

<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>30<sup>th</sup> October 2017</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Programme to Manage Seagull Breeding Population</b>		
<b>Report Of:</b>	<b>Cabinet Member for Environment</b>		
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		
<b>Key Decision:</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Budget/Policy Framework:</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Lloyd Griffiths, Head of Communities</b>		
<b>Appendices:</b>	<b>1. Map of Egg and Nest Removal Sites</b>		
	<b>2. Breakdown of Results (2015 – 2017)</b>		
	<b>3. Options Appraisal</b>		

## **OVERVIEW and RELEVANT INFORMATION**

### **1.0 Purpose of Report**

1.1 To provide Overview and Scrutiny Committee with –

- a) Background information regarding the most recent egg and nest removal programme, the contract for which has expired, and
- b) To provide options for discussion (including a preferred option), as to how the Council wishes to manage the gull breeding population moving forward

### **2.0 Background and Key Issues**

- 2.1 In Gloucester, the results from the gull breeding survey carried out in 2013, estimated around 1565 nesting pairs in the City. This was an increase of 4.9% compared with the survey carried out in 2011. Previous surveys carried out between 2006 and 2009 confirmed increases of 6% and therefore it would suggest that the work that the City Council carried out over that intervening period had slowed down the rate of population growth.
- 2.2 A tendering process was carried out in 2014 to procure a contract for a three year programme of egg & nest removal, the aim being to reduce the gull breeding population. Mitie Pest Control Ltd. was the successful Contractor, and with this contract having expired in September 2017 the Council now needs to consider its programme for future years.
- 2.3 The removal of eggs and nests combined with falconry is a departure from the method of egg oiling the Council employed in previous years. It is hoped that by continuously disrupting the breeding cycle the birds will be permanently deterred from nesting and the number of birds reaching breeding age reduced.

- 2.4 This innovative method used over such a large area, is not, as far as we aware, being replicated in any other area of the country and so we do not have any data from other towns and cities with which we can use as a comparison.
- 2.5 Since the start of the breeding season in 2015, all accessible eggs & nests from identified sites have been removed. A map indicating the location of these sites is included at **Appendix 1**.
- 2.6 The Contractor initially carried out six visits during the breeding season but this was changed to 5 visits after Year 1 due to the last visit in season yielding very little. This also allowed us to re-direct resource to additional sites that were identified as causing issues.
- 2.7 A breakdown of results is included at **Appendix 2** and you will note that in Year 1 (2015) 1165 nests and 2841 eggs were removed from the identified sites. Year 2 (2016) yielded similar results with 1159 nests and 2803 eggs being removed. It is promising to note however that in Year 3 (2017) there has been a significant reduction in the number of nests and eggs removed, with 758 nests and 1359 being recorded respectively. This is a 35% reduction in nests and a 52% reduction in eggs across the identified sites.
- 2.8 These results indicate that the 3 year programme of nest & egg removal has been successful in reducing gull activity and population on the identified sites. It maybe however that deterring birds from their favoured nesting sites has had the impact of displacing them to other areas of the city. There are early indications that this maybe happening as the Council has received anecdotal evidence although the number of annual complaints received about gulls remains steady at around 50 per year.
- 2.9 The possible presence of birds in these other areas does not necessarily indicate that they are choosing a different breeding site and it maybe that they are using the areas to forage for food, particularly as they have less opportunity to feed from traditional feeding grounds such as Hempsted Landfill Site.
- 2.10 Moving forward therefore Officers wish to present several options to Members for their consideration and these are outlined at **Appendix 3**. A preferred option is outlined at Section 6 of the report and includes the carrying out of a breeding gull survey and continuation of nest & egg removal at priority sites.
- 2.11 Officers believe that a survey is necessary to asses the impact of the on-going gull treatment programme but also to try and establish whether the more recent programme of nest & egg removal has displaced gulls into more residential areas of the City.
- 2.12 Alongside a survey it would be prudent to continue with a programme removing nest & eggs from priority sites as this year's results provide evidence that removing eggs is reducing the number of potential fledglings that are known to return to their original nesting location after 2 – 3 years. If the Council were to continue with this approach until 2019 then this would have the potential to continue reducing the City's gull population in these locations through to 2022.

### **3.0 Financial Implications**

- 3.1 The Council has available an annual budget of £20,000 for gull management. £10,000 of this is provided by the operators of Hempsted Landfill Site (via Gloucestershire County Council) as part of their environmental management obligations.
- 3.2 This budget (subject to Council's approval) will however reduce by 50% to £10,000 in 2020 with the planned closure of Hempsted Landfill Site.
- 3.3 For 2018 the preferred option would result in expenditure of between £4000 - £6000 on Gloucester City Breeding Gull Survey and the remainder of the budget being utilised to tackle the most active of those sites that have been targeted over the last 3 years.
- 3.4 For 2019 the preferred option would be to utilise the whole budget to tackle a range of areas that the 2018 Gloucester City Breeding Gull Survey has identified as requiring attention.

### **4.0 Legal Implications**

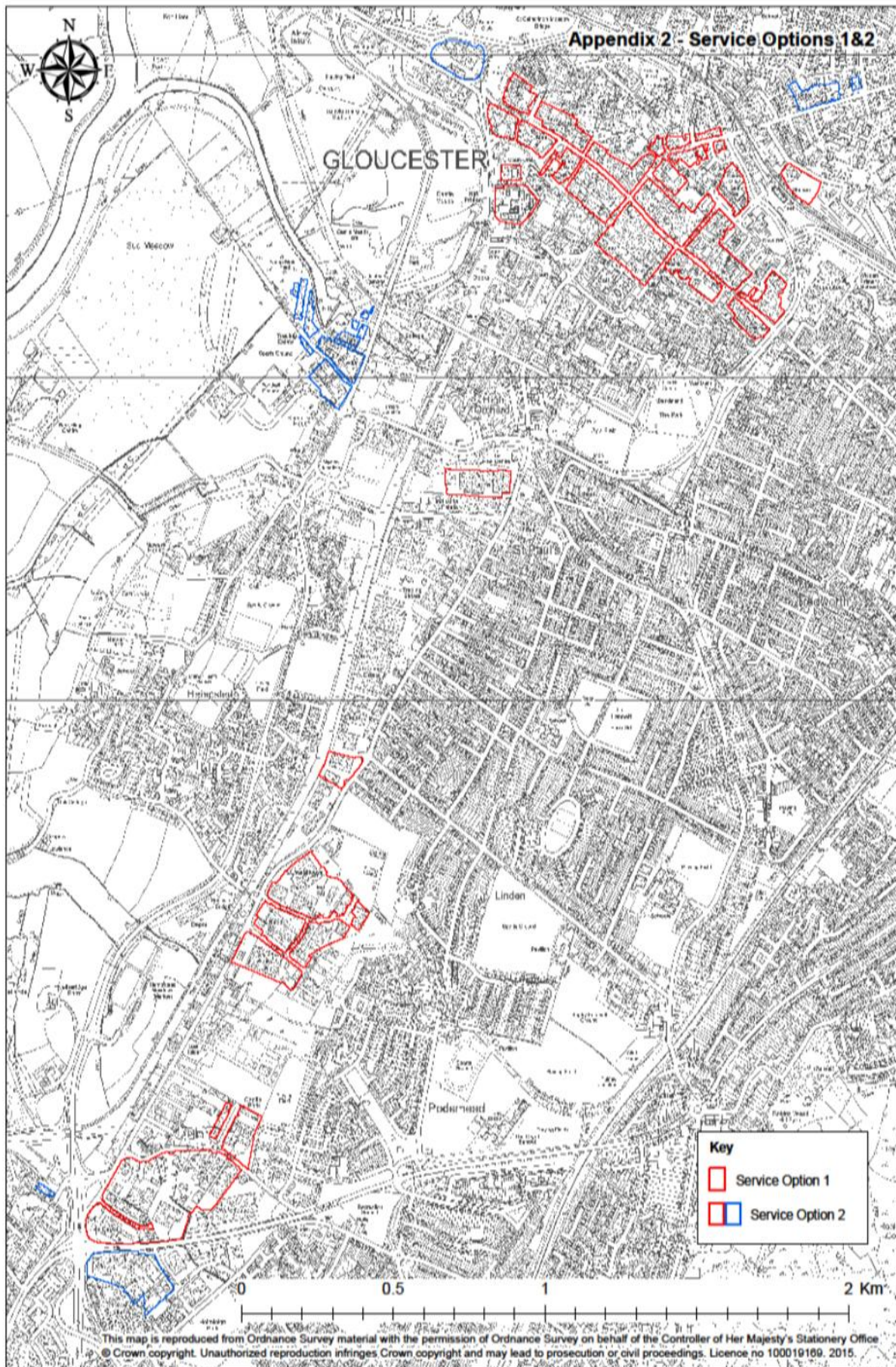
- 4.1 As a Local Authority there is no statutory obligation to control gulls and many Councils do not carry out the type of proactive work that has been undertaken, but simply provide advice & information.
- 4.4 Subject to approval by Cabinet any procurement exercise will be carried out in line with the Council's procurement rules.

### **5.0 Conclusions & Preferred Option**

- 5.1 The Council has over the last several years proactively implemented measures to reduce the gull population within the City. Surveys undertaken between 2006 and 2013 indicate that this work has had the impact slowing the population growth rate down.
- 5.2 The Nest & Egg Removal Programme which commenced in 2015 indicates that on those sites the programme has focussed on there has been a significant reduction in gull activity and population but that displacement of gulls to some extent has taken place.
- 5.3 The preferred option of officers is as follows –
- 1) To procure a contract for a Gloucester City Gull Survey to be carried out during 2018 from within the existing gull management budget (cost – circa £4000 - £6000);
  - 2) To procure a contract to continue undertaking a nest & egg removal programme across a reduced number of the existing identified sites (these to be determined through agreement with the contractor upon procurement) or a reduced number of visits across the full range of sites (value - circa £14,000 - £16,000), and

- 3) To use the results of the 2018 Gloucester City Gull Survey to inform our nest & egg removal programme for 2019 and beyond and in particular the location of sites to be focussed on.

# Appendix 1 – Map of Egg & Nest Removal Sites



## Appendix 2 – Breakdown of Results (2015 – 2017)

	V 1 - Nests	V 2 - Nests	V 3 - Nests	V 4 - Nests	V5 - nests	V6 – nests	Tot Nest	V1 - eggs	V2 - eggs	V3 - eggs	V4 - eggs	V5 - eggs	V6 - eggs	Tot Eggs
<b>2015</b>	392	335	264	119	50	5	<b>1165</b>	999	951	624	205	70	0	<b>2849</b>
<b>2016</b>	404	385	251	104	15	N/A	<b>1159</b>	404	385	251	104	15	N/A	<b>2803</b>
<b>2017</b>	166	292	177	75	48	N/A	<b>758</b>	124	605	448	146	36	N/A	<b>1359</b>
<b>Total 2015 - 2017</b>	<b>962</b>	<b>1012</b>	<b>692</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3082</b>	<b>1527</b>	<b>1941</b>	<b>1323</b>	<b>455</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7011</b>