



SCRUTINY TOPIC REGISTRATION

Date:	8 th June 2018
Name of person proposing topic:	Cllr Klara Sudbury, Cllr Tim Harman and Cllr Dilys Barrell
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Suggested title of topic:	CBC response to the problems caused to residents of Cheltenham by Urban Gulls, particularly during the nesting season
What is the issue that scrutiny needs to address?	
<p>The Council's response to reducing the urban gull population in residential areas where nesting gulls are causing problems. These areas include Tivoli, Montpellier, Lansdown, St Luke's as well as other places in the town where gulls choose to nest very close to residential property. Problems such as sleepless nights caused by the noise from parent gulls when their chicks have hatched, concerns about health problems that might arise from the large amount of gull droppings in affected areas, concern that the council budget is being invested in treating buildings in commercial use rather than treating properties where the nuisance more directly affects residents, concern that current budget is not sufficient to deal with urban gulls in areas where they are causing problems for residents.</p>	
What do you feel could be achieved by a scrutiny review (outcomes)	
<p>There are many issues related to the urban gull problem that need proper consideration. As we imagine there is further work needed to properly scope the working group we would suggest the following could be considered (though not restricted to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hear from officers from CBC or others with specialist knowledge of dealing with urban gulls about the obstacles to effectively treat gull eggs in residential areas e.g. knowing where nests are, safe access to nests, when road closures are needed etc and to consider solutions to overcome these obstacles • Look at best practice from other comparable councils to find out if / how they deal with gulls, particularly in residential areas, and any related budget issues • Assess if additional financial investment to tackle the issue would make it possible to deal with more nests given human resource available at the council • Explore ways the council could give better support to those residents who are willing and able to pay a private company to deal with any nests on their property • Investigate what powers are available - whether statutory or otherwise - to the council to require owners with gulls nesting to gull proof their roofs • Consider that if the powers are not sufficient, whether the council would write to ask the government to give them further powers • Hear from residents affected by the nuisance caused by gulls about the impact on their quality of life, mental and physical health • Create a comprehensive, publicly available report on the issue, reported to O&S and to Cabinet, to help all members of the council as well as members of the public understand more about gulls, the issues around effectively dealing with them and what the council can or can't and is or is not doing • Deliver a set of findings and recommendations which will provide an evidenced base to support any necessary changes to the budget needed to help reduce the urban gull population more effectively in residential as well as business areas of the town 	
If there a strict time constraint?	To report back to Scrutiny with recommendations to feed

	into the 2019-20 budget setting process in time for next year's breeding season.
Is the topic important to the people of Cheltenham?	This issue is of huge interest and concern to many residents in Cheltenham, particularly in areas such as Tivoli, Lansdown, Montpellier, St Luke's and the town centre.
Does the topic involve a poorly performing service or high public dissatisfaction with a service?	The current arrangements, whereby council resource is invested mainly in business areas such as Kingsditch and the town centre are effective in reducing the overall gull population in the town but are very ineffective at dealing with problems in, often densely populated, residential areas. The high level of dissatisfaction of many local residents has been expressed by dozens of angry emails to councillors and council officers in recent months as well as feedback received about the council's response to the problem at meetings of the Urban Gulls Forum.
Is it related to the Council's corporate objectives?	This review will support the corporate objectives that Cheltenham is a place where all our people and the communities they live in thrive. Where we champion people's mental and physical health (all night noise from gulls is keeping people awake all night affecting their mental and physical health). Also that we will listen and respond to communities, promoting a wide range of access to services.

Any other comments:

The Urban Gulls Forum was set up a number of years ago. Over the years local residents and councillors have met up twice a year or so to try to find a cost effective way of tackling the noise and mess issues related to nesting gulls.

The forum has provided a useful mechanism for local residents to tell councillors and council officers about the problems they are experiencing. However, there is concern that the forum does not have the time or resource to delve into the issue and potential solutions. Crucially there is a disconnect between the forum and the executive/scrutiny processes in the council which makes bringing evidence based proposals for changes in policy or budget very difficult.

A formal and organised scrutiny review will enable members to fact-find and make clear recommendations to the cabinet and into the budget setting process the issue. Without it we are concerned there is a risk that this issue which is so important to many residents could be left to drift.

The current situation is not only causing distress to residents affected but also having a significant impact on the reputation of the council. Conducting a thorough overview and scrutiny review of the situation and assessing any potential solutions will help inform what the council can reasonably do to help keep the gull population down in residential as well as business areas.

OFFICER IMPLICATIONS

Date:	11 June 2018
Officer name:	Mark Nelson, Enforcement Manager
Officers have already had discussions with members about the option of setting up a scrutiny task group and there are no further comments at this stage.	