



PRESS INFORMATION

Ref: 163-AWS
Date: 24th October 2007

POLICE AUTHORITY LAUNCHES ANIMAL WELFARE SCHEME

Humberside Police Authority has unveiled a new scheme designed to provide independent verification that Humberside Police horses and dogs receive the highest standard of care.

Alene Branton MBE, Chair of the Police Authority said: “The Police Authority monitors every aspect of police performance in Humberside and the police animals play a valuable role in local policing, so their well-being is important. There is no question that the animals are not well-cared for, but it’s good to have that checked independently.”

The Animal Welfare Lay Visitors Scheme, which will be launched in the next few weeks and a recruitment drive to find members of the public who are willing to act as ‘Independent Lay Visitors’ will take place over the next few weeks.

This role will involve visits to police stables and kennels to observe training of police dogs, to check on the condition and welfare of the animal and then reporting their findings back to the group. This is a purely voluntary role, although expenses will be paid.

Alene Branton added “We are hoping that people who understand working dogs and horses will volunteer to undertake these visits. It should be stressed that their average day is not the same as the family pet, so their needs and care are also different. These are highly trained animals, who work hard on behalf of the public performing countless invaluable tasks. We will provide training for the volunteers, explaining what the visits should cover.

“We are confident that the scheme will confirm that they are all well cared for, but we feel that it is important that provide evidence of this. The scheme has been set up to ensure that there will never be a repeat of an incident in another police area when a dog was maltreated.

The scheme is benefiting from the advice and support of experts from the RSPCA and International League for the Protection of Horses (I.L.P.H.).

Humberside Police has seven Police Horses in its mounted section and following training, which can take up to two years, they go on patrol, they help with crowd control and provide essential community reassurance.

The dog section has 39 Police Dogs, all of whom live with their handler when they are ‘off duty’. The dogs undergo training lasting up to three months, and work the same hours as a police officer, for up to seven years. When they retire they usually remain with their handler for the rest of their days.

Like the horses, the dog section is a vital component to policing in the area. In addition to the drug sniffer dogs, they are used to find explosives, search for missing persons, keep order, track down offenders trying to evade arrest and so on.

It is expected that the Animal Welfare Lay Visitors will make 12 visits per year to check on the conditions in which the dog is kept, its feeding regime and its general well being.

Alene Branton concluded: “The Authority takes a keen interest in the welfare of all those who work for Humberside Police Service and the police horses and dogs are no exception. They are important members of the team.”

Anyone interested in becoming a member of this group or wanting to know more about Independent Lay Visiting should contact Victoria Wise on 01482 307234.

Ends

Press enquiries: Sallie Blair, Better Times PR 01283 821012 / 07702 541401