

The John Chadwick Pet Policy

Maidstone Borough Council's approach to accommodating homeless applicants and their pets.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Maidstone Borough Council recognises that our homeless applicants may need to keep pets whilst being housed in accommodation under the Homelessness statute. Where possible Maidstone Council will endeavour to accommodate the household where it is suitable and permitted for pets.
- 1.2. At all times we will endeavour to keep households and their pets together, as we understand that they play an important and supportive role, to households facing this stressful situation.
- 1.3. However, it is noted that the current legal position regarding the homelessness legislation does not consider pets to be part of the household. This could mean that in an emergency, if no properties are available where a pet is allowed to reside, then the pet may not be taken into consideration when making a suitable offer of temporary accommodation. By way of explanation the Homelessness Code of Guidance states:
“Housing authorities will need to be sensitive to importance of pets to some applicant, particularly elderly people, rough sleepers who may rely on pets for companionship. Although it will not always be possible to make provisions for pets, the secretary of state recommends that housing authorities give careful consideration to this aspect when making provision for applicants who wish to retain their pet”
- 1.4. Under this policy we will seek to keep pet(s) with the applicant in their temporary accommodation and when making an offer of accommodation to end the homelessness duty. In making the final offer, officers will take into consideration whether the landlord permits pets at the property and exercise their judgement as to whether the offer would be suitable. The Council acknowledges that housing providers (including private landlords) are likely to have their own policy as to whether pets are permitted in their accommodation and the Council does not have the authority to overrule their decision.
- 1.5. In normal circumstances if the applicant were offered accommodation where pets are not permitted, the offer of accommodation would not normally be considered as unsuitable on the basis that the pet not being able to join the applicant. Whilst the approach outlined in this policy is not an overriding consideration when examining the suitability of an offer, the officer may accept up to one refusal of a suitable offer under the John Chadwick Pet Policy without penalising the applicant.

INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS

2. This policy aims to clarify

- 2.1. What pets you can or cannot keep at your property
- 2.2. How we expect them and your home to be looked after; ensuring the well-being of the pet and the community you live in.

3. Pets that (may be) permitted to stay:

- 3.1. Dogs
- 3.2. Cats
- 3.3. Fish
- 3.4. Caged Birds
- 3.5. Small caged animals (e.g hamsters/ rabbits).

4. Allowing your pet to stay in the temporary accommodation

- 4.1. The following rules apply to allow you to keep your pet in the property with you.
- 4.2. You must not allow animals kept at a property to cause a nuisance to other people.
“Nuisance can be caused, although not exclusively, by noise, odour, fouling or lack of proper supervision and control. The latter may also result in injury to persons as well as ¹damage to property. This can affect neighbours, council employees or contractors and other people in the locality.”
- 4.3. You must sign the MBC pet’s contract
- 4.4. Pay a service charge which will assist Council in ensuring the protection of the condition of the property, is appropriate
- 4.5. Any fouling caused by your pet must be cleaned up straight away.
- 4.6. At times pets may not be allowed in accommodation that is classed as shared accommodation. If permission is not given, we will offer advice and support on possible rehousing.
- 4.7. No farm animals (such as Pigs, Chickens) will be allowed to be kept in the accommodation.
- 4.8. MBC expects households to take responsibility, not only for ensuring that the needs of any pets that are kept at the property are met, but also for making sure that their pets do not cause a hazard, nuisance or annoyance to other people, damage to property or injury to persons.
- 4.9. We would require cats are neutered and micro-chipped.

5. Number of animals permitted:

- 5.1. Each property will have different space constraints – so maximum number of pets will be allowed dependant on the size of the accommodation unit. Generally, we would not allow more than this:
 - One dog** and one cat, or two cats and no dog.
 - Two caged animals

- Reasonable amount of caged birds

**No dog must be kept at the property which is of a breed that is banned under the 1991 Dangerous Dogs Act. This includes the Pit Bull Terrier, Japanese Tosa, Dogo Argentino and Fila Brasileiro

6. Animals we do not allowed to be kept under the policy.

6.1. We do not allow applicants to keep wild animals, livestock or farm animals, endangered species or any dogs identified in the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, or any subsequent legislation. In addition, animals registered under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976, which includes venomous snakes, certain types of spider and various breeds of monkey, are not permitted in Maidstone Council Properties.

7. Keeping Pets without Permission

7.1. If you keep a pet(s) in the emergency accommodation without first requesting permission from the Council it will be a breach of your licence. You will be issued with a warning and you must rehome your pet(s) within 14 days and failure to do so may mean that the Council will ask you to leave the accommodation.

8. If someone complains about your pet

8.1. If we receive complaints of nuisance behaviour about a pet at any property, we will treat this as an anti-social behaviour complaint. We will first ask you to resolve any problems yourself. If you don't, we will consider withdrawing permission to keep the pet and take enforcement action to resolve the issue as a breach of licence conditions.

This includes any:

- Fouling staircases, walkways, courtyards, any communal areas or dwellings including your own property.
- Injuring or frightening anyone into thinking they might be injured (by the pet).
- Being out of control or a danger to other residents.
- Making a noise that causes or is likely to cause alarm, distress or harassment to others.
- Failing to comply with the terms of any dog control notice or similar notice issued by the relevant authority.
- Not keeping your home and surrounding areas in good condition.

8.2. If MBC withdraw permission for your pet to remain at the property and you do not remove it, your temporary accommodation will be cancelled and no further temporary accommodation will be offered to you.

9. Leaving your Accommodation

9.1. When leaving the temporary accommodation, you must leave the accommodation in the condition that it was provided to you. All equipment relating to your animal (cages, kennels, and Litter trays) will need to be removed from the property. All carpets will need to be thoroughly cleaned. Ensure any litter trays, cages, or dog's faeces are disposed of hygienically.

9.2. If you are granted permission to keep a cat or dog at the Council emergency accommodation you will be responsible at the end of your stay for ensuring that all the

carpets are professionally cleaned. You must give a receipt for this work to the Temporary Accommodation Officer when the keys are returned to the Council. Should this not be done, the Council will arrange a professional carpet clean and charge you for the full cost

10. Responsible Pet Ownership

- 10.1. A pet owner is responsible for the welfare of their animal by law and must take such steps as are reasonable in all circumstances to ensure that the needs of the animal for which he or she is responsible are met to the extent required by good practice (Section 9, Animal Welfare Act 2006). This includes the provision of a suitable environment for the animal, which maybe with or apart from other animals and ensuring that the animal has the ability to express normal behaviour which may include the provision of regular exercise e.g. dog walking. An appropriate diet must also be provided as well as protection from pain, suffering, injury and disease.
- 10.2. If we believe that a pet at the property has been neglected or abandoned, we will report the case to an appropriate animal welfare organisation.

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