



## Report of the Convener

Natural Environment Scrutiny Performance Panel – 22 October 2019

### Public Concerns – Gull Nuisance

<b>Purpose</b>	The Panel has been asked by the Scrutiny Programme Committee to deal with a public request for scrutiny concerning problem with gull nuisance.
<b>Content</b>	This report outlines the public concerns and appends relevant information for the Panel's consideration including a report from the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure Management, Councillor Mark Thomas.
<b>Councillors are being asked to</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consider the public concerns and information provided</li><li>• Make comments and recommendation as necessary</li></ul>
<b>Lead Councillor(s)</b>	Councillor Peter Jones (convener)
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#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Members of the public are able to make requests for scrutiny by contacting the Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee or Scrutiny Team in writing detailing the issue of concern, its impact, and suggested action. A public request for scrutiny was received in July and was reported by the Chair of the Committee to the Scrutiny Programme Committee at its meeting on 12 August to consider what to do with the request.
- 1.2 The request for scrutiny came from residents of Mayals with concern about nuisance from gulls and anti-social behaviour of people feeding the gulls within communities and urban areas. There is concern that the Council is failing to safeguard residents' well-being, health and safety by not deterring those feeding the birds. The members of the public have already been in contact with the Council about the issues being experienced in their community but to date have been advised the Council is unable to take any action, such as carrying out a public campaign. The Committee will note that Swansea had a campaign a few years ago to get the public to 'feed the bins, not the birds'. The Committee should also note that this issue was reported upon in the

South Wales Evening Post (Front Page and p5, 18 July 2019) and has also been raised at Welsh Government level by Dr Dai Lloyd, AM for South Wales West in order that there is a consistent approach across Wales by local councils. A copy of the press article is **appended**.

- 1.3 It was agreed by the Committee that this matter be referred to the Natural Environment Scrutiny Performance Panel to explore the concerns, seek response from relevant Cabinet Member / officer(s), hear from relevant persons, discuss possible solutions, and consider whether, and what, action may be necessary to recommend. The Committee acknowledged that this issue affected residents across Swansea.

## **2 Information for Consideration**

- 2.1 The persons making the request for scrutiny, Mr Phil Slater and Mrs Caroline Slater on behalf of Mayals Friends and Residents Group, have been invited to the Panel meeting to outline the issues. They are calling on the Council to follow the growing number of other Authorities in Wales and the UK to tackle this issue. At the very least they suggest the Council could prepare a generic warning letter to send to a minority (but growing number) of anti-social residents intent on feeding them.
- 2.2 Amongst the specific issues they have raised in correspondence include:
- Residents and pets being attacked by gulls in Mayals and surrounding areas.
  - Spread of urban gulls having detrimental effect on residents' quality of life and mental well-being. They are very large and aggressive birds and their invasion of our neighbourhood is extremely stressful to live with.
  - Being woken in the early hours of the morning as it is impossible to sleep through the gulls screeching.
  - Residents are no longer able to enjoy their gardens in relative peace due to the gulls calling to be fed and/or those now nesting in the immediate area.
  - Some residents are now afraid to let their children play unattended in their own gardens and can no longer let them take food outside for fear of attack.
  - Residents have to put up with damage to their property, and residents' washing and property (cars / windows) is regularly defecated on.
  - Residents are faced with significant costs to try and gull-proof their homes and carry an increased risk of their chimney flues being blocked with nesting material, which can lead to carbon monoxide poisoning.
  - Council's refusal to take action to stop anti-social individuals feeding the gulls and engage with residents on this issue, and misunderstanding the problem. The only advice the Council has offered to date is for residents to gull-proof their homes, but the

quotations received so far from 3 pest control companies are cost prohibitive.

- Some residents have been intimidated by the actions of some anti-social individuals.
- The avian expert & urban gull specialist Peter Rock advises that the only way to control the number of urban gulls and their invasion of the urban environment is to control their food source.
- This issue will not go away by itself, is now intolerable, and will only get worse

They have provided a copy of a poster [Mumbles Community Council](#) has published on its website '10 reasons not to feed seagulls' – see **attached**.

- 2.3 The relevant Cabinet Member, Councillor Mark Thomas (Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure Management), will attend the meeting, and has provided a written report (see **Appendix 3**) to account for the Council's position on this matter, and respond to the public concern. The relevant Head of Service, Mark Wade (Head of Housing & Public Health) and Team Leader (Pollution Control & Private Sector Housing), Tom Price will also attend to help present the report and provide advice. This report also includes input from legal services about powers and actions available.
- 2.4 Information provided by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds is also attached (**Appendix 4**). This includes advice obtained from Katie-Jo Luxton, Director of RSPB Cymru, and relevant information from the RSPB's website.

**Background Papers:** None

**Appendices:**

**Appendix 1** – South Wales Evening Post Newspaper Article

**Appendix 2** – Poster – 10 reasons not to feed seagulls

**Appendix 3** – Report of the Cabinet Member for Environment & infrastructure Management – Urban Gulls in Mayals

**Appendix 4** – Information provided by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds