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| To: | Mayor and Councillors |
| From: | Tania Madden, Manager Strategic Planning |
| Endorsed by: | Kathryn Ross, Chief Executive |
| Date: | 15 May 2019 |
| Subject: | Dog Registration and Associated Fees 2019/20 |
| DECISION | |
| Recommendation: | |
| That Council adopts the proposed Dog Registration Fees, and associated fees, for 2019/20 as specified in Attachment 2 of Report 095/19. | |

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval of the fees and charges for Council's Animal Control activity for the 2019/20 financial year.

BACKGROUND

Section 37 of the Dog Control Act 1996 gives local authorities the power to set charges for dog registration and other dog control activities. Section 37(4) requires the territorial authority to have regard to the relative costs of the registration and control of dogs in the various categories. Section 37(8) states any increase in fees can only take effect at the commencement of that year. Fees must be set by no later than 30 May to meet dog registration deadlines.

There are 5892 known dogs within the Masterton District (both registered and unregistered). Approximately 98.3% (or 5797 dogs) are registered. There are 95 unregistered dogs that are known to Council. A number of these dogs may have left the Masterton district without notification from owners. There are 3022 rural dogs compared to 2870 urban dogs in the district.

In 2018 registration fees for most dog categories were increased by \$1; with urban entire dogs increased by \$2. For the current financial year, to date, fees are projected to meet 85% of costs, as per the Revenue & Financing Policy that was adopted as part of the 2018/28 Long Term Plan. The fees proposed in this report for 2019/20 will enable the policy to be achieved, whilst also allowing for cost increases.

DISCUSSION AND OPTIONS

Dog Registration Fees

For 2019/20, it is proposed Council make a small increase to dog registration fees from the current level, noting those with responsible owner status would receive the applicable discount. The proposed dog registration increases are (See Attachment 2 for more detail):

- \$1 per dog for urban neutered, breeder permitted, and all rural first, second and subsequent dogs.
- \$4 per dog for urban entire.
- Fee increases for services provided by MDC to dog owners, such as microchipping and impounding, are also proposed (See Attachment 2 for details).

In 2018/19 dog registration revenue was planned at \$323,000. The 2019/20 Dog registration revenue, based on the proposed fee increases, will be \$344,400. This is an increase of \$21,400 per annum. Fee increases are proposed to meet the increased cost of delivering this service to our community, which includes the need for adequate staffing levels to provide safe and responsive animal control services.

The higher increase in fees for entire urban dogs is proposed to encourage dog owners to neuter their dogs. Anecdotally, staff note a higher proportion of call outs, incidents and impounding in entire dogs compared to neutered dogs. There are also benefits in neutering dogs including that neutered dogs live significantly longer than those that are not; many diseases are reduced or eliminated in neutered dogs (e.g. infections and cancers of the reproductive system); and neutering removes the hormonal influences that can contribute to inter-dog aggression and roaming. Neutering also enables better control of dog populations and contributes to a reduction in the number of unwanted dogs.

The cost of neutering a dog ranges from \$130 to \$400 depending on the weight and sex of the dog.

Overall, the proposed registration fees are comparable with neighbouring councils of a similar size. The proposed registration fees would be slightly more than Carterton and South Wairarapa District Councils for dogs in the urban area, but MDC does offer urban dog owners the option of applying for Responsible Dog Owner (RDO) status (see below). Neither of the neighbouring councils currently offer this. MDC's registration cost for rural dogs, if 2 more are owned, is \$14 cheaper than CDC and \$22 cheaper compared to SWDC if the dog/s is entire. Comparison fees can be seen in attachment 3.

As per MDC's Revenue and Financing Policy there is public (rate payer) funding of 15% for services and operations carried out under the Dog Control Act with 85% of costs recovered from dog owners.

Responsible Dog Owners

The Responsible Dog Owner (RDO) policy was adopted as part of the review of the Dog Policy in March 2018. Applicants who apply and are assessed as meeting the criteria receive a 25% discount on registration fees for the duration of their dog/s life provided they continue to meet the criteria. There is a one-off application fee of \$20 per property to apply for RDO status. Applications for RDO status for the 2019/20 year have now closed. As at 1 May 2019 there are 73 individual owners with 102 dogs that have RDO status.

Options

| Option | | Advantages | Disadvantages |
|--------|--|---|--|
| 1 | Increase registration and dog control fees as proposed | Covers the cost of effectively running the Animal Services activity; Consistent with Council's Revenue and Financing Policy; Maintains the rates contribution at 15% reflecting public good; Enables Animal Services to meet agreed levels of service. | Potential for negative feedback from dog owners about registration fee increases. |
| 2 | Maintain the Status Quo with Fees | Avoids potential for negative feedback from dog owners about registration fee increases. | Will not cover the costs required to effectively run the Dog Control activity; May require a higher rates contribution to enable services to be delivered; May result in a lower level of service being delivered. |

Conclusion

Staff recommend Option 1. This option will ensure that agreed levels of service can be maintained; and is consistent with Councils Revenue and Financing Policy regarding the level of general rates and user pays.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Strategic, Policy and Legislative Implications

As noted, Section 37 of the Dog Control Act 1996 gives local authorities the power to set charges for dog registration and other dog control activities. Section 37(4) requires the territorial authority to have regard to the relative costs of the registration and control of dogs in the various categories. Section 37(8) states any increase in fees can only take effect at the commencement of that year. Fees must be set by no later than 30 May to meet dog registration deadlines.

Significance, Engagement and Consultation

The proposed fee changes have been assessed against Council's Significance and Engagement policy and the assessment concluded that the decision is not significant. While there is likely to be interest from dog owners, Council has the power under legislation to review fees annually to cover the cost of service delivery; the proposed fee increases are to maintain the agreed level of service for our community; and the rates contribution for this service is consistent with Council's Revenue and Financing Policy. Community consultation is not required or recommended in relation to this decision. Dog owners will be informed of fee changes.

Financial Considerations

The proposed fee increases, as discussed in this report, are to cover the cost of delivering Animal Control services to our community and are consistent with Council's Revenue and Financing Policy in relation to rates funding and user pays.

Treaty Considerations/Implications for Māori

No implications specific to Māori have been identified in this decision.

Communications/Engagement Plan

No consultation is required as a result of this decision. Dog owners will be informed of fee increases and fee schedules will be updated on Council's website.

Environmental/Climate Change Impact and Considerations

No environmental/climate change impacts have been identified in relation to this decision.

Responsible Dog Owner Status

ATTACHMENT 1

Urban dog owners can apply for RDO status.

To be eligible they must meet the following criteria:

- Registration fees paid by 31 July for the previous two years (or, if newly registered in Masterton, able to provide evidence that registration was paid on time to the previous territorial authority).
- The dog has been de-sexed. (An exception may be made for certified breeders, at MDC's discretion).
- The dog is kept securely on the owner's property, with access available to at least one door of the dwelling without encountering the dog.
- The dog's shelter complies with the requirements of the Control of Dogs Bylaw
- The dog is microchipped (if the dog was registered for the first time after 1 July 2006).
- The dog has not been the subject of a substantiated complaint, been impounded or received infringements in the previous two years.

Proposed Dog Fees for 2019/20

ATTACHMENT 2

| Dog Control Fees | 2018/19 Fees | Proposed Fees 2019/20 |
|---------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| Responsible owner | 25% discount | 25% discount |
| Urban Neutered | \$81.00 | \$82.00 |
| Urban Entire | \$132.00 | \$136.00 |
| Permit Breeder | \$81.00 | \$82.00 |
| Rural 1 st Dog | \$81.00 | \$82.00 |
| Rural 2nd and Subsequent | \$21.00 | \$22.00 |
| Dangerous Neutered | \$126.00 | \$126.00 |

| Dog Control Charges | | 2018/19 Fees (incl. GST) | Proposed Fees for 2019/20 (incl GST) |
|---|---------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Sustenance fee (per day) | | \$12.00 | \$15.00 |
| Pound Fee: | First impounding | \$66.00 | \$70.00 |
| | Second impounding | \$122.00 | \$125.00 |
| | Third and subsequent impounding | \$153.00 | \$160.00 |
| Surrender a dog for euthanasia | | Actual cost plus 10% | Actual cost plus 15% |
| Microchipping of Masterton registered dog | | \$20.00 | \$20.00 |
| Permit application to keep more than two dogs in urban area including breeder | | \$51.00 | \$55.00 |
| Re-homing fee for impounded dog | | No charge | No charge |
| Replacement registration tag | | \$5.00 | \$5.00 |
| Collars | | Actual cost plus 15% | Actual cost plus 15% |
| Costs and expenses relating to impounding and securing impounded dog | | Actual cost plus 15% | Actual cost plus 15% |

Fees Comparison

ATTACHMENT 3

| Fee type | Urban Neutered | Responsible Dog Owner (Urban Only) | Urban Entire | Rural 1 st (entire) | Rural 2 nd (entire) | Subsequent rural dogs (entire) | Dangerous |
|--------------------|----------------|------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------|
| Masterton DC | \$82 | 25% discount on urban neutered | \$136 | \$82 | \$22 | \$22 | \$126 |
| Carterton DC | \$60 | | \$85 | \$60 | \$60 | \$32 | 150% |
| South Wairarapa DC | \$75 | | \$105 | \$64 | \$64 | \$210 for up to 10 dogs | 150% |
| Upper Hutt DC | \$105 | \$69 | \$117 | \$69 | \$69 | \$69 | \$157 |
| Kapiti DC | \$97 | \$68 | \$186 | \$68 | \$68 | \$41 | \$278 |
| Tararua DC | \$87 | \$50 | \$87 | \$36 | \$36 | \$36 | 150% |
| Manawatu DC | \$66 | \$33 | \$103 | | | | \$155 |
| Horowhenua DC | \$69 | \$56 | \$114 | \$64 | \$64 | \$64 | \$155 |