



MINISTER'S PRE-BRIEF AND MEETING NOTE

It is the business area's responsibility for keeping a CM record of the final agreed note.

☐ PRE-BRIEF

☒ MEETING

INV / SUB Reference Number: INV-0444-2026

DATE OF MEETING: 15 June 2026

TITLE/ORGANISATION:		Meeting with new USPCA Chair Baroness Sue Gray, to discuss their strategic plan and animal welfare		
VENUE:	Room 29, Parliament Buildings, Stormont			
☒ Parliament Buildings	☐ Clare House	☐ OTHER: Please specify location	☐ Virtual	☐ Hybrid
LIST OF ATTENDEES:				
☒ Minister	☒ SpAd	☒ PS	☐ APS	
OFFICIALS:				
External Attendees:	Baroness Sue Gray, Chair of USPCA Heather Weir, Chief Executive of USPCA			

KEY POINTS DISCUSSED:

- Sue opened the meeting outlining her priority as the new Chair to set strategic direction for USPCA, with a view to growing the organisation and expressed desire to be more like RSPCA.
- Heather added that a new collaborative group has been established with Chief Executives from RSPCA in GB and National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (NSPCA).
- USPCA is in its 190th year and they are planning for the next 10 years, with an eye to what the organisation will look like in 20 years.
- Heather noted an increase in calls about dog abandonment, with a growing number also relating to horses and they are considering what USPCA priorities should be.
- Minister Muir noted that farmed animals often receive less public attention and referred to the DoJ sentencing review, which will consider deterrents for farmed animal welfare offences. He suggested that USPCA may wish to focus its priorities, noting that the Animal Welfare Pathway sets out clear priorities for the remainder of the mandate and provides a rationale for action where other issues, such as greyhound racing and glue traps, continue to be raised.
- Minister Muir expressed frustration with councils' position on the new reforms, noting that SOLACE has indicated it is not prepared to engage on Lucy's Law or enforce any new reforms without a funding package.
- He added that he is continuing to seek councils engagement and has written to NILGA to set out the issues.
- Heather noted differing attitudes between council Chief Executives and officers, with Chief Executives appearing more open to engagement.
- Sue noted there is an issue with public knowing where to report animal welfare concerns and USPCA receives large volume of calls, suggested a central point for reporting.
- Noted the PSNI responsibilities for enforcement and that she has invited [REDACTED] down to USPCA headquarters.
- Sue also proposed to invite NILGA representatives down to USPCA headquarters and Minister said he would speak to party colleagues about a potential visit, noting this is about improving relationships.
- Minister Muir outlined progress on Dog Breeding Review, that it contains large number of recommendations which cannot all be delivered at once. He has agreed for officials to identify up to 10 recommendations to be consulted on, following which he will set out the way forward, noting that councils need to be engaged. He emphasised his desire to make progress in this area before end of mandate.
- Heather noted that she made a presentation to NILGA and there were significant concerns being raised about puppy farming and the travelling community in the Mid Ulster area.
- Additionally, Heather has been engaging with [REDACTED], [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Queens University Belfast regarding the need for research to understand the scale of animal welfare sector in Northern

Ireland. Heather added that she has been considering organising an event with animal welfare organisations to celebrate 190 years of USPCA. Minister concluded the meeting noting his appreciation for the constructive engagement with USPCA and the valuable work it undertakes.	
ISSUES AGREED: (must be completed) Minister to raise with NILGA party colleagues potential visit to USPCA.	
ACTION POINTS & OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE: N/A	
Notes written by - ██████████	DATE: 16 June 2026

Signed and Dated by most Senior Official in attendance: ██████████

Signed and Dated by Minister/Private Secretary: _____
 24/6/26 _____