

Report to Cabinet

6 December 2023

Subject:	Forge Mill Farm Animal Welfare Policy
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Kerrie Carmichael, Leader of the Council
Director:	Director of Borough Economy: Alice Davey
Key Decision:	Yes - to Implement Animal Welfare Policy
Contact Officer:	Matthew Huggins, Assistant Director: Borough Economy (Green Spaces, Green Services, Visitor Services, Events) – matthew_huggins@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations




- 1.1 That the Cabinet notes and approves the Forge Mill Farm Animal Welfare Policy.
- 1.2 That the Assistant Director of Borough Economy be authorised to implement and review the policy in line with legislation, best practice guidance and advice from industry experts/ veterinary professionals.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 Forge Mill Farm’s ambition is to become a centre of excellence in animal welfare food and farming education. This policy sets the framework for how this will be achieved and monitored.
- 2.2 This policy ensures that as Forge Mill Farm’s public facing operations expand, animal welfare continues to be at the centre of that growth.
- 2.1 The endorsement of the policy will ensure high standards of animal welfare persists through any future changes in leadership, management or comically direction.



3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>The Best Start in Life for Children and Young People</p> <p>Set higher standards of animal welfare to show best practice, this will be advocated to Sandwell residents through our education and outreach services for them to use in their lives and communities.</p>
	<p>People Live Well and Age Well</p> <p>This policy ensures that Forge Mill Farm's public facing operations are enabled to expand, improving opportunities and days out in Sandwell.</p>
	<p>Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods</p> <p>This policy ensures that Forge Mill Farm's public facing operations are enabled to expand, improving opportunities and days out making it an attractive place to live, work and raise a family Sandwell.</p>
	<p>A Strong and Inclusive Economy</p> <p>This policy ensures that Forge Mill Farm's public facing operations are enabled to expand and maximise income generation opportunities whilst ensuring that animal welfare is at the centre of that growth.</p>



4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 This policy is to be used by Sandwell Council and Forge Mill Farm staff, managers, supervisors, and team members to deliver high standards of animal welfare, to identify what best practice looks like, and to provide indicators for success/improvement in relation to animal health and well-being.
- 4.2 This policy includes the provision of regular inspection, accreditation and certification from external organisations including a nominated vet practice. Forge Mill Farm's ambition is to become a centre of excellence in animal welfare food and farming education.
- 4.3 This policy is written for all animals within the management control of Forge Mill Farm across Sandwell Valley Country Park, Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre and Forge Mill Farm and any other location animals within Sandwell Council's management control are located. This includes a variety of rare breed animals including sheep, goats, cattle, pigs, alpacas, horses, ponies, donkeys, chickens, ducks and rabbits.
- 4.4 The *Animal Welfare Act 2006* is the principal law relating to animal welfare. This law highlights the responsibility of owners and keepers to have a duty of care for their animals and make sure that their needs are met.
- 4.5 The welfare of farmed animals is additionally protected by the *Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulation 2007* which set a minimum standard for all farm animals.
- 4.6 It is the expectation that this policy goes above and beyond the legal requirements of animal welfare standards in the UK.



4.7 A strong working relationship with the nominated vet practice (reviewed through regular procurement timelines) will ensure that there is external involvement in animal welfare procedures to ensure best practice is being followed and to monitor and improve animal welfare.

4.8 The Forge Mill Farm Animal Welfare Policy has been reviewed by the farm's nominated vet practice, whose updates and amendments have been taken on board. The vet practice will continue to guide the farm and update the policy in line with legislation, best practice guidance and advice.

5 Alternative Options

5.1 The Cabinet can choose not to endorse the policy presented and the farm can continue to base decisions on legal minimum requirements and best practice recommendations outside of a council policy. However, having a clear policy sets standards and expectations, against which performance can be measured.

6 Implications

Resources:	Some additional costs incurred associated with more vet visits, blood and faecal testing, memberships, subscriptions and accreditations and staff training. Up to approximately £8,000 a year on top of existing budget.
Legal and Governance:	The <i>Animal Welfare Act 2006</i> is the principal law relating to animal welfare. This law highlights the responsibility of owners and keepers to have a duty of care for their animals and make sure that their needs are met.



	<p>The welfare of farmed animals is additionally protected by the <i>Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2007</i> which sets a minimum standard for all farm animals.</p> <p>It is the expectation that this policy goes above and beyond the legal requirements of animal welfare standards in the UK.</p>
Risk:	Reduced risk to reputation and harm to animals.
Equality:	N/A
Health and Wellbeing:	Excellent animal welfare and continued monitoring ensure public health is protected from zoonotic diseases. The animals at Forge Mill Farm provide many Sandwell residents with improving mental health and well-being opportunities which are only possible if the welfare of the animals is maintained and protected.
Social Value:	Setting higher standards of animal welfare will show best practice, ensure the long-term resilience of Forge Mill Farm, ensure that as Forge Mill Farm's public facing operations is enabled to expand, improving opportunities and days out making it an attractive place to live, work and raise a family Sandwell.
Climate Change:	Antibiotic and anthelmintic resistance is a growing problem alongside climate change. This policy outlines strategies to reduce and prevent this.
Corporate Parenting:	Setting higher standards of animal welfare shows best practice to Sandwell residents for them to use as a standard in their lives and communities. This will be reflected in our education and outreach team work, targeting some activities towards our children in care and care leavers.

7. Appendices

Forge Mill Farm Animal Welfare Policy

8. Background Papers

None Required

