

PE1396/S

Letter from COSLA to the Scottish Government of 10 July 2012

Dear Dr Williams,

I appreciate that both the petitioner and the Petitions Committee find this to be an important matter, and that it has been raised with the petitioner's local authority, Angus Council – who also appear to agree.

While we do create task groups on occasion, these are only infrequently set up, and as a response to areas that have been identified by COSLA's leadership as an agreed matter of importance to Scottish Local Government. At the moment I would find this a very difficult matter to prioritise given it has not come up through councils as a pressing issue for them.

The first meeting of the Community Well-being and Safety Executive Group since the receipt of your letter will be in early September. It is likely to be dominated with matters such as: welfare reform, the introduction of Universal Credit and poverty; criminal justice and reducing reoffending; police and fire reform; housing, homelessness and employability; Community empowerment and renewal; sports, arts and culture, particularly in the context of 2014; community safety and anti-sectarianism; and so forth.

As councils already have powers to manage dog related problems, and there is no Scotland wide evidence of relatively new legislation and powers failing to be used, I am reluctant to allocate our very limited staffing resources to this matter, at least until any new arrangements have bedded down. In as much as there appears to be an issue it seems to be a local one, and it may be better if the petitioner were to be directed back to his local authority. Because of the above it is difficult for me to see what the terms of reference of such a group would be, and how they would be consistent with COSLA's role as a representative body of Scottish Local Government.

Should the Scottish Government see this as a matter you would want to prioritise to the extent of establishing a National Working Group, I would be happy to consult our Community Well-being and Safety Spokesperson to see if we could find a either a COSLA or member authority's policy officer to attend alongside the other stakeholders that you may wish to bring together.

Regards

Anil GUPTA | Chief Officer | Community Resourcing | COSLA