

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Planning, Transport and Environment Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel
MEETING DATE:	16 July 2013
TITLE:	Urban Gulls
WARD:	ALL
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM	
List of attachments to this report: None	

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 The Panel has requested an update following on from a previous report in January 2013 regarding actions being taken to mitigate the impacts of urban gulls in Bath and North East Somerset.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Panel are asked to:

2.1 Note the report and the proactive work which has been undertaken to date.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The MTRSP contained 2 proposals relating to the Pest Control Service; firstly to delete the service and secondly to reduce the resourcing of the service by 2 FTE's. These proposals have been considered and a decision has been taken (in principle) to retain the service with reduced resourcing, the aim being that it will be self-financing in the future. In light of this decision there are costs which will be difficult to sustain. These are:

Provision of match funding to resident's associations: Under the previous administration match funding was provided to resident's associations to assist in gull work they may choose to commission for their areas e.g. egg replacement treatments. We are unable to maintain this commitment in the future.

Flying of a bird of prey: A bird of prey has been flown in various locations around the city centre for the last 4 years, the aim being to deter gulls from nesting. It is proposed to cease this method as it is not clear how effective it is as a deterrent.

Gull surveys: The Council has commissioned a survey of the gull population every year for approximately the last 10 years. This provides information on the spread and growth of the gull population across Bath and North East Somerset. The cost of this survey is approximately £2k and the recommendation is that this is done on a less frequent basis in the future, so that monitoring is maintained but the cost pressure is minimised.

4 THE REPORT

- 4.1 The Panel will be provided with a presentation which will give an update on the proactive work which has been undertaken by the Environmental Protection team over the last 6 months. This will include information on the following:

- **Communications-** a number of actions have been taken to better inform the public about what the Council can and can't do with respect to mitigating the impacts of gulls. These include:
 - a) Publicity in the local media about what the Council is doing to tackle the problem. This was successful in bringing about interviews on Radio Bristol and articles in the local print media
 - b) The Council's webpage has been updated with revised FAQ's.
 - c) A new leaflet has been produced to provide advice to the public about proofing buildings against gulls which can be downloaded from the Council's website
- **Egg replacement service-** this is a service provided by the Council's Pest Control Service where real eggs are replaced with plastic eggs. This dupes the gull into believing that the eggs are going to hatch and when it becomes apparent that this is not going to happen, it is too late for a second breeding attempt
- **Trial of 'fire gel' product on the parapets of the Roman Baths Kitchen-** this is a new product being trailed by a number of local authorities at the moment. Due to ultra-violet lights effects the gulls believe that gel makes

the building look like it is on fire and so they are deterred from landing on it. It is currently being trialled successfully on the roof of the Roman Baths kitchen and further trials are planned for next year

- **Commercial Waste Enforcement-** 'Operation Sunrise' is an initiative where officers have been helping to raise awareness within the commercial business community of what happens to their waste if it is incorrectly left out overnight. Officers have been making early morning patrols to assess compliance and this has resulted in some encouraging improvements.
- **Domestic waste enforcement.** Enforcement Officers are working proactively with the Waste Campaigns team to identify areas where waste is put out too far in advance of collection. Enforcement notices have been served on approximately 60 properties to date, and results have been very encouraging with the vast majority of residents changing their behaviour as a result of these notices.
- **Feeding gulls-** The Council is challenging members of the public who are known to be feeding gulls and requesting that they resist from this practice.
- **Extension of gull-proof re-usable rubbish sacks-** this trial provides householders with a robust sack which prevents scavenging of waste by gulls and other wildlife. The sacks were originally trialled on 1,000 homes in September 2012 and proved popular, with 86% of residents wanting to continue to use them at the end of the trial. The scheme has since been extended to cover almost 2000 homes in the city and there is a proposal to include a further 20 more streets in the trial by September 2013. Proposals are being scoped to trial making the use of these bags compulsory in streets where they have been provided.
- **Solar Compacting Bins in Bath city centre-** there are now 55 of these bins in the city centre which are effective in containing waste so that the gulls are prevented from accessing food waste. This helps to prevent scavenging and creating litter. The bins also have the potential to carry promotional messages about not feeding birds and this is being considered for the future.

5 RISK MANAGEMENT

5.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

6 EQUALITIES

6.1 An EqIA has been completed. No adverse or other significant issues were found.

7 CONSULTATION

7.1 Consultation will be carried out by way of this report.

8 ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION

8.1 Customer Focus; Other Legal Considerations

9 ADVICE SOUGHT

9.1 The Council's Monitoring Officer (Divisional Director – Legal and Democratic Services) and Section 151 Officer (Divisional Director - Finance) have had the opportunity to input to this report and have cleared it for publication.

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Background papers	None
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