

Title of Report:	Update on enforcement of new legislation relating to the control of XL Bull Dogs
Committee Report Submitted To:	Environmental Services Committee
Date of Meeting:	14th October 2025
For Decision or For Information:	For Information
To be discussed In Committee:	No

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
Strategic Theme	Healthy and Engaged Communities
Outcome	Implementation of statutory requirements
Lead Officer	Head of Health & Built Environment

Estimated Timescale for Completion	
Date to be Completed	N/A

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

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to update Members on the enforcement of recently introduced legislation regarding the control of XL Bull Dogs.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Since 1991 it has been an offence to possess certain designated breeds in Northern Ireland without certain controls in place. Previously there were 4 prohibited breeds:
- Pitbull type
 - Japanese Tosa
 - Dogo Argentina
 - Fila Brasileiro
- 2.2 In 2024 following a spate of fatal attacks the dog type known as XL Bull dogs was also added to the list of prohibited breeds - Dangerous Dogs (Designated Types) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024. From 31st December 2024 it became an offence to possess an XL Bull dog unless the owner has an exemption certificate issued under the relevant legislation

The exemption conditions are:

- the dog is neutered
- the dog is kept leashed and muzzled when in a public place
- when not in a public place, the dog is in sufficiently secure conditions
- the dog is made available to council dog wardens for inspection
- the council is notified of any change of address of the dog, or of the death or export of the dog
- third party insurance policy is taken out for the dog

3.0 Implementation of the legislation

- 3.1 Before the introduction of the legislation the Enforcement Team delivered an awareness-raising programme aimed at relevant dog owners. This included issuing written correspondence to all known XL Bully owners, publishing press releases, providing information on the Council's website, and conducting personal visits to offer advice and guidance on the exemption scheme.
- 3.2 The exemption scheme was available to XL bull dog owners for a 12 month period, ending on the 31st December 2024. During this time the team successfully granted 47 exemption certificates, allowing owners to legally keep their XL bull dogs.
- 3.3 At the end of the exemption scheme several XL bull dogs remained that had not achieved exemption and were therefore being kept illegally. At that stage, the only option available for owners to keep their dogs lawfully is to bring the matter before the Court, allowing a District Judge to determine whether the dogs can be kept safely. Where a District Judge is satisfied that an XL Bull dog does not pose a risk, a Contingent Destruction Order is issued, requiring

the owner to comply with the same control measures set out under the exemption scheme.

- 3.4 To bring the matter before the Court Council is required to seize the dog using relevant powers under the Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983. The remaining known unexempted dogs were prioritised according to the level of perceived risk. Council officers attended Court and obtained warrants to enter premises and seize any dogs being kept illegally. To date six warrants have been granted and executed by the Enforcement Team with the assistance of officers from other Councils and the PSNI.
- 3.5 Of the six seizures, four Contingent Destruction Orders were granted and the dogs returned to their owners.
- 3.6 Two owners did not receive a Contingent Destruction Order for their dogs. In one case the District Judge agreed with Council that the circumstances in which the dog was being kept posed a grave risk to the public. In the second case, the owner informed Council that they did not wish to have the dog returned. Both dogs were humanely destroyed.
- 3.7 A further three XL bull dogs were seized in a public place without the need for a warrant. Two owners received a Contingent Destruction Order and their dogs were returned. The owner of third dog ceased communicating with Council and as these dogs cannot be rehomed, the dog was humanely destroyed.
- 3.8 The Enforcement Team continues to deal with any unexempted dogs that comes to the Departments attention to ensure such dogs are kept legally and as safely as possible.

4.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that Environmental Services Committee notes the information above