

Pet Policy

1.0 Policy statement

- 1.1 Stonewater recognises that pet ownership offers significant benefits to owners and want to minimise the circumstances in which a customer's tenure or property type prevents them from enjoying the benefits of owning a pet.
- 1.2 Stonewater customers have an agreement within the form of a lease, licence or tenancy which sets out the permission requirements and if pets are allowed the process that they must follow to obtain consent from Stonewater as landlord.
- 1.3 Stonewater acknowledges that the vast majority of pet owners are responsible and will take an approach to pet ownership that recognises this, however, must also ensure that adequate measures are in place for those cases in which pet ownership causes nuisance requires intervention.
- 1.4 As a responsible landlord, Stonewater will intervene in cases where a customer's pet ownership breaches the terms of engagement laid out in granting of permission which may include but not limited to causing a nuisance to others, damage to property or welfare concern for the animal.

2.0 Policy scope and objectives

- 2.1 This Policy outlines Stonewater's approach to pet ownership and applies to customers living in our general needs, retirement living, supported housing, Shared Ownership, leasehold and Rent to Buy Homes.
- 2.2 This policy aims to:
 - Ensure a consistent approach to pet ownership, enabling customers to enjoy the benefits of owning pets.
 - Provide a balance, ensuring pet ownership does not impact on the right of others to enjoy their homes and neighbourhoods.
 - Provide information for customers on what Stonewater deems appropriate concerning pet ownership and the process that should be followed to obtain consent to keep a pet.
 - Manage customer expectations.
 - Reduce Stonewater's involvement in pet ownership to where it adds value to the individual Tenant and the wider community.

3.0 Regulatory and legal considerations

- The Animal Welfare Act 2006
- Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976
- Dangerous Dogs Act 1991

- The Dangerous Dogs (Designated Types) (England and Wales) Order 2023
- Guidelines on Pet Management for Social Housing Providers – Pet Advisory Committee
- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Control of Dogs Order 1992
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Dogs Act 1871

4.0 Policy details

- 4.1 All customers under the terms of their agreement are required to seek formal written consent from Stonewater to keep animals in their home. It is necessary to obtain written consent for each pet. In the event that a pet passes away, consent must be obtained for any new pet, even if it is a like for like replacement.
- 4.2 Under the terms of their agreement permission is not required for small birds, fish or small mammals which are housed in cages, bowls or tanks within the home, irrelevant of tenure or property type. A full list of animals included in this category is published on the Stonewater website www.stonewater.org.
- 4.3 Stonewater notes that customers living in Flats, Maisonettes, Apartments, Bedsits & Rooms may be prevented from obtaining a pet due to planning, Head Landlord or lease restrictions which may prohibit the request. In these cases, Stonewater would not be able to override the head lease.
- 4.4 Where possible Stonewater will not place a cap on the number of pets, type of pets, breed of pets or size of pets a customer may obtain irrelevant of their tenure or property type but instead will provide guidance on what is reasonable and responsible pet ownership, reviewing the request on a case by case with the customer on what is applicable for them, their property and the overall scheme. Where the number of pets are or causing a nuisance or annoyance or health and safety concern, we may request the number is reduced. As outlined in 4.1, permission is needed for each and every pet.
- 4.5 In the case of retirement living leasehold and rented flats, Stonewater will implement a cap on the number of animals per property to a maximum of two. Those animals where permission is not required as per 4.2 will not be subject to this cap.
- 4.6 Stonewater reserves the right to refuse or revoke permission for a number, breed or type of pet where we believe that it is likely to cause nuisance to other residents but will work with the customer to reach a more suitable request. We will not unreasonably withhold permission and will not withhold permission for a guide dog, welfare or assistance animal.
- 4.7 **Exclusions** - Stonewater will not allow permission for any of the following animals to reside in residents' homes:

- any breed of dog banned under the 1991 Dangerous Dogs Act
- an animal that would require a licence under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976
- birds of prey
- cattle, horses, livestock

Stonewater will only allow permission for XL bully dogs where the following can be provided:

- evidence that the customer had this dog before the ban came into place.
- an exemption certificate for the dog as per legal guidance

If these cannot be provided, permission will not be granted.

Stonewater will not grant permission to any resident to keep a pet who is subject to the following in the last 3 years:

- if there is a history of animal neglect or cruelty
- if there is a history of nuisance, annoyance or disturbance as a result of pet ownership

Stonewater will not allow any resident to keep a pet whilst they are subject to a time limited, or lifetime ban on keeping an animal further to prosecution by the RSPCA.

4.8 All customers will be required to seek formal written permission from Stonewater before obtaining the following animals. At the point of application Stonewater will consider the suitability of the home and scheme before approving:

- fowl e.g. cockerels/chickens
- micro pigs
- bees/beehives

4.9 Stonewater does not allow:

- animals to be kept or tethered in communal areas
- animals to be brought into communal lounges unless consent has been given by all residents on the scheme.
- the commercial breeding or boarding of animals in properties that it owns or manages

4.10 Where permission to keep a pet is granted customers must ensure they are responsible in their pet ownership and will be issued with terms under which the permission is granted, which may include:

- that animals do not foul in communal areas

- gardens are kept clean, and fouling is cleared up and disposed of hygienically
 - animals do not roam or stray in public spaces
 - animals do not cause a noise or odour nuisance
 - that their homes are kept free from animal mess, fleas and vermin
 - animals are kept under control and do not interfere with activities of Stonewater staff or its contractors.
 - animals do not cause annoyance, nuisance or disturbance to neighbours
 - animals do not cause damage to their property
 - animals are not maltreated or neglected
 - taking responsibility for equipment associated with pets, e.g. aquariums, ensuring they do not exceed weight limits.
- 4.11 Reports of nuisance or annoyance will be dealt with in line with Stonewater's Anti-social Behaviour Policy and procedure or local subsidiary procedures.
- 4.12 Where complaints are received around pet ownership Stonewater will work with residents to help them resolve the issues between themselves. Where a resolution cannot be reached and Stonewater does not feel that the pet owner is engaging in the process, Stonewater may withdraw its permission for a pet to be kept.
- 4.13 Where permission is withdrawn customers will be notified in writing and a reasonable timeframe agreed to allow for rehoming. Where this is not adhered to legal action may be taken for an example seeking an injunction.
- 4.14 Stonewater may report incidents to the police or RSPCA.
- 4.15 New customers will be asked to provide details of their current pet ownership as part of their application for housing and provided with details of how they can obtain a pet in the future, signposting them to the Stonewater website for the appropriate procedure to follow.
- 4.16 Customers are responsible for the behaviour of any visiting pets to their home and all clauses in 4.10 apply to visiting pets as well as those permanently residing in the home.
- 4.17 Customers will be required to apply for retrospective permission where we become aware of unauthorised ownership. Where this ownership is found to be in a property which may be restricted by planning, Head Landlord or lease restrictions, Stonewater reserve the right to ask the customer to rehouse the pet. Where this is not adhered to legal action may be taken for an example seeking an injunction.
- 4.18 Guidance and advice regarding responsible pet ownership will be published to accompany this policy.

5.0 Service standards

- 5.1 Stonewater will aim to give its decision regarding pet ownership within the first customer contact signposting customers to our website for further details to make a permissions request.
- 5.2 We will aim to consider referred requests within 5 working days, this may be extended to 10 days where Stonewater needs to liaise with others such as managing agents and landlords.
- 5.3 Customers will not be asked to pay any fee for permission to obtain a pet.
- 5.4 Stonewater will commit to work with external agencies for those properties which have restricted pet ownership through planning, head landlord or lease clauses to come to an agreement to remove these and provide the opportunity of pet ownership to as many customers as possible.

6.0 Equality, diversity and inclusion

- 6.1 The Equality Act of 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate against anyone on grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity. Stonewater supports its principles and is committed to the values of equality of opportunity and non-discrimination.
- 6.2 This policy does not adversely impact any of these groups.

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