



Date:



20 November 2014



Leicester
City Council

Mr T H Kirkman
Senior Coroner for Rutland & North Leicestershire
Loughborough Coroner's Office
Charnwood Borough Council Offices
Southfield Road
Loughborough
Leicestershire
LE11 2TR

Dear Mr Kirkman

Inquest into the Death of Lexi Branson

Thank you for sending a copy of your report following the inquest into the death of Lexi Branson.

Firstly on behalf of the City Council can we extend the condolences you passed on to Lexi's family at the inquest.

You will appreciate that before [REDACTED] evidence at the hearing a considerable amount of effort was given to any possibility in which future deaths might be prevented.

You will recall that Leicester City Council's only obligation under law is to look after dogs for the first 7 days of being found as a stray. You will recall that a private kennel, Willow Tree of Loughborough, looked after Mulan in order to allow the Council's obligations in law to be met by an external third party contractor. One option which was covered in evidence was simply for dogs to be euthanised on day 8.

The four issues you have raised are potentially wider than matters within the remit of Leicester City Council and accordingly in the absence of national standards it is difficult to understand how Leicester City Council could contribute. Even if any national standards were drafted, we can see no way in which any of the usually charitable small organisations could be compelled to agree to those standards if issued as guidance only. The very disparate and varied nature of the sort of bodies which provide that service across the UK, even aside from legal obligations, possibly explains why each different organisation may adopt its own individual rehoming standards. In part this also covers the fourth "concern" you have raised in your report.


We can assure you that as part of our investigation into the preparation of this case, various enquiries were made both of a number of different bodies with similar duties, and other organisations such as Dogs Trust, Birmingham Dog Homes and the RSPCA. We can confirm each body approached had some similarities but also some differences in the systems used.

All of the evidence we heard at the inquest would have led anyone to think that Mulan's behaviour was passive. It is perhaps self-evident but worth reiterating that the previous incident and the risk that Mulan's owner perceived after it attacked another dog had not been mentioned when he called us and told the warden (wrongly) that the dog was a stray. Prior details about its history, breed, temperament, reason for being released and any potential for a repeat of that incident might have been helpful to anyone involved in the rehoming process. Without that information, the assessment of the dog can only be based on how it behaved after it was collected.

In those circumstances, while of course we understand your concerns, the Council in fact has arguably little or no power in order to prevent such future deaths and can only continue to do its best to ensure that any learning from this tragic case has been conveyed to the current kennel provider acting on its behalf.

We do trust that this is of assistance to your enquiries but if we can be of any more assistance at all on this; please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Chief Operating Officer