



RSPCA Guildford
and Epsom Branch
Registered Charity No. 203608

RSPCA GUILDFORD and EPSOM BRANCH

ANNUAL REPORT 2021



Read Esme's story later in our report

USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS

COMPLAINTS AND ADVICE

Anyone suspecting cruelty or mistreatment to animals should report the incident to the RSPCA by contacting the Cruelty Line on 0300 1234 999 (or www.rspca.org.uk/reportcruelty) where all calls are dealt with in the strictest confidence

CHIEF INSPECTOR

Chief Inspector Rob Jackson
RSPCA Millbrook Animal Centre
Guildford Road, Chobham, Surrey
GU24 8EH

BRANCH PARTNERSHIP MANAGER

Sarah Piggott
C/O RSPCA HQ
Wilberforce Way, Southwater, West
Sussex
RH13 9RS

Branch Contact Details

Telephone 07906 924002
Facebook www.facebook.com/rspcaguildfordepsom
Website www.rspcaguildfordepsom.org.uk
Email info@rspcaguildfordepsom.org.uk

LOCAL ANIMAL CENTRES

RSPCA Millbrook Animal Centre
Guildford Road
Chobham, Surrey
GU24 8EH
Tel: 0300 123 0740
Email millbrook@rspca.org.uk

Services:

- Adopt an animal
- Microchipping
- Pet merchandise
- Gala days, car boot sales and dog shows
- Dog behaviourist

Animal viewings and introductions by appointment only.

Postcodes covered by the Branch

GU1 1, GU1 2, GU1 3, GU1 4, GU2 4, GU2 5, GU2 6, GU2 7, GU2 8, GU2 9, GU3 1, GU4 7, GU4 8, GU5 0, GU5 9, GU6 7, GU6 8, GU7 1, GU7 2, GU7 3, GU8 4, GU8

KT4 9, KT9 1, KT9 2, KT9 9, KT17 1, KT17 2, KT17 3, KT17 4, KT17 6, KT17 9, KT18 5, KT18 6, KT18 7, KT19 0, KT19 7, KT19 8, KT19 9, KT20 5, KT20 6, KT20 7, KT20 9, KT21 1, KT21 2, KT22 0, KT22 2, KT22 7, KT22 8, KT22 9, KT23 3, KT23 4, KT24 5, KT24 6, KT24 7

SM7 1, SM7 2, SM7 3

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SPOTLIGHT ON OUR WORK - here we showcase **our work with animals**

AMBER- Amber is a lovely 15 year old tabby cat who came into our care when her owner could no longer meet her ongoing needs for hyperthyroidism. This is a common ailment in elderly cats but can be managed by medication and regular blood tests to check the medication is controlling the thyroid activity. This requires regular veterinary visits and can be very expensive.

Long term treatment can also give rise to a risk of kidney disease, so regular monitoring is essential.

For Amber, the good news is that after a brief period in our foster care, she was adopted by a super couple with experience of this problem in elderly cats and her condition has been stabilised. She quickly settled into her new home, enjoying the garden and indoor comforts!



1. Reference and administration details

Charity Name	The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Guildford and Epsom Branch
Other names charity is known by	RSPCA Guildford and Epsom Branch
Registered charity number	203608
Charity's principal addresses	The Branch does not have an address for members of the public to visit but can be contacted via email or telephone.
Charity's principal bankers	Lloyds Bank plc
Independent examiner	Jim Halliday FCA – Chartered Accountant

Names of the trustees who manage the charity

Trustee name	Office (if any)	Dates acted if not for whole year
Judith Crowhurst*		
Rebecca Greaves		
Garth Hampson		Resigned 21 Dec 2021
Steven Hooke	Hon. Treasurer	
Abbi Moore*		
Cat Pilbeam		
Lucy Pollard	Hon. Chair	
Katrina Tully	Hon. Secretary	
Sarah White		
Ann Winter		

*Judith and Abbi are employed by the RSPCA National Society. We obtained its approval before co-opting them as trustees, as required by branch rule 7.4.

Other support provided by

Sarah Piggott	Branch Partnership Manager	
Trasna Palmer	President	

2. Introduction by the Chair

This year's annual report reflects on our continued transition from the Covid pandemic, which has led to changes in the way we all live, work and interact. For the Branch, this has mainly affected our ability to rehome animals and fundraise.

There was a huge rise in pet ownership coupled with a loss of vet resources (with varying causes: some chose not to remain after Brexit; the industry is not seeing new recruits come through and a lot of vet practices are moving to corporate ownership) which put an enormous strain on both the cost of and the availability of treatment. Sadly, many pets not being neutered is just one example of this. This affects our provision of welfare services and the volume of people needing our assistance.

The rise in pet ownership has also meant that we are seeing an increasing number of requests for assistance towards costly veterinary treatments, many of which the owners could have made better provision towards, when they took the decision to own an animal. For example, thinking about the impacts of owning multiple animals and introducing them appropriately to avoid fighting (especially dogs) and unnecessary injury. Or putting some money aside to cover potential additional costs / taking out pet insurance, and not allowing children to 'man handle' kittens or puppies like toys.

Some animals have also very sadly become 'unwanted' as Covid restrictions have lifted. This is as a result of the desire to own pets growing during the pandemic lockdown. Whilst owning a pet is a great boost to both mental and physical health and provides companionship, it also comes with a substantial financial responsibility which with high levels of job losses and furlough creates additional requests and pressures on charities whose income has been significantly impacted. Sadly, dogs in particular are suffering as owner ignorance continues from infections such as Pyometra, which would have been easily avoided if the dog was spayed. Other examples are a lack of awareness of Parvovirus in puppies (more frequently affecting puppies born in puppy farms) and puppies and kittens with limbs broken due to being left alone or unsupervised with children.

We are trying to support owners with vet costs so that they can keep their animal rather than sign them over to us and we are also trying to educate owners with the considerations they need to make when returning to work e.g suffering from separation anxiety.

Fundraising continued to be impacted by restrictions. However, plenty of initiative was shown by our volunteers to overcome this. We opened up new ways to generate support and much needed funds; moving to online donation platforms, online fundraising activity and selling items online. For example we are now part of the Guildford Community Lottery. As in the previous year, sales of pet items such as hand-made dog beds and catnip mice were a great success, and "lockdown clearouts" turned unwanted items into cash. We also held another virtual pet show this year. Of course, we want to keep our volunteers safe, so we only attended very small fairs instead of the large fetes we were used to, and we have bought an ecard reader to allow us to take contactless donations at future events.

I hope that you enjoy reading through this year's annual report and the heart-warming stories about the animals we have helped.

As always, I would like to pay special thanks to all our volunteers for their unwavering support and generosity and to all of our supporters. It is hugely appreciated.

I wish you all the best for 2022, as some level of normality returns to our lives



Lucy Pollard



3. Structure, governance, and management

How the charity is constituted	We are a separately registered charity, constituted as an unincorporated association, working within the Rules, Policies and Guidelines of the national RSPCA. Our governing document is the RSPCA Society's Branch Rules. The charity operates as an autonomous branch, responsible for our own funding and for managing local animal welfare work.
Trustee selection methods	The committee consists of a maximum of 17 individuals, being: (1) at least 7 and not more than 14 elected committee members, all of whom must be eligible branch members, elected at the AGM and (2) up to 3 co-opted committee members, who may also be branch members.
How trustees are recruited and appointed	Elected from branch members at every AGM to carry on the Branch work for the forthcoming year. Potential trustees are recruited via various methods including volunteer agencies, RSPCA websites and Head Office enquiries, advertising and appeals to members. Potential new trustees are vetted in accordance with Charity Commission guidelines and sign the recommended declarations upon appointment.
Policies and procedures adopted for the induction and training of trustees	All trustees are briefed on their responsibilities prior to their acceptance of the role. New trustees receive appropriate training in RSPCA and Branch Policies and Procedures, in line with Information Commissioner's Office and Charity Commission guidance. They also receive support from other trustees, guidance from Head Office and Branch Partnership Managers and handover from retiring officers if applicable.
The charity's organisational structure and any wider network with which the charity works	Some services such as those of the inspectorate are carried out by the national society whereas others are carried out by a network of branches which are independently registered charities operating in defined local areas. Our branch is the Guildford and Epsom branch, which is a member of the South East Regional Board area. All the work of the Branch is carried out by volunteers, so we have no paid staff. Decisions are made by the trustees at committee meetings, usually held every 4 to 6 weeks. The Branch works with Head Office staff, the Inspectorate, Millbrook and other branches and animal centres in its day-to-day work.
Trustees' consideration of major risks and the system and procedures to manage them	The main risks facing the Branch are: Financial. Income generation is vital for us to continue our work. Despite pressing need, we must evaluate what we can afford to fund. Insufficient income levels mean that we will have to reduce or cease welfare activity to remain a viable branch. New demands and requests for funding are a key discussion item at every committee meeting. Spending is controlled through delegated limits and required approvals. Levels of pet ownership grew during the pandemic, and whilst owning a pet is a great boost to both mental and physical health it also comes with a substantial financial responsibility, which places additional pressure on charities whose income has been significantly impacted during the same period. At the time of writing, we are seeing that the vets we work with are struggling with significant shortages in staff set against a huge and growing demand for appointments. This impacts our ability to negotiate on price and may mean that non urgent procedures such as neuters are delayed. Longer term, we expect this to lead to more unwanted litters and conditions such as tumours that are hormone related.

	<p>Public opinion. The RSPCA is a well-known and respected “brand”, and we must ensure that we do not tarnish it. Mitigating activities include screening/induction of volunteers plus ongoing training and education for trustees (specifically on their responsibilities as branch officials) and other volunteers. All adoption support volunteers must attend a training course followed by one to one support.</p> <p>People. We continue to have difficulties in finding volunteers willing to act as trustees and carry out welfare and fundraising work. We use volunteer recruitment bureaux and other methods as described above to publicise our requirements.</p> <p>Health and Safety. We have a duty to take reasonable care of our volunteers’ health and safety and that of others who may be affected by our actions. All volunteers are covered by the RSPCA’s liability and personal accident insurance and are provided with appropriate information on our health and safety policies and guidelines.</p> <p>The committee has identified and evaluated risks affecting the Branch and has set in place policies and procedures based on guidelines issued by RSPCA Head Office and the Charity Commission to mitigate the risks where possible. The operation and relevance of these policies and procedures is reviewed regularly.</p> <p>The Branch complies with the Branch Rules as issued by the National Society and has a number of related financial transactions with this organisation. Judith Crowhurst and Abbi Moore are also paid employees of the RSPCA (National Society).</p>
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4. Objectives and activities

Summary of the objectives of the charity set out in its governing document	<p>To promote the work and objectives of the national Society Royal Society for The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (registered charity number 219099), with particular reference to the area of the Branch, in accordance with the policies of the society.</p> <p>The objectives of the Branch remain unchanged from previous years.</p>
Charity’s aim	The RSPCA as a charity will, by all lawful means, prevent cruelty, promote kindness to and alleviate suffering of all animals.
Summary of the main activities in relation to these objects	<p>The Branch promotes animal welfare in the local area primarily through veterinary assistance, neutering and rehoming.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We offer discretionary support to people in need to help pay veterinary bills. • We respond to enquiries from the public about animals and offer free animal care advice by phone, social media, via leaflets and at our events, which promotes responsible pet ownership. • Where funds permit, the Branch takes in abandoned animals, including pets whose owners suffer ill health or financial difficulties, or pass away. We also support the national RSPCA by caring for animals taken in by the Inspectorate if there is no space at the national animal centres. • We continue to support the Inspectorate as a priority. • We undertake educational presentations and workshops with local groups and schools. <p>More detail on our activities can be found in section 5 of the Trustees Report.</p>

SPOTLIGHT ON OUR WORK - here we showcase **how supporters have helped care for our animals**

ESME – Esme featured on our front cover, is a white and brown female mini lop rabbit who came into our care in Nov 2020 when her owners could not afford the vet dental treatment required and she had fallen out and was fighting with the other 2 female rabbits all adopted as a trio from Pets at Home.

Our vet extracted 4 of Esme's teeth, but an abscess had formed due to a delay in dental treatment and the infection required antibiotics. The infection proved persistent, needing several antibiotic treatments, and sadly leading to a gut stasis episode (when rabbits stop eating and is life threatening). Poor Esme required hospitalisation and hand feeding for recovery.

All through her suffering, Esme was a sweet tempered friendly rabbit, the sweetest bun we have ever cared for. No doubt her amazing temperament influenced our decision to spend our scarce resources on the continuing vet care she required. Once we knew she was firmly on the road to recovery, we launched a social media appeal for supporters to help with the vet bills.

When fully recovered we soon found a wonderful new home for Esme where she swiftly bonded with a partner male rabbit and is living happily ever after. A wonderful success!

5. Achievements and performance

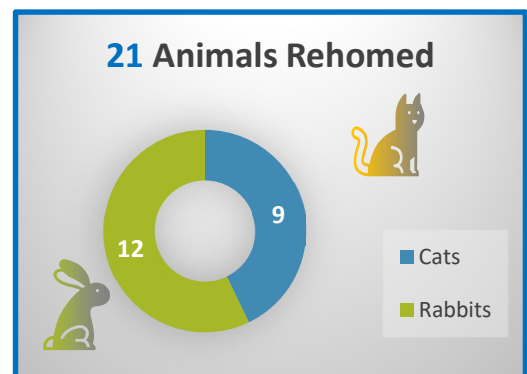
A. Animal Welfare

Rehoming, adoption support and fostering

The RSPCA rehomes animals to people who can meet the needs of a companion animal in an appropriate environment.

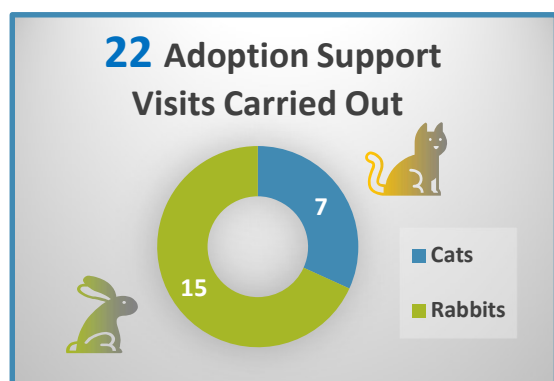
Most rehoming in the local area is done by Millbrook Animal Centre, which is the nearest RSPCA animal centre to the Branch. The Branch also has space in foster homes and private boarding establishments for cats and rabbits who have been found abandoned or stray or have been taken in via the RSPCA Inspectorate when there is no room for them in an Animal Centre. They are cared for and rehabilitated, while we search for loving new homes. There are few dogs mentioned in our reports because we do not have the facilities or expertise to take them into our direct care and use other RSPCA branches and animal centres or other rescue organisations wherever possible. Animals in our care receive veterinary treatment, vaccinations, neutering and microchipping. Flea and other parasite treatments are kept up to date. This helps to control the incidence and spread of disease and suffering.

During the year we rehomed 21 animals that came into our care. In addition to this, we took on responsibility for a number of other animals before finding them places in RSPCA animal centres. We advertise animals for rehoming on our branch website and Facebook page, as well as the National Society's main website; allowing us to reach a larger audience of prospective adopters. At certain times all our facilities are completely full, yet it is so important that we can take in animals in need and give them a chance of a loving home.



We support rehoming activity by recruiting and providing volunteers who undertake home suitability assessments as part of adoption support. Their role is to understand each animal's need

(for space, stimulation, safety etc) and ensure that what potential adopters can provide matches these needs. They then follow up with the adopter later to ensure that the adoption has been a success. We now mostly undertake this support via video/phone calls rather than in person visits.



We carried out 22 adoption visits in 2021 (compared with 60 in 2020). These continued to be mostly conducted remotely under the DEFRA compliant Covid related protocols/guidance. Our team of home visitors not only carry out visits for our branch animals, but also on behalf of other RSPCA branches and centres where the potential adopter lives within the Branch area.

We have cat fosterers who give the special care and attention that is often much easier to provide in a foster home than in a cattery. If we have spaces in this preferred home environment, we can socialise and nurture cats meaning that they are more quickly restored to good health and able to be rehomed earlier. We are extremely keen to find other potential fosterers including cat and kitten fosterers, who will have support from our co-ordinator. This reduces the costs of boarding overall.

Our main rabbit fosterer has outdoor accommodation and has provided a great resource for the branch, the Inspectorate, and wider RSPCA needs by taking in rabbits to full capacity throughout the Covid difficulties. Our indoor rabbit fosterer has more limited capacity but provides an essential environment to those rabbits that cannot be housed outdoors - especially in the colder months. Both fosterers have been invaluable in their work to rehabilitate rabbits in their care and progress them to rehoming with wonderful new forever homes.

Welfare assistance

We provide support to people in need to help pay their vet bills. The service is offered in certain circumstances to assist with difficulties experienced by pet owners faced with veterinary costs which they will struggle to meet. This helps to promote responsible pet ownership, prevent suffering, and reduce the numbers of unwanted cats, dogs, and rabbits. We assisted 276 animals in this way in 2021 (178 in 2020). We also helped with the neutering of 147 animals (129 in 2020). 117 of these were cats where we offered subsidised neutering to owners under our World Spay Day initiative.

We had 83 animals in our care during the year and we have paid for all their necessary treatments. Our thanks go to the veterinary community for their invaluable help throughout the year.

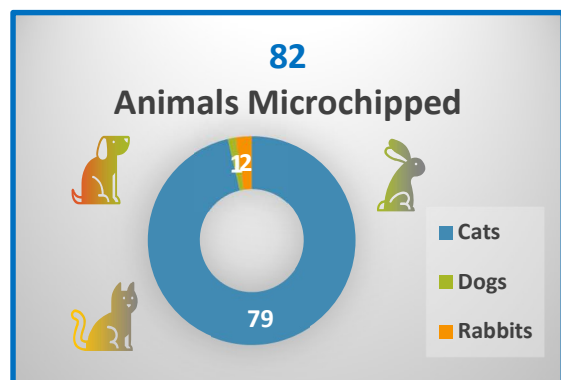
We also paid Wildlife Aid in Leatherhead for the care of 92 animals including hedgehogs, badgers, foxes, bats, pigeons, owls, and ducklings (compared with 53 animals in the previous year). These cases originated in our branch area and were taken there by the Inspectorate.

Supporting the Inspectorate

The Branch continued to support the Inspectorate in their vital and sometimes distressing work. We do this through fostering or boarding and paying for veterinary treatment for animals signed over to the RSPCA. We also provide welfare assistance for veterinary treatment and neutering where the Inspectors find owners in need. The Inspectorate report is in a later section of the Annual Report.

Other welfare activities

We take in, free of charge, lost animals and take steps to reunite them with owners. This work benefits our local community (including local authorities) by preventing animals from straying and posing a risk to themselves and to people through road accidents. We respond to enquiries from the public about animals in the Branch area. The public benefits by knowing that we can and will intervene to assist animals in need.



It is the law that you must have your dog microchipped and your details kept up to date in England and Wales. We believe all cats, dogs and rabbits should be chipped to ensure that a pet can be reunited with their owner, and to aid this we will pay for chipping where required.

We microchipped 82 animals in 2021, compared to 66 in 2020.

Microchipping continues to help solve one of our regular challenges; that of stray or lost animals. We advertised a number of lost and found pets through the year and the care of stray animals adds significantly to our work. Microchipped pets where contact details are kept up to date are easily reunited with their families, avoiding heartache for the owners and costs for the RSPCA.

B. Education

Education events

Educational activities were severely curtailed due to Covid restrictions all year. We have been unable to visit schools or engage face to face with groups. RSPCA Head Office have online educational facilities which we have promoted on our social media sites. Our welfare line operated throughout the year, without interruption and provided advice to the general public to help with pets, wildlife, and farm animals.

We hope to be able to start planning in educational activities again as soon as schools are comfortable for us to do so.

Social media

Our social media content can be found at www.facebook.com/rspcaguildfordepsom and www.rspcaguildfordepsom.org.uk. You can see more about the Branch trustees and our work, find out about our welfare services, and learn about forthcoming campaigns and events. You can also obtain useful help and advice and contact us via these links.

Other educational activities

We continued to heavily publicise and support World Spay Day and Early Neutering Awareness by running a social media campaign to offer low-cost cat spay/snip and free microchipping for both male and female cats in the Branch area.

We continue to support Rabbit Awareness Week (RAW) promotions. In 2021 we carried on the previous initiative focussed on getting rabbits vaccinated against the deadly RHD2 disease. The virus causes internal bleeding and is highly contagious. There is no specific treatment, which makes vaccination essential. Alongside the education campaign we offered subsidised vaccines in the branch area.

C. Fundraising

Fundraising events and activities

Our traditional fundraising events were again impacted by Covid and its aftermath, as demonstrated by the table below. The 2020 events were all held prior to the first National Lockdown.

Event type	2021	2020
Town centre collections	Nil	£599.44
Store collections	Nil	£63.22

As in the previous year, we continued to pursue other activities including selling dog beds and greetings cards online; the catnip mice knitted by one of our kind adopters were very popular! Several members of the committee had success selling second-hand items and plants through social media and at car boot sales.

Recognising that not all volunteers felt comfortable to attend public events when restrictions were lifted, we also sold donated items at some smaller fairs instead of the large fetes and carnivals we were used to.

Other digital fundraising included hosting a virtual pet show, much as we did in 2020. We are now part of the Guildford Community Lottery, so supporters can raise money for us, whilst being in with a chance to win a cash prize for themselves.

The money raised by these activities is disclosed in the accounts against the following categories – Sales of New and Donated Goods, Branch Fundraising Events and Other Donations.

We are always mindful of the need to fundraise responsibly and ensure that we remain compliant with law and best practice, especially in line with Covid restrictions. Further details of how we use our income to help local animals can be found in section 5A.

Collection boxes

As expected, Covid impacted on our collection boxes which are usually placed in coffee and pet shops, as those places were either closed or saw large drops in customers. We therefore only had 1 box actively in use (compared with 23 for the previous year). The 2020 results included a very generous collection at Maggie's Pets in Ewell.

2021 takings	2020 takings
£49.10	£216.45

D. Public benefit

Our objectives and activities are outlined in section 4 of this report. Performance against those objectives is detailed above. Our current short term and long-term aims can be found in section 7 of this report.

The trustees have reviewed the outcomes and achievements of our objectives and activities for the year to ensure they remain focussed on our charitable aims and continue to deliver benefits to the public. We have complied with the duty under the Charities Act 2006 to have due regard to public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission.

6. Financial Review

Overview

The Covid pandemic continued to have a significant impact on activities during 2021, with many traditional activities undertaken by the Branch remaining subdued compared to pre-pandemic levels.

Overall expenditure in 2021 was down £1,806 to £84,514 compared to £86,320 in 2020.

The percentage of total expenditure spent in the branch area on animal welfare has increased from 55% in 2020 to 71% in 2021. This largely reflects higher levels of animal welfare activity within the branch area during the current year, together with lower donations made outside of the area in 2021 compared to the prior year. Donations in the year included £20,000 to RSPCA Canterbury and District Branch for increased cat pen capacity across the region.

Income was £64,666 in 2021, broadly flat compared to the £64,323 in the prior year. The branch share of direct debit donations raised by the RSPCA HQ door to door fundraising campaign, which amounted to £48,268 in 2021 makes up 75% of the income in the current year (2020: £50,346 and 78%). Branch income reduced during 2021 as the Community Action Event (CAE) cat neutering programme support from Cats Protection ended. The Branch received a refund of £5,561 in 2021 from the Branch Emergency Fund (2020: donation expense of £25,000) and legacy income of £2,300 (2020: nil), offsetting the reduction from CAE ending and a fall in other income.

Overall, there was a net deficit for the year of £19,848 compared to a deficit of £21,997 in 2020. The Branch continues to hold significant reserves but aims to reduce these in line with the policy as described below.

The full accounts are provided later within the Annual Report.

Brief statement of the charity's policy on reserves

Reserves are those funds which are freely available for general purposes and have not been designated for specific projects or activities.

During 2020 the Branch received permission from the Charity Commission to remove restrictions in respect of former Epsom branch funds, which became effective on 29 September 2020. Since this time the Branch has only held unrestricted reserves.

The Trustees have recently reviewed the reserves policy. Having considered the experience of the Covid pandemic and the current inflationary pressures facing the branch (e.g., the increasing costs of veterinary treatments), the Trustees have decided to target general reserves to a level that, should all income cease, there would be sufficient funds in hand to run the Branch for approximately 24 months (previously 12 months). Based on this measure the Branch currently has excess reserves. The Trustees aim to reduce reserves over time by targeting increased levels of annual expenditure on activities or donations that further the animal welfare aims of the Branch.

The Branch invests surplus funds in capital-safe bank and deposit-based savings accounts where the deposits are covered by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS).

7. Plans for the future

<p>Aims and objectives for the future</p>	<p>Our overriding aim is to continue to provide and promote animal welfare for the local area by providing financial assistance for those on low incomes, continuing with our fostering and rehoming work to ensure a healthy and happy lifestyle for adopted animals, and to support the national Society.</p> <p>In January 2021 the new committee agreed our short and medium-term priorities and we aligned out goals with the new RSPCA strategy.</p> <p>Our main area of focus is to increase animal welfare across the Region by continuing and extending collaboration with other branches and organisations and supporting more people with animals in need. This is dependent upon and supported by 4 additional pillars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Revenue Generation• Strong Governance• Public Engagement• People <p>The 2019 merger presents significant challenges to deliver this welfare work across the wider geographical area. Consequently, volunteer recruitment will be featuring as a future key objective. Meanwhile we have plans to incrementally expand and consolidate existing activities across the wider area.</p> <p>Financial sustainability is primarily about revenue generation and spending control to fund the welfare work that we do. Our goal is to ensure the Branch remains in existence for (many) years to come. We review the best sources of income in order to best target our limited volunteer resource.</p> <p>The Plan will be reviewed regularly and adapted to reflect changing circumstances and priorities.</p>
<p>Activities planned to achieve the objectives</p> <p>1. Revenue Generation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set up a fundraising working group to provide a dedicated focus on revenue generation ideas• Develop a compelling fundraising plan (including an emphasis on digital) to rely less on door-to-door income• Empower and engage members and volunteers to spread our messages and support fundraising efforts• Diversify income generation by exploring alternative revenue streams

2. Strong Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver a more robust approach to managing and refreshing policies, procedures, and processes • Foster stronger connectivity, sharing, and leverage of best practices across the Branch Network
3. Public Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build & enhance positive relationships with the public & our communities, including amplifying National RSPCA advocacy areas • Build our existing and/or adopt new digital channels to communicate branch activities and successes • Analyse 'Audience Profile' for each message/campaign/activity to ensure we're targeting the right demographic
4. People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand and effectively manage, utilise, and retain our volunteer network and membership • Define clear roles and responsibility for trustee and volunteer roles with a focus on succession planning

SPOTLIGHT ON OUR WORK - here we showcase **our work with wildlife**

We recently donated some incubators to Hannah's Bird and Hedgehog Rehabilitation, which has helped to provide additional essential care for hedgehogs and hoglets. Heat is very important to sick hogs and these lifesaving pieces of kit can really make the difference between life and death. The incubators are used all the time, making it possible to provide more poorly hedgehogs with this care and ensures that they are more settled during their stay. A poorly patient (a very skinny hog) recently arrived from a vet very dehydrated and covered in ticks (over 100!). After spending some time in his incubator and receiving lots of love and care, he has made a good recovery and is almost at the weight needed for him to be released back into the wild.



Declaration

**The trustees declare that they have approved the trustee's report above.
Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees**

Lucy Pollard

Lucy Pollard. Hon. Chair

Date 9 June 2022

Inspectorate report

RSPCA Surrey Inspectorate Team - Annual Report 2021

Group Statistics

In Surrey during 2021, my officers dealt with:

- over 1,600 rescues and collections
- nearly 1,500 complaints and enquiries

In addition, Surrey officers have frequently undertaken collections, rescues, complaints and enquiries in all of the surrounding areas.

Report

2021 saw the continuation of Coronavirus and of the ongoing restrictions, including the furloughing of some staff. However, the team continued to work with dedication throughout the year, and in a way which protected both themselves and members of the public.

We were delighted to welcome back Inspector Leanna Hone from her maternity leave in June and she has certainly 'hit the ground running' since her return.

Two of our team, Inspector Lauren Evans and Inspector Nat Kitchin, were both finally able to celebrate their much-delayed weddings towards the end of 2021. Several of the team attended these wonderful occasions, and we all wish them the very best for the future.

Our two Animal Rescue Officers, Louis and Chloe, continued to make excellent progress throughout 2021 having completed their training in December 2020. Whilst their Field Training was inevitably disrupted by the pandemic, they have thrown themselves into their new roles and have both proven to be highly capable officers and an asset to the team.

We were also delighted to welcome two brand new trainee Animal Rescue Officers, Sam Matthews and Ben Fitzcosta. They both started their training in November 2021 and will be ready to join the team in March 2022 - good luck to them both in their new careers.

In August, we were also joined by Surrey's first ever Wildlife Casualty volunteer, Tess Macpherson-Woods. Tess already works for the RSPCA full time as our Social Media Manager. As a WCV, Tess is able to collect small birds and hedgehogs before transporting them to vets or wildlife centres in the area. We are delighted to have her as part of the team.

Partnership working is a large part of the new RSPCA Strategy, and Deputy Chief Inspector Sandy Barlow managed to secure another wildlife facility we could use in the area. "Hannah's bird and hedgehog rehabilitation" is in Farnborough, Hants and Hannah works at a local veterinary surgery so we can guarantee that every animal is fully assessed and has a safe place to stay whilst receiving treatment. Our grateful thanks to the Guildford and Epsom Branch and the Surrey and North Hants Branch who got together to kindly fund a couple of incubators for Hannah to use.

Proving that Inspectorate officers don't just deal with animals, Inspector Jo Bowling gave a talk to a primary school in Tadworth recently. Jo discussed what pet animals needed to keep them happy and healthy. Inspector Nat Kitchin also gave a talk at Merrist Wood Agricultural College near Guildford and faced some interesting and challenging questions from some of the students there.



Finally, both Inspector Jo Bowling and I received our long service awards towards the beginning of 2021. The award is given to staff who have served 20 years with the RSPCA and Jo and I were very proud to receive this recognition.

Cases 2021

Surrey officers instigated 14 prosecution cases files, of which 10 were submitted to our Prosecutions department for consideration of further action. The remaining 4 are still in the investigation stage (with 2 waiting for the first court hearing). Here are some of the completed cases and investigations we have dealt with:



Inspector Natalie Kitchen conducted a lengthy investigation into a complaint regarding a sweet chihuahua called 'Kiki' in the Windsor area. The owner was suffering from mental health issues and had thrown Kiki against a wall, breaking her leg. After discussions with the Prosecution department, a Section 20 application was made under the Animal Welfare Act and the court authorised removal of the dog from the owner's care. Poor Kiki had to have her leg amputated but has since been successfully rehomed with a loving family.

Inspector Pete Yarde was called to 2 thin horses in Leatherhead in March and, after calling out a vet, confirmed that both emaciated horses needed to be seized and removed from the location. Pete tracked down the owner who agreed to sign over one of the horses (Bella). The owner accepted an adult written caution, and the other horse was returned to the owner with appropriate advice for ongoing care.



Inspector Natalie Kitchen was called to a poor pony in Woking who had a very nasty injury to the top of his head, caused by a head collar. Having called out a vet to examine the pony, Nat asked Surrey Police to seize the pony.

The investigation was concluded with a Caution, and the pony was returned to the owner with appropriate advice.

Inspector Nat Kitchin also dealt with a chicken in Egham which sadly had untreated wounds around the rear end and ongoing diarrhoea. The poor chicken was also being fed a wholly inappropriate diet. The owner had failed to provide the necessary veterinary attention and accepted a Caution for this offence.

Very sadly, the poorly chicken had to be euthanised.



In January 2021, Inspector Becky Timberlake secured a successful conviction against the owner of "Scrappy and Chance", 2 lovely dogs from Aldershot. Both were emaciated when first discovered and they were seized and taken to a vet who confirmed that both were sadly suffering under section 4 of the Animal Welfare Act. Both dogs were found loving new homes via Millbrook Animal Centre. The owner received a 12 month community order, with 160 hours unpaid work, £200 of costs, £90 victim surcharge and a 5 year disqualification under section 34 of the Animal Welfare Act, in respect of all animals.

Inspector Andrew Kirby dealt with an individual in Merstham who had 2 cats suffering with severe flea allergies and significant hair loss. One of the poorly cats sadly died, but the other was signed over and put up for rehoming. Due to several factors, the decision was made not to take the owner through the courts, but a caution was issued and accepted.



Inspector Andrew Kirby finally saw a conclusion to a prosecution case that he picked up on Christmas Eve 2019 near Chichester. Two ponies were emaciated with terrible diarrhoea. Sadly, one of the ponies died on Christmas day, but the other pony luckily survived and has been rehomed. The owner was found guilty in his absence. He was sent to prison but, on appeal, this was suspended. He was also banned from keeping horses and fined.

Deputy Chief Inspector Sandy Barlow also had a long wait to get her prosecution case through court, mainly due to Covid. In January 2021 Sandy attended an address in Basingstoke concerning Max, an emaciated Staffordshire bull terrier. Max was seized by police and taken to a vet. Sadly, Max was not strong enough to pull through and he had to be put to sleep. His owner was found guilty in court and received a community service order for 12 months, as well as a ban on keeping dogs for 5 years and ordered to pay costs.

Collections & Rescues 2021

Here is a wide range of some of the collections and rescues undertaken by Surrey officers during 2021:

Inspector Liz Wheeler was called to Dorking, when a member of the public walking his dog came across this very unfortunate deer tangled in some fencing.

Liz managed to free the deer and, after a few minutes to recover, it bounded away across the field!



Animal Rescue Officers Chloe Wilson and Louis Horton were called to Guildford when a landlord surprisingly discovered that 5 snakes had been abandoned by the previous tenants who had moved out a few weeks earlier.



Louis and Chloe collected one cornsnake, two Boa constrictors, one royal python and a hog nose. All the snakes were taken to a specialist private boarding establishment in Leighton Buzzard from where they will be rehomed. Sadly, the owner was never traced.

Animal Rescue Officer Louis Horton also dealt with a job that involved a great deal of multi-agency teamwork. Three badgers (an adult and 2 sweet babies) had very unfortunately managed to fall into a slurry tank at a sewage plant in Horley and were unable to get out. With the help of Fire and Rescue and Wildlife Aid, all three were caught and taken to Wildlife Aid for a check over. Fortunately, all were fine and were later released back to their familiar surroundings.



Inspector Nat Kitchen and Insp Lauren Evans dealt with a particularly difficult job in Windsor in October, where a gentleman had very sadly been found deceased in his house and had no next of kin to deal with his 10 cats. None of the cats had been socialised so it was a massive effort on Lauren and Nat's part to locate and catch them in the very run-down property. The environment was particularly bad with years of cat faeces and rubbish having built up. After numerous days of catching and trapping they could finally declare the house cat free.



The cats were split between Millbrook Animal Centre and the Hillingdon Branch, where they were assessed and put up for rehoming.

Inspector Jo Bowling was called to a florist in Cranleigh who had discovered a small frog nesting in one of the flower 'cups' imported from overseas! Jo took the frog to the RSPCA Exotic Centre in Patcham, where it was identified as a 'Striped Spiny Reed' frog, all the way from bushland in West Africa, so it had certainly travelled a fair distance!



DCI Sandy Barlow attended an emergency in Bracknell regarding 2 abandoned ducks in some disused garages. One was walking but the other had her feet taped together and was unable to move. Upon searching the area, Sandy also discovered a bag containing another 2 ducks, both of which had their legs and beaks taped up. Both of these ducks had sadly died. Despite press releases and an exhaustive investigation, Sandy was unable to track down the person responsible. The surviving ducks were taken to Swan Support in Denham and are doing really well.

This is one of those really upsetting and frustrating mysteries that we have been unable to solve.

Thank you's

I would like to thank all of our 'partner' organisations who have continued to assist us in working for animals. This includes local Police, Fire & Rescue, vets, local authorities and other animal charities. It is amazing and encouraging that so many different agencies work together for the same cause.

Finally, I would also like, on behalf of the whole Surrey team, to express my gratitude to all of our local Branches for their help and support during 2021. It really is a team effort and, whether it be assisting with veterinary invoices, arranging boarding or providing extra kit, we could not have done all of the things we did to alleviate animal suffering and improve welfare without the assistance of all of the Branches we work alongside.

Rob Jackson
Chief Inspector, Surrey

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF RSPCA GUILDFORD AND EPSOM BRANCH

I report on the accounts of the Charity (Registered Charity number 203608) for the year ended 31 December 2021, which are set out on the following pages.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act), and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's statement

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no material matters have come to my attention which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

JIM HALLIDAY, FCA
Chartered Accountant
74 Holly Hill, Southampton, SO16 7EY

9 June 2022

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

RSPCA GUILDFORD AND EPSOM BRANCH STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

	NOTE	Total funds* 2021	Total funds* 2020 £
INCOMING RESOURCES			
Collecting Boxes		49	216
Sales of New and Donated Goods		25	282
Branch Fundraising Events		604	720
Branch Adoption Fees		1,435	790
Donations via HQ Door to Door Fundraising		48,268	50,346
Donations refunded from Branch Emergency Fund		5,561	-
Other Donations		2,847	3,920
Legacies		2,300	-
Contributions received for Community Action Events		-	3,524
Membership Subscriptions		362	418
Investment Income	3	3,215	4,107
		<u>64,666</u>	<u>64,323</u>
RESOURCES EXPENDED			
Charitable Activities			
Veterinary Treatment on Branch Voucher Scheme		29,602	23,129
Neutering on Branch Voucher Scheme		10,806	3,517
Voucher Scheme and Charitable Expenses		594	540
Veterinary Treatment and Neutering of Unowned Animals		9,935	5,736
Boarding and Food		3,759	3,207
Wildlife		4,934	7,622
Community Action Events		-	3,730
Donations		22,869	35,757
Branch Contribution to RSPCA Headquarters and Region		551	1,378
		<u>83,050</u>	<u>84,616</u>
Cost of Generating Funds	4	<u>17</u>	<u>234</u>
Governance Costs and Depreciation			
AGM/Annual Reports		297	173
Administrative Expenses		508	611
Depreciation		117	161
Insurance		525	525
		<u>1,447</u>	<u>1,470</u>
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		<u>84,514</u>	<u>86,320</u>
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS FOR THE YEAR		<u>(19,848)</u>	<u>(21,997)</u>
TOTAL FUNDS Balance Brought Forward		297,242	319,239
TOTAL FUNDS Balance Carried Forward		<u>277,394</u>	<u>297,242</u>

*All funds are unrestricted in 2021; note 8 provides an analysis of comparatives for 2020 between restricted and unrestricted funds.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

RSPCA GUILDFORD AND EPSOM BRANCH BALANCE SHEET AT 31 DECEMBER 2021

	NOTE	2021 £	2020 £
FIXED ASSETS			
Tangible fixed assets	6	177	294
CURRENT ASSETS			
Debtors	7	2,262	6,682
Investment Bank Accounts		286,047	295,962
Cash at bank - Current Account		20,364	10,103
		<u>308,673</u>	<u>312,747</u>
CREDITORS (falling due within 1 year)			
Creditors		(31,456)	(15,799)
NET CURRENT ASSETS		<u>277,217</u>	<u>296,948</u>
NET ASSETS		<u>277,394</u>	<u>297,242</u>
FUNDS			
UNRESTRICTED FUNDS		<u>277,394</u>	<u>297,242</u>

Approved by the Trustees on 09 June 2022 and signed on their behalf by:

____L Pollard_____ Hon. Chairman

____S Hooke_____ Hon. Treasurer

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

RSPCA GUILDFORD AND EPSOM BRANCH NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

A General

The accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention and in accordance with applicable accounting standards and the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting by Charities.

The accounts have been prepared on an accruals basis.

B Income

All income is recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities once the charity has entitlement to the funds, it is probable that the income will be received, and the amount can be measured reliably.

Donations are recognised when the Charity has been notified in writing of both the amount and settlement date. In the event that a donation is subject to conditions that require a level of performance before the charity is entitled to the funds, the income is deferred and not recognised until either those conditions are fully met, or the fulfilment of those conditions is wholly within the control of the charity and it is probable that those conditions will be fulfilled in the reporting period.

Legacies are recognised on the earlier of either (a) the date that probate is granted, the estate has been finalised and notification has been made by the executor(s) to the Charity that a distribution will be made, or (b) when a distribution is received from the estate. Where legacies have been notified to the charity, or the charity is aware of the granting of probate, and the criteria for income recognition has not been met, then the legacy is disclosed in the notes to the accounts. Legacies received via the Branch legacy scheme are grossed up for the administration charges deducted, with the associated charges shown as expenditure in the year the legacy is credited.

Investment income is recognised on an accruals basis.

C Expenditure

Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to that expenditure, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in settlement and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably.

Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all cost related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings, they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources.

D Tangible fixed assets

Depreciation is provided on equipment at a rate of 25% per annum to write off the assets over an estimated useful life of 4 years.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

RSPCA GUILDFORD AND EPSOM BRANCH NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

E Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the trustees.

Designated funds represent those unrestricted funds which have been ring fenced by the trustees for a specific purpose.

Restricted funds can only be used for particular restricted purposes, within the objects of the charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes.

2. STATEMENT OF BRANCH COMMITTEE'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Charity law requires the branch committee, as trustees, to prepare financial statements for each year which give a true and fair view of the charity's financial activities during the year, and the financial position at the end of the year. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable Accounting Policies and apply them consistently
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- prepare financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business

3. INVESTMENT INCOME

	2021	2020
	£	£
Interest on Investment Bank Accounts	3,215	4,107

4. COST OF GENERATING FUNDS

	2021	2020
	£	£
Pitch fees and licences	17	234

5. COMMITTEE MEMBERS' EXPENSES AND REMUNERATION

No committee member received any remuneration, and the branch has no paid staff. Four committee members were reimbursed a total of £1,461.09 for costs incurred.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

RSPCA GUILDFORD AND EPSOM BRANCH NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

6. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

EQUIPMENT	2021	2020
	£	£
COST		
At 1 January	469	1,264
Disposals	-	(795)
At 31 December	<u>469</u>	<u>469</u>
DEPRECIATION		
At 1 January	175	235
Charge for year	117	161
Disposals	-	(221)
At 31 December	<u>292</u>	<u>175</u>
NET BOOK VALUE		
At 31 December	<u>177</u>	<u>294</u>

7. DEBTORS

	2021	2020
	£	£
Prepayments and accrued income	1,263	1,959
Other debtors	999	4,723
	<u>2,262</u>	<u>6,682</u>

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

RSPCA GUILDFORD AND EPSOM BRANCH NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

8. COMPARATIVES FOR STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

	Unrestricted funds 2020 £	Restricted funds 2020 £	Total funds 2020 £
INCOMING RESOURCES			
Collecting Boxes	216	-	216
Sales of New and Donated Goods	282	-	282
Branch Fundraising Events	720	-	720
Branch Adoption Fees	790	-	790
Donations via HQ Door to Door Fundraising	50,346	-	50,346
Donations refunded from Branch Emergency Fund	-	-	-
Other Donations	3,920	-	3,920
Legacies	-	-	-
Contributions received for Community Action Events	3,524	-	3,524
Membership Subscriptions	418	-	418
Investment Income	1,951	2,156	4,107
	<u>62,167</u>	<u>2,156</u>	<u>64,323</u>
RESOURCES EXPENDED			
Charitable Activities			
Veterinary Treatment on Branch Voucher Scheme	16,831	6,298	23,129
Neutering on Branch Voucher Scheme	2,379	1,138	3,517
Voucher Scheme and Charitable Expenses	376	164	540
Veterinary Treatment and Neutering of Unowned Animals	5,532	204	5,736
Boarding and Food	3,141	66	3,207
Wildlife	4,764	2,858	7,622
Community Action Events	3,730	-	3,730
Donations	35,757	-	35,757
Branch Contribution to RSPCA Headquarters and Region	1,378	-	1,378
	<u>73,888</u>	<u>10,728</u>	<u>84,616</u>
Cost of Generating Funds	<u>234</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>234</u>
Governance Costs and Depreciation			
AGM/Annual Reports	108	65	173
Administrative Expenses	382	229	611
Depreciation	161	-	161
Insurance	328	197	525
	<u>979</u>	<u>491</u>	<u>1,470</u>
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	<u>75,101</u>	<u>11,219</u>	<u>86,320</u>
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS FOR THE YEAR	<u>(12,934)</u>	<u>(9,063)</u>	<u>(21,997)</u>
TOTAL FUNDS Balance Brought Forward	114,320	204,919	319,239
Transfer of funds	195,856	(195,856)	-
TOTAL FUNDS Balance Carried Forward	<u>297,242</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>297,242</u>

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Spotlight on our work – here we showcase the work of our volunteers

We are incredibly lucky to have had Ann volunteering with us since 2011 as a branch welfare coordinator, which is a huge time commitment and can at times, be very upsetting. We asked Ann to write about her experience and put together some examples of situations where the branch has assisted local animals both wild and domestic. You can read Ann's story below:

I soon realised this was extremely challenging as every day our branch offers help and advice across such a wide range of scenarios either via phone calls or emails. No two days are the same and there are still the occasional surprises such as a wallaby recently being spotted!



My day may start with a potential emergency, and whilst not the kind of activity requiring inspectorate intervention, it may still involve numerous calls back and forth between the owner and vet possibly involving a lot of negotiations to achieve a good result for the animal. These emergencies have included road traffic accidents, pyometra (a life-threatening condition so easily avoided if the dog had been spayed and from which cats can also suffer), pregnancy complications (sometimes due to immature animals becoming pregnant) or sick puppies (many are still being purchased online and/or unknowingly from puppy farms etc and parvo virus is often fatal). Sadly, many people still fail to recognise how expensive it can be 'meeting an animal's needs', accidental injuries can occur at any time, many pets will require dental procedures during their lifetime and the occurrence of cancer is sadly increasing. The enhanced demand for pets has only fuelled indiscriminate breeding which brings more health problems, and in situations where there are multiple animals the issue is exacerbated.

There may be calls about wildlife, especially birds which often the member of the public can help to resolve by taking the bird to a local wildlife centre, for other wild animals in distress then an officer will usually be required to assist, and I will direct the member of the public to our National Control Centre number 03001234999. For example, a duck may have laid her eggs in a quiet spot in someone's garden and there are now 10 ducklings on the loose, or there could be a disorientated swan, perhaps an injured fox caught in a football net or a hedgehog wandering around in daylight. These will all require intervention by our Inspectorate. There might even be an anti-social stray Tom cat terrorising the local neighbourhood that needs trapping, or someone's cat has gone missing, and they need help trying to find it. In fact, there was one occasion when I received both a call about a missing cat and another about a cat stuck up a tree -after comparing the postcodes it seemed there was a possibility that they were one and the same and they were luckily reunited.

I regularly receive enquiries from people seeking pets but also sadly from those needing to rehome them. Rabbits are a massive problem as they are cheap to buy but complicated to keep, frequently bought without adequate research and often for children whose interest soon wanes. Our branch has a small number of dedicated Fosterers (for cats and rabbits), however, if no spaces are available then I will network with surrounding branches and centres to try to locate a space. For the animals that come into our care they receive any necessary veterinary treatment and rehabilitation in readiness for their 'fur ever' homes. I often receive calls from Social Services, sometimes when an owner has been taken into hospital or sadly where a family is not coping and there are pets involved. Such circumstances require a delicate touch. At this time more than ever with the repercussions from Covid, many more people are encountering difficulties, both mentally and financially. Other sensitive conversations are with owners whose pets are in an end of life situation. Despite the wonders of modern medicine our beloved pets' lifespans are significantly less than ours and I try to help owners when they need to make these heart-breaking decisions (a day too early is better than a day too late).

I may also receive calls from our local Inspectorate whom we are delighted to support. If our branch can help them provide some financial assistance where an owner is struggling, coupled with their advice and support, a welfare situation can often be avoided e.g. a flea infestation causing a nasty skin condition. On many occasions we are also supported by local vets with whom we also work and who too are also struggling during these challenging times due to being short of staff but with a huge and growing demand for appointments.

Well, I hope you have enjoyed reading this snapshot into my volunteer role. It can certainly be 'full on', and as a Trustee it is also accompanied by a variety of other tasks, but for every animal I can assist, I know I am helping to prevent suffering, alleviate pain and offering support and kindness to the owner at the end of the tail. *Must go... phone is ringing!*