REPORT TO:  COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 17th AUGUST 2010

SUBJECT:  GREEN DOG WALKERS INITIATIVE TO TACKLE DOG FOULING

BY:  CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1.  REASON FOR REPORT

1.1 The Committee is asked to consider the rolling out of the ‘Green Dog Walker’ (GDW) initiative across Moray to assist in tackling the persistent problem of dog fouling in Moray.

1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to Safer Communities

2.  RECOMMENDATION

2.1 The Communities Committee is asked to consider the rolling out of the ‘Green Dog Walkers’ initiative across Moray and recognise the pilot project results to date.

3.  BACKGROUND

3.1 Dog fouling has continually, over a number of years, been identified through Community Safety Surveys and Citizens Panel Surveys as one of the top three priorities relating to community safety that residents, members and community groups in Moray have concerns about.

3.2 The Green Dog Walkers initiative originated in the Falkirk area and was initially only to be a one year pilot project within one area. However during the first 20 months of the initiative there was a great deal of interest in the scheme and it was decided to roll it out throughout the Falkirk Council area. In the lifetime of the scheme they have amassed over 600 volunteers who wear the Green Dog Walker armbands as well as 14 community group partners who are managing their own schemes within their neighbourhoods.

3.3 It is a non-confrontational, friendly way to change attitudes about dog fouling throughout the Moray area. Volunteers wear a GDW armband (or their dogs wear the GDW collar) which signifies that they have “taken the pledge” to always:

- clean up after their dog
- wear the armband when walking their dog
• carry extra dog waste bags
• be happy to be approached to 'lend' a dog waste bag to those without
• be a friendly reminder to other dog walkers to clean up after their dogs

3.4 A pilot of the Green Dog Walker initiative was launched at Forres Dog Show on 22 May 2010 by Community Warden Cowie with the support of the Safer Communities Service. To date approx 119 volunteers have signed the pledge in Forres alone to assist with the scheme. They are keen to promote the message to clear up after your dog by providing supplies of dog waste bags and are willing to approach other dog owners who may not have bags to offer bags and encourage cleaning up the waste in a friendly manner.

3.5 Consultation so far with the dog owners who have already signed up to the scheme has revealed that they believe the scheme to be a really good way to approach the persistent problem of dog fouling. Many also believe it is beneficial to counteract the bad publicity dog walkers get with this green armband, which in itself represents and recognises responsible dog ownership. The scheme in Forres is being supported locally by Moray Coast Vets and the two pet shops in the town, 'Pearls Pets' and 'PALS'.

3.6 An evaluation for the first six month period of the initiative will take place in November whereby a questionnaire will be issued to all volunteers signed up to the scheme. We will also monitor how many dog fouling complaints have been reported in Forres prior to the pilot and during this six month period to assess the impact. Further evaluation can be done through the number of dog waste bags distributed in the area and usage of dog waste bins in the area.

3.7 First indications based on a comparison of the period just before and during the start of the pilot show that dog fouling complaints reported to the Safer Communities Service in the Forres area has decreased by approximately 50%.

3.8 It is intended that the next phase of the project will be rolled out by the Community Wardens in Elgin at the upcoming Dog Show scheduled for Saturday 21st August at Cooper Park, Elgin.

4 SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Single Outcome Agreement/ Service Improvement Plan
The Safer Communities service contributes towards achieving Priority One of the Single Outcome Agreement - Health – Improving the health and wellbeing of the population as well as Outcome 11 - We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.
(b) **Policy and Legal**
The scheme is covered by a trademark licence. This was reviewed by our legal department prior to signing the licence agreement.

(c) **Financial implications**
A one off payment of £500 was made to Falkirk Council for the Green Dog Walkers License as it has a registered trademark license. 

Printing Costs – Leaflets (including pledge form) £64.82
Posters £39.05
Armbands (300 Adults and 100 Childrens) £735
All the above is met from the existing Safer Communities budget.

(d) **Risk Implications**
Identified risks of not tackling dog fouling would be an increased risk in the number of dog fouling incidents which can lead to increased risk to young children from diseases such as toxacara canis, roundworm, salmonella and E-coli.

(e) **Staffing Implications**
There are no additional staffing implications. The co-ordination, promotion and clerical support required for the initiative are being met by the existing Project Officer, Clerical Assistant within Safe Communities and the Community Wardens are actively involved within their own area.

(f) **Property**
There are no property implications.

(g) **Equalities**
The Dog Fouling (Scotland) Act 2003 states an exception to the Act where the owner of the dog has a physical impairment which affects their mobility and the dog assists them with such impairment. This information is to be communicated to all volunteers signed up to the ‘Green Dog Walkers’ Initiative to inform them of this exception.

(h) **Consultations**
Falkirk Council, Sergeant Colin Taylor (Grampian Police), Community Councils, Community Wardens and Legal Department, The Moray Council have all been consulted on the implementation of this initiative within Moray and all fully support it.
5. **CONCLUSION**

5.1 The ‘Green Dog Walkers’ Initiative has proven to be a good, successful scheme in other areas of Scotland. There has been good local support so far for the scheme and the pilot is proving to be successful in a short time period. As a result it is planned to roll the initiative out wider. The Communities Committee is asked to consider the rolling out of the ‘Green Dog Walkers’ initiative across Moray and recognise the pilot project results to date.

Author of Report:
Background Papers:
Ref: