



Places to live. Space to grow.

## **West Kent Pets Policy**

### **Policy Statement**

West Kent recognises that pet ownership can be very beneficial for the wellbeing of our residents, improving mental health, reducing loneliness and can help maintain a healthy and active lifestyle.

This Policy is for all our tenants and homeowners (shared owners and leaseholders) to allow pets in all our properties whilst ensuring the wellbeing of every animal and the surrounding community.

This policy aims to make it clear what pets you can or cannot keep at your property and how we expect them and your home to be looked after.

### **Permission for new tenants or new pets for existing tenants**

We will give permission to keep a pet if the property is suitable and you are able to take on the responsibilities of looking after the pet. We will also take into consideration whether your tenancy has been breached in any way, for instance, rent arrears, no access, anti-social behaviour or not looking after your property.

We will ask you to sign a pet's contract if you want to keep a dog or cat and confirm that they have been neutered and microchipped.

We will usually give consent to changes you might need to make to your property to accommodate your pet, such as a cat flap, as long as you agree to remove and make good the changes if you move away and the changes do not affect fire safety. You cannot have a cat flap if your door opens onto a communal hallway in a block of flats.

Permission for breeding or selling animals will not be allowed in any West Kent property.

### **Existing tenants**

If you already have a pet that we are not aware of, we expect you to let us know and sign a pet contract and we expect you to look after your pet according to this policy.

## Pet ownership rules for dogs and cats

- All cats and dogs will have to be neutered and microchipped
- All dogs have to wear a collar with ID tag and lead in any communal area
- Dog fouling needs to be cleaned straight away and disposed of appropriately
- You are responsible for ensuring your garden is secure

Property type*	Property size	Amount of pets	
All general needs property	One bed	One dog or one cat	
	Two bed +	Up to two dogs and two cats	
All general needs flats in a block	Any	One small** dog or one house cat	
Temporary accommodation	Any	One small dog or one cat***	
Emerald properties category 1, 1.5 and 2	Any	One small dog or one house cat	

\*The pet's policy will not apply where there is a local lettings plan in place for the estate you live on which has a clause to restrict or not allow pets

\*\*Small dog would be no bigger than a Highland Terrier

\*\*\*We will not refuse permission if you need temporary accommodation and already have more pets than allowed when you applied for housing if the pet/s are well managed and looked after as per the policy.

## Kent Extra Homes for All (KEHFA)

KEHFA schemes have a separate pet's policy.

## Assistance dogs

We will make reasonable adjustments to enable tenants to have an assistance dog on a case by case basis.

## Pets you do not need permission for

You do not need permission to keep a reasonable number of caged house birds and small caged animals like hamsters, rabbits etc. However, breeding and selling is not permitted and if you are not looking after your home well we may prevent you from having any caged animals or birds. Any food stored outside for your pets has to be in a sealed container to reduce vermin.

## **Farm animals and birds of prey**

When appropriate, we will give permission to keep a limited number of chickens (but not cockerels) or birds of prey. Permission will be dependent on the size of the garden, location of the property, storage of food and bedding and licensing requirements. In general, we will not give permission for outdoor farm animals in built up areas or where keeping them is likely to impact on others.

## **Animals we will not give permission for**

- Wild animals - however if you are volunteering for a wild life trust we will consider each request individually.
- Livestock or farm animals (except as set out above in relation to chickens and birds of prey)
- Endangered species or any dogs identified in the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, or any subsequent legislation. If a tenant is identified as owning a dangerous dog we will liaise with the tenant and the local authority and if the dog is put on the index of exempted dogs (IED) we may allow you to keep the dog in the property as long as you keep to the terms of the exemption certificate.

If it is recognised that any animal living in a property is causing nuisance behaviour we will record it as an anti-social behaviour complaint. We will ask you to quickly resolve any problems yourself. If you do not, we will consider withdrawing permission to keep the pet and start enforcement action for breach of tenancy following the pet policy procedure and anti-social behaviour policy.

The following are some examples of what we consider to be nuisance behaviour;

- Fouling staircase, walkways, courtyards or any communal area or dwelling including your own property. You are responsible for cleaning up any mess immediately.
- Injuring or frightening anyone into thinking they might be injured
- An animal out of control or a danger to other residents
- Failing to keep a pet on a lead in all communal areas
- Making a noise that causes or is likely to cause alarm, distress or harassment to others
- Breeding or selling of animals
- Allowing an animal to cause damage to West Kent property
- Failing to comply with the terms of any dog control notice or similar notice issues by the relevant authority

Dog owners can be prosecuted if their dog attacks a person in their own home or in any public place. This includes any attack on assistance dogs.

West Kent will liaise with the local authority dog wardens and animal welfare organisations to ensure the best possible advice, information and expertise are readily available to help you look after your pet.

## **Some things to consider about keeping a pet**

### **Legal obligations**

The Animal Welfare Act 2006 makes owners responsible for ensuring their animals welfare needs are met.

#### **These include the need:**

- For a suitable environment (place to live)
- For a suitable diet
- To exhibit normal behaviour patterns
- To be housed with or apart from other animals (if applicable)
- To be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.
- Minimum age of pet ownership is 16 years

Anyone who is cruel to an animal or does not provide for its welfare needs may be banned from owning animals, fined up to £20,000 and/or sent to prison.

### **Can you afford a pet?**

Looking after a dog or cat can involve a significant financial commitment, including food, equipment, vet bills and medicine. It has been estimated in recent years that the average annual spend can be around £1,183 on a pet dog and £1,028 on a cat. Allowing for an average lifespan of six to eighteen years, the total cost of pet ownership adds up.

### **Looking after your pet and home**

You should also consider how you will exercise your pet, what happens if you are unwell or are no longer able to look after it, holiday arrangements and things like extra cleaning in your home.

### **Choosing a pet**

When choosing a pet, we recommend that you seek a pet that needs rehoming from an animal shelter. This will help reduce third party breeding.

### **More information**

For further information on the Animal Welfare Act and other advice about keeping pets go to [www.rspca.org.uk](http://www.rspca.org.uk)