

## **Proposed recommendations from Staffordshire Police**

We have summarised the recommendations that Staffordshire Police have outlined in their report and addressed each one to demonstrate what we will be doing going forward to implement these recommendations.

### **Recommendation 1**

**To provide handlers with formal training and a qualification in first aid for dogs to enable them to manage the welfare of our dogs in the event of illness or injury.**

The Association of Chief Police Officers does not stipulate that handlers must have canine first aid training in respect of the deployment of police dogs in its Police Dog Manual of Guidance. This document sets out the framework of rules that police forces operate to.

We have nevertheless identified a number of potential canine first aid training providers locally and are in the process of establishing what level of first aid our handlers can be and ought to be trained in as we want to ensure that we can provide our dogs with the most appropriate level of care in the event of illness going forward.

We aim to provide all police dog handlers in Warwickshire and West Mercia with some level of canine first aid training by the end of March, 2019, once we have explored all of the options to ensure efficient and effective training is delivered.

### **Recommendation 2**

**To recall all vehicles used for transporting dogs for testing to ensure that the run-stop feature in the air conditioning is operating correctly.**

Our Transport Services department looked into this some time ago and established that there is no systemic fault with the run-stop feature of the air conditioning systems in our vehicles used to transport dogs.

On a very small number of occasions, dog handlers had reported engine cut-outs but upon investigating this, it was established that in some instances, the engine of a van cut out if left idling when not fully warmed up.

These reported engine cut-outs are in no way related to the run-stop function in the air-conditioning system.

We are therefore in the process of ensuring that all dog handlers are made aware of the need to ensure that the engine is fully warmed up and we plan to include guidance on this in our policy relating to the deployment of police dogs by the end of this month (October 2018).

### **Recommendation 3**

**To provide control room staff and divisional supervision with advice on what is best practice when handling dogs in extreme and hot weather and to empower handlers to act in their dogs' best interests to ensure that their welfare is prioritised if and when a handler raises concern.**

The welfare of our dogs is a priority to us and we would always encourage handlers and staff to raise any concerns or animal welfare issues with their colleagues and supervisors.

To reinforce this message, we will update our policy and procedures relating to police dogs to reflect a requirement for all handlers to consider animal welfare as part of any future deployment.

We will also set out a process of escalation to management where handlers believe their dog's welfare may be compromised.

We aim to update our policy to reflect the above by the end of November 2018 and we will communicate these updates to all of the relevant officers and staff.

#### Recommendation 4

**To refer all dogs adversely affected by heat to the care of a veterinary practice and to monitor the dog's welfare in line with the vet's advice.**

**To develop a 'near miss' procedure that looks to monitor and mitigate any welfare issues arising for police dogs.**

We will amend our policy relating to the deployment of police dogs to stipulate that any officer who believes their dog to be adversely affected by heat to take it for immediate veterinary care.

We will also develop a 'near miss' system so that we can identify and review through our existing health and safety processes, any instances in which one of our dogs' welfare is compromised.

We aim to implement these changes by the end of December 2018 and we will communicate these changes to all relevant officers and staff.

#### Recommendation 5

**For officers to always travel to the nearest veterinary practice in the event of an emergency and to identify the nearest practice ahead of a training event while ensuring it is included in the risk assessment.**

Our existing policy currently directs officers to use any available veterinary practice in the event of an emergency.

Going forward, we will highlight this to all officers and staff within the dog unit and we will ensure that for all dog training events, the nearest suitable veterinary practice will be identified in advance and written into the event's risk assessment.

We aim to make the above changes to our policy and communicate these changes to our staff before the end of November 2018.

#### Recommendation 6

**To consider investing in technology that can effectively monitor temperature and humidity within the police dog vehicles, and is capable of notifying the handler and the control room of any changes to these. This will complement and not replace regular checks of the dogs.**

In recognising the importance of our police dogs' welfare, we will look to invest in procuring a temperature alarm system within our police dog vehicles as an additional safeguard.

This system will allow a handler working away from the vehicle to be alerted if the temperature of the vehicle exceeds a pre-determined level set by us.

We are currently scoping out the options and hope to have a system installed by the end of March 2019.

#### Recommendation 7

**To recall and test all police dog vehicles to ensure that the extractor fans are operating effectively and to regularly service these fans going forward.**

Within 48 hrs of the incident involving PD Ivy, the fan on every dog vehicle in the fleet was physically inspected and found to be functioning correctly.

The checking of these fans has now been incorporated into the service schedule for all dog vehicles and into the daily routine vehicle checks that all police officers undertake before taking a police dog vehicle onto the public roads.

#### Recommendation 8

**To remove any vehicle from service that has experienced failures within its air-conditioning and climate control functions where operationally viable and where extreme temperatures are likely to impact on the welfare of a police dog.**

Where a handler has become aware of a defect to their vehicle that could impact on a dog's welfare, we will direct that the vehicle be immediately removed from service and to not return to service until it is in full working order.

Our policy relating to the deployment of police dogs will be updated to reflect this by the end of this month (October 2018) and we will communicate this update to all relevant officers and staff.

#### Recommendation 9

**To prepare guidelines on operating the air-conditioning systems in police dog vehicles, and to also ensure that dog handlers are provided with mandatory training that is then monitored to ensure strict compliance.**

Following on from consultation with the manufacturer of the air-conditioning systems in our police dog vehicles, all handlers will receive formal training from the manufacturer in how to operate the bespoke air-conditioning system.

We aim to complete this training by the end of March 2019 and will update our policy to reflect this mandatory training for all handlers.

#### Recommendation 10

**To recall each of our vehicles and conduct rigorous testing in association with the manufacturer so we can better understand some of the limitations of the air-conditioning systems and to allow for better advice to be available for our handlers.**

We are working closely with the air-conditioning manufacturer to understand any technical limitations the system may have when operating in extreme weather so that we can take these into account when considering the welfare of our animals.

We hope to have documented any technical limitations with the manufacturer and communicated any learnings to all of our dog handlers by the end of November 2018.

#### Recommendation 11

**Lesson plans should be updated and refreshed prior to the delivery of any element of training.**

**They should be version controlled to reflect any changes and signed off by the relevant authority immediately before the course commences.**

**The trainer/student ratio should be reduced from 1 trainer to 7 students, to allow for effective delivery of training and welfare of dogs within the timescales allowed within the course timetable.**

We are satisfied that our training plans are up-to-date and reflect current practice and procedures. We do recognise however that 'version control' was

not being used effectively when updates were applied but going forward, we will ensure that it is.

We operate at a trainer to student ratio of 1:4, the reference to 1:7 in the report was taken from an out of date policy document that did not reflect current reality and has now been updated.

#### Recommendation 12

**To update all documentation relating to the dog unit, in particular documentation relating to training, to reflect the welfare of dogs.**

**Both trainers and handlers should be responsible for the effective management of the safety and welfare of dogs within their care and be able to declare their fitness at the start and conclusion of training events.**

**To consider training police dog instructors as Health & Safety Risk Assessors to ensure that detailed and professional risk assessments are conducted, therefore identifying all of the potential risk and hazards posed to dogs (including extreme temperatures) during training.**

We are absolutely committed to the welfare of our animals and will ensure that this is reflected in all of our documentation relating to the dog unit.

By the end of December 2018, we plan to have trained all of our instructors to be Health and Safety Assessors.

Where instructors have identified a broader range of risks to be mitigated in respect of their training and taken such action, we will ensure that it is captured within our instructional risk assessments.

#### Recommendation 13

**To factor in regular checks of the dogs during training sessions, as directed by the trainer. Checks should be made at least every 30 minutes during hot weather.**

**To appoint a designated 'Dog Welfare Officer' to conduct regular visual checks on the dogs, particularly when on occasions when it is not practicable for the handler to return to their dog if it will compromise the effectiveness of training delivery.**

**To provide alternative training venues or to cancel/reschedule training as part of a dynamic risk assessment in the event of extreme temperatures, if it is not possible to guarantee the safety and welfare of the dog(s).**

We will provide further guidance to our handlers around regularly checking on their animals, in particular checking on them every 30 minutes during hot weather. Our policies will be updated to reflect this.

We will be formally appointing someone to assume the role of 'Dog Welfare Officer' at all training events to ensure every animal is regularly checked on (whether working or not) throughout the training day.

Where extreme weather is forecast and it is not possible to ensure the safety and welfare of our dogs, we will make it a requirement to consider weather impact on welfare ahead of training and make suitable provisions to mitigate this.

The above recommendations will be implemented by the end of December 2018.

#### Recommendation 14

**To factor in a pre-training exercise in all training schedules that establishes whether the dogs are 'fit to train' and have for example, been suitably exercised.**

**It should be the responsibility of the trainers to ensure that training does not commence until exercise and the welfare of the dogs has been suitably confirmed.**

We will ensure that all of our dogs have received appropriate exercise prior to commencing their training and all handlers will be expected to declare that their animal is fit to train. The trainers will be expected to satisfy themselves that there are no outstanding welfare issues before the training event takes place.

Our policies will be updated to reflect this before the end of December 2018.

#### Recommendation 15

**To review managerial oversight to ensure that appropriate scrutiny is applied to the dog section and that accountability for working practice in this high risk area of business is adequately owned at a senior level.**

We are in the process of conducting an ongoing review of managerial oversight to ensure this area of business is appropriately owned at a senior level.

We hope to have completed this review by the end of November 2018 with an aim to implement any required changes by the end of January 2019.

#### Recommendation 16

**To develop a series of guidelines which clearly and unequivocally outline the expected conduct of handlers in the management of the welfare of its dogs.**

As the report recognises, our handlers care deeply about their dogs and have been significantly affected by what happened to PD Ivy.

We will nevertheless formalise the good welfare practices which are carried out on a daily basis by setting them out in the form of guidelines which clearly set out the organisational position on dog welfare.

We will incorporate these guidelines into our policies and procedures relating to the deployment of police dogs by the end of December 2018.

#### Recommendation 17

**To introduce an assessed element to their annual handler licensing which specifically tests handler knowledge/application of dog welfare and the expectation of the Alliance in caring for their dog.**

Going forward, all dog handlers will be assessed on animal welfare as part of their annual re-licensing. We will update our policies and ensure this assessment is in regular effect by the end of March 2019.