

Decision Session - Executive Member for Culture, Leisure & Tourism, 24 June 2016

Report of the AD Governance & ICT

Goose Management Scrutiny Review - Cover Report

Introduction

1. This cover report re-presents the final report from the Goose Management Scrutiny Review and asks the Executive Member for Culture, Leisure & Tourism to reconsider the review recommendations, in light of the additional information presented in this report.

Review Recommendations

2. In March 2016, the Communities & Environment Policy & Scrutiny Committee considered the Goose Management Task Group's review findings as presented in the final report at Appendix 1 and endorsed the review draft recommendations as listed below:
 - i) Officers to carry out a number of trials to test the effectiveness of various measures i.e.
 - A licensed chemical (if sourced)
 - A droppings collection machine
 - Ultrasound audio
 - Amend the fencing at War Memorial Gardens
 - Expand and refresh signage in public parks and open spaces
 - ii) To inform the current annual egg treatment works undertaken by the council and to inform a future integrated goose management strategy for the city, Executive to consider providing funding from the additional ward funding monies allocated for environmental projects, to enable a survey to be undertaken of the city's Canada & Greylag goose population, and to map nesting sites across the whole CYC administrative area.

- iii) Officers to draft an integrated goose management strategy for the Executive's consideration (taking account of the findings from the various trials and the survey), which identifies:
- A range of measures suitable for specific public spaces/parks
 - The costs and resource requirements associated with those measures
 - Appropriate funding options to include ward funding, capital budget etc.
 - A monitoring regime to assess the strategy's effectiveness
- iv) Permission to be sought from private land owners identified in ii) for access to treat eggs laid on their land
- v) The strategy's effectiveness to be monitored over several years, before consideration is given to whether a cull is required in support of the strategy.

Reason: To assist in the development of a suitable long term strategy for the management of geese in York and to conclude this scrutiny review in line with scrutiny procedures and protocols.

3. In April 2016, the review final report was presented to the Executive by Councillor Kramm (Chair of the Task Group) who provided a comprehensive run through of the review work undertaken, which had led to the recommendations above. Cllr Kramm also confirmed the Scrutiny Committee's view that the recommended actions would provide the city with a much needed long-term strategy for the management of geese.
4. The Executive thanked the Task Group for their work but raised concerns regarding the resourcing and officer time required to produce and implement an integrated goose management strategy. The Executive Member for Culture, Leisure & Tourism confirmed that, whilst not fully supportive of the review recommendations, he would be willing to see officers continue to trial various measures in an effort to alleviate the problems detailed in the report.
5. The Executive chose not to approve the recommendations as presented. Instead they referred the review recommendations back to the Communities & Environment Policy & Scrutiny Committee with a request that they be reconsidered in line with budget constraints, and redrafted for further consideration by the Executive Member for Culture, Leisure & Tourism.

6. In May 2016 the Scrutiny Committee considered the Executive's request but agreed that the original recommendations as presented to the Executive in April 2016 were the most appropriate to properly address the needs of the city in relation to goose management. It was agreed that officers should provide the Executive Member with any appropriate additional information available to support him in his re-consideration of the review recommendations.

Additional Information in support of Review Recommendations

7. Recommendation i) – Officers to carry out a number of trials
The Public Realm Operations Manager (Strategy & Contracts) has confirmed that it would be possible to carry out all of the proposed trials to test the effectiveness of various measures without the need of additional resources.
8. Recommendation ii) – Carry out a survey of the city's goose population
Having considered the quotes received the Public Realm Operations Manager (Strategy & Contracts) has confirmed that the cost of carrying out a survey would have been £6k had that work been undertaken this year. However, as the nesting period has now past, there may be a slight increase in that cost should it be agreed that the work be undertaken during next year's nesting period which will fall within the 2017/18 financial year.
9. The Council currently spends £900 a year treating eggs in known nests on council land. It would be possible to increase this programme within the existing budget; however, those wards who wished to participate in the expanded programme would need to fund the initial survey. It is expected that those wards would be Micklegate, Heworth, Guildhall & Fishergate. This would be a legitimate use of their ward environmental budget. The Public Realm Operations Manager (Strategy & Contracts) would commission the work. The purpose of the survey would be to identify more nests than those currently treated, which if included in future annual egg treatment works would have a more positive impact on reducing goose numbers.
10. Recommendation iii) – Drafting an Integrated Goose Management Strategy
It is accepted that it will not be possible to draft a citywide strategy without impacting on current staffing resources.

However, as a result of the work undertaken on the review, a number of measures have already been identified that would improve the negative impact of geese on a number of specific sites across the city e.g. Rowntree Park, Memorial Gardens etc. It is therefore suggested that the relevant Ward Councillors may wish to consider whether they want to implement any of the measures identified by the review within their wards and use their ward funding to enable the necessary works.

11. In regard to the proposed purchase of a goose droppings collection machine, officers have agreed to proceed with a trial of the machine. They have agreed that, should it prove a success, it may be possible to purchase the equipment using existing budgets for this financial year provided that there is a commitment from wards who wish to use their budgets to operate it in their respective areas.
12. Recommendation iv) – Seeking permission to treat eggs laid on private land

Officers have confirmed that complaints and requests on how to deal with geese have been received from private landowners and businesses, not only where geese have been nesting but also where they have been grazing. Therefore it is expected that they would be receptive to a request for the Council to treat eggs in nests found on their land.
13. Implementation of this recommendation would only be required as a result of recommendation (ii) being implemented. The survey would identify the number of landowners / businesses to be contacted. This could be done either in writing or, to reduce costs, by email. Alternatively, as the company that undertakes the survey would need to seek permission to access any privately owned land to carry out the survey, they could perhaps at the same time request permission for future treatment of eggs in any nests found, (explaining that this would be a yearly event). At the very least they could record the email contact details of each private landowner to minimise the work required to later seek permission to treat eggs in nests found on their land.
14. Recommendation v) – monitoring the effectiveness of an integrated strategy

As the proposal now is that wards would implement their own measures in response to specific issues in their ward, it would be up to those wards to monitor the effectiveness of those measures.

Options

15. Having considered the further information provided by officers, the Executive Member may choose to:
 - a. Approve some or all of the review recommendations
 - b. Instruct officers to carry out alternative works
 - c. Reject some or all of the recommendations

Implications

16. The implications associated with each recommendation were originally identified in the review final report (as shown at Appendix 1). The additional information provided by officers in this cover report also seeks to address those implications.

Recommendations

7. Having considered the additional information provided by officers detailed in paragraphs 7-14 above, the Executive Member for Culture, Leisure & Tourism is invited to reconsider the recommendations arising from the Goose Management Scrutiny Review.

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Report Approved

Date

31 May 2016

Wards Affected:

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: None

Annexes: Goose Management Scrutiny Review Final Report to
Communities & Environment Policy & Scrutiny Committee: 15 March 2016
<http://modgov.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=670&MId=8917&Ver=4>