

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

17th January 2017

Jew Constituency

RE: PROTECTION OF POLICE SUPPORT ANIMALS.

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of the protection of Police support animals.

Police support animals make a valuable contribution in the detection and prevention of crime and in maintaining public safety. I am extremely grateful for the bravery and skill shown by Police dogs and their handlers on a daily basis. Attacks of any sort on Police dogs or horses are unacceptable and should be dealt with severely under the criminal law.

Under the *Animal Welfare Act 2006* an attack on a Police dog or other Police support animal can be treated as causing unnecessary suffering to an animal, and the maximum penalty is 6 months' imprisonment, an unlimited fine, or both. Indeed, the financial element of the penalty was raised in 2015 from a maximum fine of £20,000. Similarly, an attack on a Police animal could be considered by the court as an aggravating factor leading to a higher sentence. Under some circumstances assaults on support animals could be treated as criminal damage which would allow for penalties of up to 10 years' imprisonment.

The Government has also requested that the Sentencing Council considers assaults on police animals as an aggravating factor as a part of their current review on guidelines for sentencing in the Magistrates' Courts, which includes animal cruelty offences.

While the current penalties are appropriate, I agree that it is unpalatable to think of Police animals as merely 'equipment', as the charge of criminal damage might suggest, and does not convey the respect and gratitude felt for the animals involved and their contribution to law enforcement and public safety. Work across Government is underway to explore whether there is more that the law should do to offer the most appropriate protections to Police animals and all working animals.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,

TOM

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Rest assured that I will continue to keep a close eye on that and raise it with Ministers.

LISTENING TO YOU - CAMPAIGNING FOR YOU

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