

**NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S REPORT TO THE  
PUBLIC PROTECTION COMMITTEE**

**Date 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2014**

1. **HEADING** PIGEON CONTROL: NEWCASTLE TOWN CENTRE  
**Submitted by:** David Beardmore, Environmental Health Team Manager  
Dog & Pest Control
- Portfolio:** Environment & Recycling
- Ward(s) affected:** Town Centre

**Purpose of the Report**

To update Public Protection on action to reduce feral pigeon numbers in the town centre

**Recommendations**

That the report be received.

**Reasons**

Current controls are managing numbers at an acceptable level.

1. **Background**

- 1.1 The Committee has previously considered the action which the authority should take to manage the number of feral birds within the town centre and specifically around Castle Walk.
- 1.2 Members have previously agreed on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2012 :
- (a) That the authority continues its current action to remove litter and discourage littering.
  - (b) That we aim to educate residents of the problems caused by encouraging pigeons, and to confirm that it may be necessary to issue fixed penalty notices for bird feeding in the future where there is a persistent offender.
  - (c) That designated feeding areas were not desirable.
  - (d) That through traders groups the Council will continue to encourage correct maintenance of buildings, and proofing works where appropriate.
  - (e) That the Council will attempt to identify trader support for lethal controls, establish those willing to provide treatment sites, and the likelihood that they will either commission works independently of the Council, or be willing to contribute to the Council's costs if it coordinated lethal controls
  - (f) That officers investigate signage to discourage people from feeding the pigeons.

(g) That the situation be monitored and a review report be brought back to the Committee in 6 months time.

1.3 Reviewing progress on 8<sup>th</sup> August 2013 Members resolved:

a) That Officers look into additional signage encouraging people not to feed the pigeons.

b) That if possible there be more rigorous enforcement of the pigeon problem.

c) That an update be brought back to the Committee in 6 months (Feb 2014)

## 2. **Issues**

2.1 There remains both support and opposition to pigeon control.

2.2 A reduction in the number of birds has been achieved, but there is little realistic prospect that numbers will now fall further without lethal controls.

2.3 The Pest Control team have only received 8 complaints about pigeons in the town centre between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2013 and 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013. This is lower than previously recorded.

2.4 Streetscene have continued to target Castle Walk and portions of High Street, regularly emptying litter bins, and ensure that litter does not accumulate. This has helped to reduce 'food on the go' waste which would otherwise encourage pigeons and potentially rats.

2.5 Signage is in place within Castle Walk (on litterbins) requesting residents' cooperation. Signage has not been placed elsewhere within the town due to lack of suitable locations, cost and maintenance issues.

2.6 The authority has attempted discourage residents from feeding birds in our shopping areas. Actions have included littering enforcement patrols, focussed on the Castle Walk and Guild Hall areas. As the control of pigeons can be such a sensitive matter, members of the public have been given advice in the first instance. A total of six warnings have been issued during November and December , however prior to these patrols at least three fixed penalties have been issued for feeding in the town centre.

2.7 A number of traders have now fitted proofing measures to projecting signs and shop fascias to discourage birds from perching. It may not be viable to net roofs.

## 3. **Options Considered** (if any)

3.1 Two options are now available: a) continue with current programme of advice to residents to discourage feeding, guidance to building owners to prevent perching / roosting and taking enforcement action against persistent pigeon feeders; and b) Approve lethal controls, subject to approval and funding.

## 4. **Proposal**

4.1 The authority proposes to continue its current action to remove litter and discourage littering. A further report will be presented to Public Protection if complaints significantly rise, or if traders wish to support lethal controls

4.2 Members are requested to receive the report

5. **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

- 5.1 Current complaint levels suggest that present pigeon numbers are acceptable to both traders and residents.
- 5.2 The lethal control of pigeons is not a cost effective, long term or sustainable solution for the control of pigeons within the town centre. The authority does not currently have the capacity to deliver lethal controls in-house with out an adverse impact on other pest control services to residents and businesses.
- 5.3 Businesses can act collectively to commission lethal controls independently of the authority if they so wish.

6. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

- 6.1 Managing feral pigeon numbers aligns with the councils stated priority to maintain clean and safe public places.

7. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 7.1 A suitably qualified person can control pigeon numbers, provided criteria set by DEFRA are met.

8. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 8.1 No issues have been identified

9. **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 9.1 There will continue to be an ongoing cost of street cleansing town centre areas, and to enforce litter controls.
- 9.2 The estimated cost of pigeon control work within the town centre, delivered by a specialist contractor, is £6,000 per annum. There is currently no budget for undertaking this work.

10. **Major Risks**

- 10.1 There is a reputation risk to the council both through action and inaction due to the emotive nature of this subject.
- 10.2 Any interventions delivered must represent value for money and be delivered professionally.
- 10.3 Controls have a number of associated safety risks, and person engaged delivering the controls may be injured (e.g. fall from height) or assaulted.

11. **Sustainability and Climate Change Implications**

- 11.1 Any controls delivered would have only a limited and local effect on pigeon populations.

11.2 There is no risk to non-target wildlife.

11.3 Whilst controls may require additional journeys to be made to the treatment site, the treatment itself is non-polluting.

12. **Key Decision Information**

12.1 Town centre pigeon control is not considered a key decision.

13. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

13.1 As detailed in the background above.

14. **Background Papers**

None