

Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	Cabinet	Date:	6th December 2017
Subject:	Programme to Manage Urban Gull Breeding Population		
Report Of:	Cabinet Member for Environment		
Wards Affected:	All		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
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Appendices:	1. Map of Egg and Nest Removal Sites 2. Breakdown of Results (2015 – 2017)		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the results of the egg & nest removal programme and to seek Cabinet's approval to extend the current programme for a period of 1 year through to 1st April 2019 and to undertake a gull breeding survey during the summer of 2018 to assess the impact of the treatment programme.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to RESOLVE that:

- 1) The positive impact that the egg & nest removal programme has had on the treatment sites be noted and that the continuation of such a treatment programme in order to further decrease the urban gull population growth rate be endorsed.
- 2) Approval be granted for a 1 year extension of the current egg & nest removal contract through use of Condition 4 of the contract between the Council and Mitie Pest Control Ltd, and
- 3) Approval be granted to procure a gull breeding survey to be carried out in 2018 and for delegation to be provided to The Head of Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member of Environment and s.151 Monitoring Officer to award the contract in line with the Council's procurement rules.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

- 3.1 In 2015 the Council procured a 3 year contract to deliver programme of egg & nest removal, the aim being to reduce the gull breeding population. Mitie Pest Control Ltd. was the appointed contractor, and with this contract due expire on 1st April

2018 it is considered prudent to take a decision on how it wishes to proceed in managing the gull population moving forward at this stage.

- 3.2 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 population growth rate.
- 3.3 The removal of eggs and nests is a departure from the method of egg oiling and falconry the Council has 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.
- 3.4 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.
- 3.5 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**.
- 3.6 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 where there was evidence that nesting was taking place.
- 3.7 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.
- 3.8 These results indicate that the 3 year programme of nest & egg removal has been successful in reducing gull activity and population at the identified sites. It maybe however that deterring birds from their favoured nesting sites has had the impact of displacing them to other adjoining 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.
- 3.9 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 visiting these areas to forage for food, particularly as they have less opportunity to feed from traditional feeding grounds such as Hempsted Landfill Site.
- 3.10 This report seeks approval to continue with the existing programme of egg & nest removal in 2018, delivered by the Council's existing contractor via an extension clause that exists within the current contract. In addition the report seeks approval

to commission the undertaking of a gull breeding survey such as those that have been carried out periodically in previous years.

- 3.11 Officers are of the opinion that such a survey is necessary to assess 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.
- 3.12 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 in particular 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 in 2018 then as a minimum this would have the potential to continue slowing the population growth rate in these locations through to 2022.
- 3.13 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.
- 3.14 A discussion report was taken to Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 30th October 2017 and Members endorsed the recommendations as outlined at Section 2.1 (2) & 2.1 (3) of this report.

4.0 Asset Based Community Development Considerations

4.1 N/A

5.0 Alternative Options Considered

5.1 In considering how the Council takes forward its gull management work a number of alternative options were considered and these are outlined in the table below –

Measure	Indicative Cost (-) /Saving (+)	Benefit	Risk
Do Nothing	+ £10,000	Financial Saving	Undermines treatment work that has been carried out over last several years
Continue with Current Programme only	Nil	Full amount of budget to be spent on treatment programme	No formal assessment of impact on breeding gull population including displacement
Carry out Breeding Population Survey Only	+ £4,000 - £6,000	Financial Saving	Undermines treatment work that has been carried out over last several years

Cont.

Measure	Indicative Cost (-) /Saving (+)	Benefit	Risk
Utilise existing budget to offer funding for roof proofing and or gull scaring devices etc	Nil	Empowering and encouraging businesses / home owners to arrange for for gull proofing	Displacement of birds No control over quality, maintenance and location of works

6.0 Reasons for Recommendation

- 6.1 The egg & nest removal programme that has been in place over the last 3 years should be continued so that the positive results that have been recorded in 2017 are not undermined. Continuing with the current programme will mean that we can keep disrupting the breeding pattern of gulls but more importantly significantly reduce the number of gulls that are reaching breeding age each year.
- 6.2 To ascertain impact on gull numbers and in particular breeding pairs it is considered prudent to undertake a survey to compare and contrast the number of gulls at these sites from previous surveys. Having this information will inform the Council's treatment programme for future years.
- 6.3 Furthermore undertaking a survey will allow the Council to investigate whether displacement of gulls has taken place and if so to what extent, and as above this information is important in informing what future treatment programmes.

7.0 Future Work and Conclusions

- 7.1 Subject to approval work will firstly be undertaken to confirm an extension of the current egg & nest removal contract with Mitie Pest Control Ltd commencing 2nd April 2017.
- 7.2 In addition the Council will also concurrently commence a procurement exercise in order to procure a contractor to carry out a gull breeding survey in time for April 2018.

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 The cost of continuing with the existing gull treatment programme in 2018 and the carrying out of a survey during the same period can be covered from within the existing pest control budget available. Therefore no additional monies are requested.
- 8.2 It should be noted that a £10,000 contribution to the Council's gull management programme is provided by the operators of Hempsted Landfill Site (via Gloucestershire County Council) as part of their environmental management obligations. This £10,000 contribution is considered time limited as it is linked to the future of Hempsted Landfill Site which in turn is linked to the Javelin Park Energy to Waste Plant which is under construction.

9.0 Legal Implications

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

10.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

- 10.1 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications have been outlined at Section 5 of this report.

11.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA)

- 11.1 The PIA Screening Stage was completed and did not identify any potential or actual negative impact, therefore a full PIA was not required.

12.0 Other Corporate Implications

Community Safety

- 12.1 There are no community safety comments associated with this report.

Sustainability

- 12.2 There are no sustainability comments associated with this report.

Staffing / Trade Unions

- 12.3 There are no staffing or trade union comments associated with this report.

Safeguarding

- 12.4 There are no safeguarding comments associated with this report.