

Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Cabinet
Date:	20 April 2026
Subject:	Stray dog collection and kennelling service
Lead Member:	Cllr. Ejaz Ahmed, Lead Member for Communities, Sport, Leisure and Public Protection
Chief Officer:	Tessa Lindfield, Director of Public Health & Public Protection
Contact Officer:	Laura Robertson, Head of Public Protection
Ward(s):	All
Purpose of report:	For decision
Key Decision:	YES
Exempt:	NO
Decision Subject to Call In:	YES
Appendices:	N/A

1. Summary and Recommendations

1.1.1. This report sets out the requirement for Slough Borough Council to procure an end-to-end 24/7 stray dog collection and kennelling service, to ensure the Council meets its statutory duties in relation to stray dogs and to bring current off contract arrangements into a compliant, best value procurement.

1.2. Recommendations:

1.2.1. Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve the procurement of a new end-to-end stray dog collection and kennelling service, via a formal competitive tender process, for a contract term of 3+1+1 years commencing in June 2026 with a total maximum contract value of £640,000.
2. Delegate authority to the Director of Public Health and Public Protection, in consultation with the Lead Member for Communities, Sport, Leisure and Public Protection and the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial to award the contract following the procurement referred to above, finalise and execute the contract and complete all other necessary contractual documentation.

1.2.2. Reasons:

1. The Council has a statutory duty to seize and kennel stray dogs for 7 days.

2. Current provision is off contract, posing risks to cost control, compliance, service resilience, continuity and value for money.
3. To ensure the Council continues to meet its statutory responsibilities for stray dogs and to place the service on a compliant contractual footing in line with Contract Procedure Rules and relevant procurement legislation.
4. Demand for kennel capacity is increasing and supply is limited, requiring a secure contractual arrangement to ensure resilience.

1.3. Commissioner Review

Transitioning from long-term, non-compliant rolling contracts and spot purchasing arrangements to a properly procured contract offers significant benefits, including enhanced value for money, improved operational performance, reduced legal risks, and better alignment with current organisational objectives.

Commissioners are content for this report to be considered.

1. Report

1.3. Introductory paragraph

- 1.3.1. The Corporate Plan (2023–27) sets out the Council’s commitment to financial sustainability, including embedding good practice and ensuring resources are used effectively. It also prioritises making Slough a town where residents can live healthier, safer and more independent lives. Procuring an end-to-end stray dog collection and kennelling service supports these aims by improving cost control, strengthening service reliability, and contributing to community safety.
- 1.3.2. The decision sought supports the Council’s priorities in delivering statutory services efficiently, ensuring financial control, and ensuring vulnerable animals in the borough are managed in accordance with welfare standards. Procuring a compliant stray dog collection and kennelling service will ensure that the Council meets its legal duties while supporting improved oversight and financial transparency across directorates.

1.4. Options considered

- 1.4.1. **Option 1:** Do nothing / continue with current off contract arrangements.
- 1.4.2. Maintaining current off contract collection and kennelling arrangements would avoid immediate procurement effort, but would prolong compliance risks, increase exposure to cost volatility including late payment exposures, and increase service resilience issues in a constrained provider market.

Conclusion: Not recommended

- 1.4.3. **Option 2:** Bring collection in house (reinstate an animal warden team).
- 1.4.4. Establishing an in-house team to collect strays, with vehicles, equipment and training, would still require external kennel capacity. Setup and operating costs

are material, and the service would likely be limited to office hours, creating operational and risk implications.

Conclusion: Not recommended at this time due to cost, limited coverage and continuing dependence on external kennels.

1.4.5. **Option 3:** Procure an end-to-end stray dog collection and kennelling service

1.4.6. A competitive procurement to secure 24/7 collection, safe transport, and statutory 7-day kennelling with defined performance standards offers a compliant, resilient and value for money route. It provides contractual control over capacity, service quality and invoicing/price discipline.

Conclusion: Recommended.

1.5. Background

1.5.1. Section 149 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 requires the Council to designate an officer, under any appropriate title, to discharge the statutory functions associated with stray dogs. This includes seizing dogs believed to be stray, detaining them for seven clear days, and making reasonable efforts to reunite them with their owners. A public register of seizures must also be maintained, and owners are required to pay detention costs before dogs are returned.

1.5.2. The Council must collect strays 24/7 and provide a minimum of 7day kennelling, with circa 100 stray dogs per year typically entering the service, of which approximately one third are reclaimed. Current activity is off contract, with fragmented arrangements and a limited local supply of suitable kennels, particularly for larger and high-risk dogs.

1.6. Current service model

1.6.1. Slough Borough Council (SBC) currently uses an external provider for confined stray animal collection on a 24/7/365 basis. The contract expired in 2017 and the commercial arrangement has continued on a rolling basis. This creates a risk if the provider were to cease service

1.6.2. Kennelling is sourced from multiple non-contracted providers, with acceptance and availability varying by kennel and breed/type. Block bookings were used during the initial XL Bully ban to secure capacity.

1.7. Demand and activity

1.7.1. SBC typically removes around 100 stray dogs per year from the street, with circa 30 reclaimed before or shortly after kennelling. Euthanasia is rare and managed through a controlled process where required. Animal intake is cyclical, with higher numbers around Halloween, Christmas/New Year and school holidays. Nationally, authorities report increased abandonments and harder rehoming for larger or complex dogs that have become more prevalent.

1.7.2. Procuring an end-to-end service provides consistent collection and kennelling capacity throughout the year, including during seasonal peaks when stray numbers rise. A single contracted provider can plan staffing, transport and

kennel availability around predictable demand and manage the handling of larger or more complex dogs, ensuring a reliable response as volumes fluctuate.

1.8. Market and operational challenges

- 1.8.1. Supply of suitable kennels is limited and is reducing. Charities are also reported to be at or near capacity and therefore often unable to accept harder to rehabilitate animals. Larger or more aggressive dogs increase handling complexity and reduce rehoming likelihood. These pressures reflect national and regional experience, with other authorities reporting constrained markets, variable service models and upward cost pressure.
- 1.8.2. A formal contract secures capacity in a market where suitable kennels are limited. It allows the Council to specify the skills, facilities and resilience required for challenging dogs and stabilises costs in an environment where other authorities report constrained supply and rising prices. This reduces reliance on informal arrangements that cannot guarantee availability.

1.9. Current service kennelling capacity

- 1.9.1. Due to high demand for kennel spaces, particularly for large and/or dangerous breeds, some spaces are block booked by SBC.
- 1.9.2. The procurement of an end-to-end service would replace the current mix of block booked and ad-hoc kennelling with guaranteed, fit-for-purpose provision, including for larger or dangerous breeds. It offers continuity where providers may leave the market and allows kennel spaces to be matched more effectively to actual demand, strengthening service resilience and reducing the risk created by potential loss of existing facilities.

1.10. National context

- 1.10.1. National data shows rising pressure on stray dog services. Local authorities handled over 36,000 stray dogs between April 2023 and March 2024. Reunion rates fell to 39%, down from 43% the previous year and 54% in 2021/22. The proportion of dogs euthanised increased by 6%, which Dogs Trust estimates equates to around 1,800 dogs.
- 1.10.2. Market research has revealed councils across the country are reporting difficulty securing kennel providers. York City Council's re-procurement exercise received one bid, which was later withdrawn, forcing the council to approach incumbent providers directly. Somerset Council experienced a similar issue where the sole bid submitted was also withdrawn during evaluation. Contract prices are rising in this climate, such as in the Royal Borough of Greenwich, where a recent stray dog contract award totalled £507,840 for a three-year period.
- 1.10.3. These trends point to a tighter market, higher service demand, and increased complexity for councils managing strays, especially larger or regulated breeds.

2. Implications of the Recommendation

2.1. Financial implications

- 2.1.1. The maximum contract value is £640k over 5 years. Public Health and Public Protection has an annual budget of £129k which will be sufficient to cover the contract value.
- 2.1.2. Implementation of the recommendation set out within this report is expected to reduce operational costs, enhance the accuracy of future cost forecasting, and lessen associated administrative burdens. It is expected that the contracting exercise will produce efficiencies which will reduce the current cost.

2.2. Legal implications

- 2.2.1. Section 149 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 sets out the Council's legal duties in relation to the seizure of stray dogs. This includes appointing an officer for the purpose of discharging these functions, seizure and detainment of the stray dogs, procedures for notifying owners and disposing of unclaimed dogs and payment of costs incurred to the Council.
- 2.2.2. The total maximum value of the proposed 3+1+1 contract is £640,000. A procurement process will be undertaken prior to contract award in compliance with the Procurement Act 2023 and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules (CPRs).
- 2.2.3. The CPRs state that, for contracts with a value of £500,000 or above, authority to procure must be obtained through Cabinet prior to any tender activity starting. The procurement must be advertised and tendered via the e-tendering Portal. A business case must also be submitted to the Procurement Review Board (PRB).
- 2.2.4. Approval to award is a significant decision and must be approved by Cabinet prior to any contract award. Authorisation to award the contract may be delegated to Executive Director in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation.

2.3. Risk management implications

- 2.3.1. Inability to assure continuous statutory provision.
- 2.3.2. Public safety risks where strays remain at large (e.g., traffic hazards, potential injury to residents, uncontrolled fouling).
- 2.3.3. Market capacity risk in securing suitable kennels with associated service resilience risks
- 2.3.4. There is also a risk that the proposed exercise to procure an end-to-end service may receive few or no compliant bids, reflecting the limited market for stray dog collection and kennelling services as set out in the background section of this report.
- 2.3.5. To mitigate this risk, the Council undertook a compliant soft market engagement exercise, via the Southeast Shared Services portal. This generated two responses, including the current ad hoc collection services provider, which aligns with wider market conditions.

2.3.6. Although the response was limited, early engagement ensured providers were sighted on the planned procurement and confirmed that the proposed service model is realistic within current market capacity.

2.4. Environmental implications

2.4.1. No material environmental impact is anticipated from the decision to procure.

2.5. Equality implications

2.5.1. Neutral impact is expected across protected characteristics.

2.6. Procurement implications

2.6.1. A procurement exercise to secure the Stray dog collection and kennelling services will be undertaken via a route that is compliant with the council's contract procedure rules and the new Procurement Act 2023 (PA23).

2.6.2. A soft market testing questionnaire was published on the In-Tend Portal and feedback from this exercise has been used to inform the specification and the appropriate procurement route.

2.6.3. The preferred procurement option is to use the Open Procedure which is a single stage process allowing any supplier to submit a tender. The Open procedure encourages broad market participation, promotes value for money and ensures fairness and non-discrimination.

2.6.4. Two other procurement options were considered: a call off using a framework and the competitive flexible procedure. Using a framework will restrict competition and is not a recommended option to ensure best value. The competitive flexible procedure is used where the procurement requires flexibility, negotiation, or a bespoke multi-stage tendering process which are not requirements of this procurement.

2.6.5. All relevant tender documentation, including the service specification and the form of contract, will be included in the invitation to tender. The tender documentation will state any selection criteria and the award criteria which will be applied to the tender evaluation process and any sub-criteria. The advertised scoring criteria will detail how each part of the tender will be scored.

2.6.6. All tenders will be evaluated in line with the selection criteria and the award criteria to ensure a fair and transparent process is undertaken. The corporate procurement team will support with this process along with issuing assessment summaries to ensure compliance with Procurement Act 2023.

2.6.7. A procurement business case will be prepared and approval from the Procurement Review Board will be sought prior to Cabinet approval.

2.6.8. Other directorates with responsibilities for animals are out of scope of this procurement, with this approach being validated by the soft market testing exercise.

2.7. Workforce implications

2.7.1. As set out in sections 2.3.1. & 3.2., Section 149 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 requires every local authority to appoint an officer (under whatever title the authority may determine) for the purpose of discharging the functions

imposed or conferred by this section for dealing with stray dogs found in the area of the authority.

2.7.2. The officer may delegate the discharge of their functions to another person, but they shall remain responsible for securing that the functions are properly discharged.

2.7.3. The functions under this section are included within the job description of a Senior Environmental Enforcement Officer.

2.8. Property implications

2.8.1. None

2.9. Background Papers

2.9.1. None