

PIGEONS - HIGH STREET RAYLEIGH (Min 375/96)

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report deals with the continuing problem of pigeons in Rayleigh High Street and evaluates control measures available to the Council.
- 1.2 The control of pigeons in built up areas is a discretionary function, however there is a statutory duty where a statutory nuisance arises.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This Committee considered the issue of increasing numbers of pigeons in Rayleigh in 1996 after concern was raised over the fouling of pavements and buildings, and possible health hazards.
- 2.2 At this time Members considered the possibility of culling the pigeons by trapping and humane destruction. This was recognised as a very emotive issue and there was considerable objection. It was decided to resolve the problem by educating the public not to feed pigeons and to ensure the pavements were regularly cleaned.
- 2.3 Signs were subsequently erected in the areas worst affected and an article in the Council's newspaper alerted the public to the nuisance caused by feeding pigeons. Regular pavement cleaning was introduced. Pavements in the High Street are currently swept twice a day in general areas, but more frequently in the worst affected areas.
- 2.4 The street cleansing regime has been the subject of recent reports to Members and under the new Street Cleansing Contract, a mechanical sweeper will operate in Rayleigh on a full time basis. This sweeper has a washing facility and will continue to wash the areas affected by pigeon mess and prevent any build up of the problem. In addition, the new contract provides for the cleansing of areas, including seating, affected by bird droppings. Council has also agreed a specific budget of £5000 for pigeon control in Rayleigh Town Centre next financial year.

3 OPTION APPRAISAL

- 3.1 The problem of large numbers of pigeons congregating in the High Street has continued despite the measures taken and information on methods of pigeon control has been updated. A summary of these controls is detailed in the appendix to this report

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- 3.2 It is clear that there is no easy solution. Other local authorities have tried a number of different control measures with varying degrees of success.
- 3.3 On balance the preferred solution remains to limit the food supply, which will in turn reduce the size of the pigeon population, coupled with measures to prevent pigeons roosting on buildings.
- 3.4 This means continuing with and reinforcing the education campaign, together with approaching owners and occupiers of premises in the High Street with a view to carry out proofing. If informal approaches fail, formal action may be possible where pigeons are causing a statutory nuisance.
- 3.5 Some non-food premises in Rayleigh have already been approached on an informal basis and proofing has been carried out as a result.
- 3.6 During routine inspections of food premises, officers will check that proper waste storage and disposal facilities are available. These premises can be further targeted as part of the campaign to limit the pigeons' food supply.
- 3.7 It is proposed that the special budget be used to fund proofing works to buildings on a prioritised basis. This will require Officers to survey the town centre to identify those buildings where proofing would be most effective and beneficial, and the type and extent of proofing required.
- 3.8 Signage requesting that people do not feed the pigeons should also be installed at appropriate locations, also to be funded from the budget provision.

4 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The proposed measures will reduce the fouling of buildings and footpaths and help minimise potential health hazards caused by pigeons.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The budget provision of £5000 will be spent as indicated, subject to the Committee's approval.
- 5.2 The recommended course of action will mean staff resources being diverted from other work. The amount of resources needed is difficult to quantify at this stage.

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- 5.3 In the event that Members decide alternative steps should be taken, the resource implications will be assessed and reported to a future meeting if they are likely to exceed the agreed budget and contract provisions.

6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Accumulations of pigeon excrement can give rise to a statutory nuisance under the provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The Council has a duty to deal with such nuisances and action can be taken against owners / occupiers of premises where nuisance exists.
- 6.2 There are also provisions under this Act to deal with litter. Enforcement is likely to be contentious and difficult since the majority of the food is quickly eaten.
- 6.3 The Council also has powers (but no duty) under the provisions of the Public Health Act 1961 to deal with nuisance, annoyance or damage caused by pigeons congregating in built up areas.

7 PARISH IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Rayleigh High Street is in the Rayleigh Town Council area.

8 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**
- (1) To continue to educate the public and businesses in order to minimise the available food supply for pigeons in Rayleigh High Street.
 - (2) To increase the signage in the High Street requesting the public not to feed the pigeons, to be funded from the specific budget provision.
 - (3) To utilise the Council's newspaper and other media to reinforce the message about not feeding the pigeons.
 - (4) To approach the owners/occupiers of affected premises to request that proofing measures be carried out and to use the specific budget provision to fund these works on a prioritised basis. (CDF&ES) (HHHCC).

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Background Papers:

None

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