to formal tenancy action.

If the Council believes the animal in question is of an illegal type the Police will be informed immediately and action may be taken for breach of the tenancy agreement.

References

- Dangerous Dogs Act 1991
- Control of Dogs Order 1992
- Fouling of Land Act 1996
- Dangerous Wild Animal Act 1997
- Animal Welfare Act 2006
- The Microchipping of Dogs (England) Regulations 2015

Equalities

IBC is committed to tackling the barriers and discrimination that many people face in their lives to ensure that its policies and services are appropriate, accessible and relevant to everyone.

Review

Unless there are any changes to legislation beforehand, the next review of this policy will be in August 2018 and every three years thereafter.