

Title of Report:	Dangerous Dogs – New Legislative Controls for XL Bully Dogs
Committee Report Submitted To:	Environmental Services Committee
Date of Meeting:	Tuesday 11th June 2024
For Decision or For Information	For Information
To be discussed In Committee	No

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
Strategic Theme	Local Economy
Outcome	Implementation of statutory requirements
Lead Officer	Head of Health & Built Environment

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	N/A
Included in Current Year Estimates	N/A
Capital/Revenue	N/A
Code	N/A
Staffing Costs	N/A

Legal Considerations	
Input of Legal Services Required	NO
Legal Opinion Obtained	NO

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No N/A	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No N/A	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No N/A	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No N/A	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No N/A	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No N/A	Date:

1.0 **Purpose of Paper**

The purpose of this paper is to update Members on new legislative controls on XL Bully Dogs to be introduced in stages during 2024.

2.0 **Background**

- 2.1 Since 2020 there have been 21 cases of dogs fatally attacking humans in the UK. 15 of these fatal attacks were carried out by bull terriers and bull terrier crosses including the recently introduced breed known as XL Bullies.
- 2.2 On 5 March 2024 DAERA (Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs) Minister Andrew Muir announced his intention to introduce new safety measures for XL Bully breed type dogs in Northern Ireland as he believes it is the most appropriate way to protect public safety.
- 2.3 There are approximately 200 XL Bully breed type dogs licensed in Northern Ireland.
- 2.4 DAERA have published a proposed timescale for the introduction of this new legislation which broadly mirrors similar provisions already implemented in the rest of the UK. The purpose of this legislation is to ensure greater controls are exercised over these dogs to reduce the risk to the public.

3.0 **Proposed Timetable for new legislation**

Provisional Dates	Legislative Change
7 June 2024	Make and lay first stage of legislation 'The Dangerous Dogs (Designated Type) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024'. Adds XL Bully Dogs to the dangerous dogs list and sets a date from which it becomes illegal to own an XL Bully dog without an Exemption Certificate.
28 June 2024	XL bullies required be on a lead and muzzled in a public place. XL Bully dogs cannot be bred, gifted, sold, exchanged, abandoned or to allowed to stray. It is still legal to own an XL Bully dog.
Before Assembly summer recess	Make and lay second stage of legislation. 'The Dangerous Dogs (Compensation and Exemption Schemes) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024'.
1 August 2024	Applications for exemption certificates open.
31 December 2024	After this date it is illegal to own an XL Bully dog without an exemption certificate.

- 3.1 From 28th June 2024 it will be a legal requirement for all XL Bully dogs to be kept on a leash and muzzled when in any public place and no XL Bully dog can be bred, given away or sold.
- 3.2 From 31st December 2024 all owners of XL Bully dogs will be required to have obtained an Exemption Certificate. This Certificate will be issued by District Councils in Northern Ireland once they are satisfied that the dog is registered with the Council as a Dangerous Dog, that the dog has been neutered and that the owners have third party liability insurance in place.
- 3.3 The application scheme for exemption certificates will open on 1st August 2024. There will be a fee of £92.40 for owners for each application.
- 3.4 After 31st December 2024 it will be illegal to own an XL Bully dog without an Exemption Certificate.

4.0 Compensation scheme

- 4.1 DEARA will implement a compensation scheme for owners of these dogs who do not wish to obtain an exemption certificate and would rather the dog be humanely destroyed. Dog owners may voluntarily surrender their XL Bully type dogs for euthanasia, and receive financial compensation of £100, plus £100 towards Vets costs.

5.0 Guidance

- 5.1 DAERA will develop guidance and practical support to allow owners to understand the pending legislative changes, including how to identify an XL Bully breed type dog using the current Defra Conformation Standard developed by the UK Government.
- 5.2 Owners will be required to self-assess their dog using the XL Bully Breed Type Conformation Standard and where the dog meets a substantial number of the characteristics outlined, it will be considered an XL Bully breed type.
- 5.3 Guidance is also available for enforcement officers applying the XL Bully Breed Type Conformation Standard.

6.0 Communications/Awareness campaign

- 6.1 DAERA, in conjunction with local councils, will ensure that communications are issued in advance of the restrictions coming into effect, including details of the steps required to comply and enable the XL Bully dog owners to prepare for the changes.

7.0 Recommendation

- 7.1 It is recommended that Environmental Services Committee notes the information above.