

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

21st JULY 2008

REPORT OF ENVIRONMENT SELECT TASK & FINISH GROUP-RATS & PIGEONS

CABINET DECISION

Environment-Lead Cabinet Member-Councillor Mrs Beaumont

Final Report of Environment Task & Finish Group-Rats & Pigeons

1. Summary

This report presents the findings and recommendations of the Task and Finish Group that has been examining the extent to which the Borough is affected by high numbers of both rats and pigeons, and what necessary measures can be carried out, in isolation or in partnership, by both the Council, the public, and the business/retail sector to help reduce the numbers of both.

In reviewing the evidence, members considered the need for greater public and commercial awareness of factors that influence the number of rats and pigeons. The Group have made recommendations in order to achieve a reduction in numbers of both; at the same time as increasing awareness of the Council's policy to control such problems and maintain the cleanliness of the Borough and to contribute to promotion of both the Borough and its Town Centres as enjoyable places to visit and shop.

2. Recommendations

1. That a public awareness campaign be conducted via Stockton News, the Council's website and other Council information outlets advising of the sensible action that should be taken (both do's and don'ts) so as to eliminate potential food sources likely to encourage rats.

The availability of the free service offered to all domestic properties, and the service offered to commercial properties, be similarly highlighted as part of the campaign.

2. That the Corporate Director of Resources be requested to look into current spend across the Council on pest control services and the opportunities to maximise efficiencies and 'invest to save' opportunities, particularly in relation to responsibilities for open public land.
3. That in order to minimise the potential for the urban landscape to attract both rats and litter, the Environmental Health Service should continue to be consulted on planning applications containing proposed shrub beds, and the service should also provide input into the design stage of major projects and the guidance contained within the Local Development Framework.
4. That the benefits of the connectivity of the two relevant IT systems be acknowledged and the Environmental Health Manager build into Service Improvement Planning the acquisition

of the appropriate software necessary to achieve greater connectivity between use of the Council's FLARE and GIS systems, so as to produce a higher level of management information that more accurately records specific trends regarding reported pest control problems.

5. That through consultation with the Environmental Health Manager, the Council's Waste Implementation Plan should reflect the need to ensure that the advice provided regarding, and proposed methods of, food waste disposal and home composting do not encourage and provide food sources to rodents; and that the supply of suitable compost unit bases be further investigated by a Sub Group established by the Urban Environment Task Group (UETG).
6. That an initial public and commercial awareness campaign be initiated via Stockton News, the Council's website, the various Retail Fora highlighting the Council's wish to tackle pigeon infestation in the Borough, targetted initially via a pilot exercise within Stockton Town Centre , through measures designed to:-
 - Reduce food availability;
 - Prevent pigeon roosting sites as far as possible;
 - Raise awareness via high profile publicity/education of the causes of pigeon infestation (i.e. available food sources and areas for harbourage) and the detrimental effects caused by feeding pigeons human food;
 - Enforce prohibition;and that successful measures are then extended to the remaining Borough Town Centres following the trial period.
7. That as part of the awareness raising campaign suggested in Recommendation 6, the views of both the public and the retail sector be sought through a consultation exercise to ascertain their support for any proposed action to be taken aimed at reducing the number of pigeons within Stockton Town Centre in the first instance.
8. That via the suggested Retail Fora (e.g Stockton Town Centre Retail Forum; Town Centre Managers Newsletter, Chamber of Commerce Business Forum) the retail sector be advised of the available support offered by the Council's Pest Control Service regards measures that can be implemented to prevent harbourage of pigeons on their properties, including proofing measures, securing of property against roosting etc, and they be encouraged to identify any retail properties requiring prevention works, including derelict properties providing harbourage.
9. That as an incentive to the retail sectors involvement in measures to reduce pigeon infestation, the Council's Environmental Health Manager give consideration to initial concessions being offered to retailers on the cost of implementing proofing measures on their buildings, and issue appropriate advice regarding necessary measures to be carried out.
10. That the Council's Land & Property Manager, in consultation with the Environmental Health Manager, be requested to consider appropriate action that could be taken to deter pigeon roosting on Council buildings; such as the suitability of proofing measures being added where appropriate.
11. That as part of the consideration of the detailed design stage of proposed retail developments dialogue be entered into between developers, Planning and Environmental Health so as to seek to remove the potential for design features to encourage pigeon harbourage.
12. That a Sub Group be established by the Urban Environment Task Group with responsibility to incorporate into its work programme consideration of the following measures and their

cost; and that they form part of an agreed Action Plan to be built into future Service Improvement Planning to assist this Task & Finish Group's aim in achieving a reduction in pigeon numbers in Stockton Town Centre as part of an initial pilot exercise:-

- Use of Prohibitive Signs advising the public not to feed the pigeons/warning of enforcement action;
- Media campaign utilising all available advertising outlets, bus shelters, billboards, retail premises, sandwich bags etc, promoting the theme of encouraging the public not to feed the pigeons;
- Advice/Enforcement action towards retail sector regards storage of commercial food waste;
- Target collection of litter bins in the Town Centre to reduce build up of food waste likely to attract pigeon/vermin, and consider number and sighting of bins to ensure that they are sited in appropriate locations (such as outside of fast food outlets) ;
- Involvement of Neighbourhood Enforcement Team in offering advice/enforcement to public regards dissuading them from feeding pigeons/dropping food waste;
- Engagement of the retail sector in all measures designed to improve the Town Centre environmental street scene;
- Enforcement action to be taken with regard to properties left derelict and prone to attract pigeon/vermin;
- Commissioning of a DVD, based on the example provided by Liverpool City Council, as a method of engagement to educate the public, schools, community groups etc regarding the aims of the Council's campaign to discourage the feeding of pigeons, and the DVD be promoted on the Castlegate Centre display screen; hosted as a download on the Council's website, and circulated to schools/community groups as appropriate;
- The proposed use of raptor methods, subject to the outcome of the proposed consultation, be approved and be funded from the campaign budget, as a measure towards pigeon control.

13. That a campaign to reduce pigeon numbers be built into future Pest Control Service Improvement Planning and if appropriate any funding implications be built into the Medium Term Financial Plan process.
14. That the Council's website content be reviewed to include the main themes of the campaign, offering appropriate advice and requesting on line comment from the public regarding areas affected by pigeon infestation.
15. That the Council commit to a campaign to achieve a sustainable 50% reduction in pigeon numbers in Stockton Town Centre within three years.
16. That the success of the campaign be monitored by the Sub Group established by the Urban Environment Task Group and results provided on an annual basis to the Environment Select Committee.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

The request to carry out such a review had first been suggested by members in 2006 at a time when there appeared to be a visible number of rats prevalent in areas of the Borough, including around the vicinity of the Municipal Buildings/Central Library. The presence of high numbers of pigeons around the main Town Centres had also been noted; encouraged by available food sources. As a result, the Executive Scrutiny Committee had included the topic on its Scrutiny Work Programme. Subsequently in January 2008, the Environment Select Committee was requested to establish a small Task & Finish Group to carry out an appropriate scrutiny review and three members of the Select Committee volunteered to undertake this work.

4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (**paragraph 8**) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (**paragraphs 10 and 11 of the code of conduct**).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting considering the business is being held -

- in a case where the Member is attending a meeting (including a meeting of a select committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under statutory right or otherwise, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence as the case may be;
- in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at the meeting;

and must not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (**paragraph 12 of the Code**).

Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc; whether or not they are a Member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting (unless the interest arises solely from the Member's membership of, or position of control or management on any other body to which the Member was appointed or nominated by the Council, or on any other body exercising functions of a public nature, when the interest only needs to be declared if and when the Member speaks on the matter), and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room, subject to and in accordance with the provisions referred to above.

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

21st JULY 2008

**REPORT OF ENVIRONMENT
SELECT TASK & FINISH GROUP-
RATS & PIGEONS**

CABINET DECISION

FINAL REPORT OF ENVIRONMENT TASK & FINISH GROUP-RATS & PIGEONS

SUMMARY

This report presents the findings and recommendations of the Task and Finish Group that has been examining the extent to which the Borough is affected by high numbers of both rats and pigeons, and what necessary measures can be carried out, in isolation or in partnership, by both the Council, the public, and the business/retail sector to help reduce the numbers of both.

In reviewing the evidence, members considered the need for greater public and commercial awareness of factors that influence the number of rats and pigeons. The Group have made recommendations in order to achieve a reduction in numbers of both; at the same time as increasing awareness of the Council's policy to control such problems and maintain the cleanliness of the Borough and to contribute to promotion of both the Borough and its Town Centres as enjoyable places to visit and shop.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Group recommend:

1. That a public awareness campaign be conducted via Stockton News, the Council's website and other Council information outlets advising of the sensible action that should be taken (both do's and don'ts) so as to eliminate potential food sources likely to encourage rats.

The availability of the free service offered to all domestic properties, and the service offered to commercial properties, be similarly highlighted as part of the campaign.

2. That the Corporate Director of Resources be requested to look into current spend across the Council on pest control services and the opportunities to maximise efficiencies and 'invest to save' opportunities, particularly in relation to responsibilities for open public land.
3. That in order to minimise the potential for the urban landscape to attract both rats and litter, the Environmental Health Service should continue to be consulted on planning applications containing proposed shrub beds, and the service should also provide input into the design stage of major projects and the guidance contained within the Local Development Framework.
4. That the benefits of the connectivity of the two relevant IT systems be acknowledged and the Environmental Health Manager build into Service Improvement Planning the acquisition of the appropriate software necessary to achieve greater connectivity between use of the Council's FLARE and GIS systems, so as to produce a higher level of management

information that more accurately records specific trends regarding reported pest control problems.

5. That through consultation with the Environmental Health Manager, the Council's Waste Implementation Plan should reflect the need to ensure that the advice provided regarding, and proposed methods of, food waste disposal and home composting do not encourage and provide food sources to rodents; and that the supply of suitable compost unit bases be further investigated by a Sub Group established by the Urban Environment Task Group (UETG).
6. That an initial public and commercial awareness campaign be initiated via Stockton News, the Council's website, the various Retail Fora highlighting the Council's wish to tackle pigeon infestation in the Borough, targetted initially via a pilot exercise within Stockton Town Centre , through measures designed to:-
 - Reduce food availability;
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 - Raise awareness via high profile publicity/education of the causes of pigeon infestation (i.e. available food sources and areas for harbourage) and the detrimental effects caused by feeding pigeons human food;
 - Enforce prohibition;and that successful measures are then extended to the remaining Borough Town Centres following the trial period.
7. That as part of the awareness raising campaign suggested in Recommendation 6, the views of both the public and the retail sector be sought through a consultation exercise to ascertain their support for any proposed action to be taken aimed at reducing the number of pigeons within Stockton Town Centre in the first instance.
8. That via the suggested Retail Fora (e.g Stockton Town Centre Retail Forum; Town Centre Managers Newsletter, Chamber of Commerce Business Forum) the retail sector be advised of the available support offered by the Council's Pest Control Service regards measures that can be implemented to prevent harbourage of pigeons on their properties, including proofing measures, securing of property against roosting etc, and they be encouraged to identify any retail properties requiring prevention works, including derelict properties providing harbourage.
9. That as an incentive to the retail sectors involvement in measures to reduce pigeon infestation, the Council's Environmental Health Manager give consideration to initial concessions being offered to retailers on the cost of implementing proofing measures on their buildings, and issue appropriate advice regarding necessary measures to be carried out.
10. That the Council's Land & Property Manager, in consultation with the Environmental Health Manager, be requested to consider appropriate action that could be taken to deter pigeon roosting on Council buildings; such as the suitability of proofing measures being added where appropriate.
11. That as part of the consideration of the detailed design stage of proposed retail developments dialogue be entered into between developers, Planning and Environmental Health so as to seek to remove the potential for design features to encourage pigeon harbourage.
12. That a Sub Group be established by the Urban Environment Task Group with responsibility to incorporate into its work programme consideration of the following measures and their cost; and that they form part of an agreed Action Plan to be built into future Service

Improvement Planning to assist this Task & Finish Group's aim in achieving a reduction in pigeon numbers in Stockton Town Centre as part of an initial pilot exercise:-

- Use of Prohibitive Signs advising the public not to feed the pigeons/warning of enforcement action;
- Media campaign utilising all available advertising outlets, bus shelters, billboards, retail premises, sandwich bags etc, promoting the theme of encouraging the public not to feed the pigeons;
- Advice/Enforcement action towards retail sector regards storage of commercial food waste;
- Target collection of litter bins in the Town Centre to reduce build up of food waste likely to attract pigeon/vermin, and consider number and sighting of bins to ensure that they are sited in appropriate locations (such as outside of fast food outlets) ;
- Involvement of Neighbourhood Enforcement Team in offering advice/enforcement to public regards dissuading them from feeding pigeons/dropping food waste;
- Engagement of the retail sector in all measures designed to improve the Town Centre environmental street scene;
- Enforcement action to be taken with regard to properties left derelict and prone to attract pigeon/vermin;
- Commissioning of a DVD, based on the example provided by Liverpool City Council, as a method of engagement to educate the public, schools, community groups etc regarding the aims of the Council's campaign to discourage the feeding of pigeons, and the DVD be promoted on the Castlegate Centre display screen; hosted as a download on the Council's website, and circulated to schools/community groups as appropriate;
- The proposed use of raptor methods, subject to the outcome of the proposed consultation, be approved and be funded from the campaign budget, as a measure towards pigeon control.

13. That a campaign to reduce pigeon numbers be built into future Pest Control Service Improvement Planning and if appropriate any funding implications be built into the Medium Term Financial Plan process.
14. That the Council's website content be reviewed to include the main themes of the campaign, offering appropriate advice and requesting on line comment from the public regarding areas affected by pigeon infestation.
15. That the Council commit to a campaign to achieve a sustainable 50% reduction in pigeon numbers in Stockton Town Centre within three years.
16. That the success of the campaign be monitored by the Sub Group established by the Urban Environment Task Group and results provided on an annual basis to the Environment Select Committee.

DETAIL

1. The attached report presents Cabinet with the findings and recommendations of the Task and Finish Group, established by the Environment Select Committee, to examine the extent to which the Borough is affected by high numbers of both rats and pigeons, and what necessary measures can be carried out, in isolation or in partnership, by both the Council, the public, and the business/retail sector to help reduce the numbers of both.
2. Following consideration by Cabinet, an action plan will be submitted to the Select Committee setting out how approved recommendations will be implemented detailing officers responsible for action and timescales.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3. Recommendation 4 would be met from existing resources within the Service Group. Recommendation 12 would be subject to the development of an appropriate and costed Action Plan which would then be built into future Service Improvement Planning; which would then identify whether there were any funding implications necessary to be built into the Medium Term Financial Planning process (Recommendation 13 also refers).

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4. There are no new legal implications arising from the report.

RISK ASSESSMENT

5. This Rats & Pigeons report is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

6. Liveability-Make Stockton a cleaner, greener place to live, work and visit;
Maintain the cleanliness of the Borough.

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7. An assessment would need to be made on the actions contained within the recommendations.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

8. The Group received evidence from internal and external stakeholders; including representatives from the retail sector and from Liverpool City Council who had had some success in reviewing similar issues within their own area.
9. Senior officers within DNS and the Cabinet Member responsible for Environment were consulted on the scope of the review and the findings and recommendations.

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Membership of the Task and Finish Group:
Councillor William Woodhead (Chair)
Councillor Richard Cainsl
Councillor Roy Rix

Background Papers None

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors: Not Ward specific

Property None specifically. Reference is made within the main report to discussion surrounding the transfer of assets.