



## MINUTES

### All-Party Parliamentary Group on Cats (APGOCATS)

#### June 2023 Annual General Meeting

Election of officers (10.00-10.15), policy discussion meeting (10.15-10.45), 7th June 2023, Room S  
Portcullis House, Houses of Parliament

#### Attendees:

- Sheryll Murray MP
- Lord Black of Brentwood
- Mark Tami MP
- Patricia Gibson MP
- Heather Wheeler MP
- John Stevenson MP
- Ben Parker, Battersea
- Richard Clare, Battersea
- Charlotte Broad, Cats Protection
- Madison Rogers, Cats Protection
- Annabel Berdy, Cats Protection
- Katie Maguire, Blue Cross
- Steve Crow, Governing Council of the Cat Fancy
- Rebecca Ashman, PDSA

Item	Lead Speaker	Time
1. Welcome and opening remarks	Sheryll Murray MP - <i>Chair</i>	
2. AGM	Rich Clare – <i>Secretariat</i>	
- Election of Officers		

#### **Election of Officers**

Sheryll Murray MP re- elected to position of Chair

Lord Black of Brentwood- re-elected to position of Vice Chair

Patricia Gibson MP- re elected to position of Vice Chair

Mark Tami MP- elected to position of Vice Chair

#### **Officers elected in absentia**

Andrew Gwynne MP- re-elected to position of Co-Chair

Layla Moran MP- re-elected to position of Treasurer

Lord Goddard of Stockport- re-elected to position of Vice Chair  
Henry Smith MP- elected to position of Vice Chair  
Sarah Champion MP- elected to position of Vice Chair

### 3. Secretariat & Policy Update

- Microchipping for pet cats (England) Madison Rogers- *Secretariat*

Madison Rogers (MR) noted the good news that the microchipping of pet cats will be compulsory from June 2024. The announcement was made during a visit to Battersea. People on low incomes will be able to access support with chipping through Cats Protection and PDSA. Sheryll Murray MP (SM) pointed out that the challenge will be to ensure database details are changed when cats move from one owner to another. MR said that the chipping requirement is a two stage process, the second part of which is the obligation to include updating databases and keeping details up to date. Ensuring that databases are properly maintained and rogue ones are removed will be important – with the possible option of having a single point of access. Rebecca from PDSA noted some findings from their recent PAW report research showing that the overwhelming majority of cat owners don't know which database their cats chip is held with. MR said that improvements to database systems should also ensure that owners receive prompts to ensure details are kept up to date.

- The Kept Animals Bill Charlotte Broad- *Secretariat*

Charlotte Broad (CB) updated the group with the disappointing news that the Kept Animals Bill had been dropped. Going forward the Government has pledged to bring in the same key policies affecting domestic pets, most likely through separate Bills including pet smuggling and pet theft (where it will be important to ensure cats are included, and there have been some positive signs that this will be the case). Other parties have been showing support for getting these measures enacted fast by putting forward their own proposals e.g the Lib Dems very recent Ten Minute Rule Bill (TMRB) on Puppy Smuggling. Both SM and Lord Black of Brentwood offered to assist the process by tabling questions. Additionally SM suggested another possible route could be through a TMRB or Private Members Bill if we are no further along post the November Kings' Speech. ACTION: Secretariat to draft and circulate Parliamentary questions to members.

- Regulation of Cat Breeding Madison Rogers - *Secretariat*

MR explained that cat breeding is currently unregulated; there is no protection from over breeding or other safeguards to ensure the protection of cats and their kittens. Cats Protection is particularly concerned about the increasing popularisation of breeds with extreme characteristics including Scottish Folds. These cats are bred with a cartilage deformity which results in a life time of pain. Regulations would ultimately enable the prevention of breeding of cats with extreme characteristics. There is a potential opportunity with the review of The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 which regulates the licensing of pet sellers and dog breeders – but the review may create the opportunity for this to be extended to cats. Cats Protection will present veterinary evidence to the review consultation to demonstrate the impact of these characteristics.

Regulations are already in place in Scotland and most of the selling sites in Scotland now do not list extreme breeds like Scottish folds and Munchkins and Cats Protection hope this can be replicated in

England. SM said info on this issue could be circulated to APGOCATs to ensure members were aware. ACTION: Secretariat to send across briefing on cat breeding to members.

- Pet Friendly Housing Ben Parker- *Secretariat*

The Renters' Reform Bill was introduced last month with provisions that will stop landlords unreasonably refusing requests for pets, which is welcome. Housing issues is the second most common reason dogs are brought to Battersea. The Bill will need scrutinising particularly in relation to prospective tenancies. Battersea has written to officials to ask for more details and will be looking for opportunities to ask questions once the Bill gets to 2<sup>nd</sup> reading stage.

MR noted that Dogs' Trust and RSPCA have also been working on this for some time. Measures have to be fair and affordable for both landlords and tenants but the sector supports anything that will help prevent animals from being relinquished due to landlords refusing pets. SM offered to help as the Bill makes progress. ACTION: Secretariat to send across a briefing on pets and housing and draft Parliamentary Questions to members.

- Electronic shock collars Richard Clare - *Secretariat*

The Government recently announced the decision to ban electric shock collars linked to handheld devices. However the ban would not apply to containment style collars which interact with fences. The ban comes in on the 1st February 2024. SM noted that there is significant opposition to these measures mostly from the farming community, who are especially concerned about sheep worrying. It was felt that these issues could be addressed through responsible ownership e.g keeping dogs on leads in relevant areas.

#### **4. Exploring new areas relevant to cat welfare the APPG can focus on in the future**

- Discussion with stakeholders Led by Sheryll Murray- Chair  
PAW Report Rebecca Ashman (PDSA)

Rebecca Ashman (RA) explained that PDSA now has 13 years of data on microchipping. It is clear from the findings that those in financial hardship will need assistance to meet the chipping requirements. The research also demonstrates a lack of awareness amongst the public and cat owners with many assuming that indoor only cats do not need chipping. Other stakeholders present also noted that this was a common misconception.

The research also examined welfare issues where owners have not sought veterinary care. Also where stress has been caused by unsuitable conditions in the home, for example two in five cats live in a multi-cat household where there is often a poor understanding of the requirements for those cats to be happy and comfortable (e.g having their own water bowl etc). Other key welfare issues arose through the lack of neutering and obesity.

MR noted that Cats Protection is also working on the regulation of homing organisations and rescue centres to ensure rescue cats are getting the care they need. Defra has promised a consultation but this hasn't yet happened – Scotland is ahead on this.

- Recruitment of vets

General discussion

Patricia Gibson MP (PG) had met with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons who were very concerned about a real shortage of vet surgeons compounded by a reduced number of vets in training. RA said that PDSA has had to bring in restrictions in some areas of service and/or close registrations because of the issue with recruitment. Given that 2.3 million cats will need to be chipped next year this may be challenging (although it was noted that vet nurses are able to do this and SM commented that it may be worth ensuring this is known).

- Food banks

General discussion

SM had recently met with Blue Cross who have foodbanks for cats and dogs and felt it may be worth looking into this, especially in light of the cost of living crisis. PG had also met with Blue Cross and in her constituency many foodbank users have specifically asked for pet food. MR noted that Cats Protection also has schemes designed to help with the cost of cat food as well as one which helps with cat litter.

- Away Day

RC discussed the possibility of organising an away day for the group. ACTION: Secretariat to follow up with dates.

## **5. Concluding remarks and actions**

Sheryll Murray MP- Chair

The officers having been duly elected; the meeting was closed.