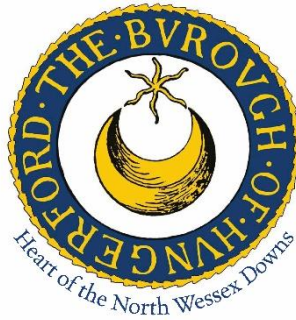


# HUNGERFORD TOWN COUNCIL

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**MINUTES** of the **Highways and Transport Committee** held on 25 November 2019 at 7pm in The Library Building, Hungerford.

**Present:** Cllrs Chicken, Knight, Hudson Also, District Councillor James Cole, RFO, Newbury Weekly News.

1. **Apologies for absence** – Noted from Cllrs Simpson, Downes, Fyfe, Gaines, Hawkins
2. **Declarations of interest** – None.
3. **Agreement of minutes of meeting held on 23 September 2019:** *Cllr Knight proposed the minutes as a true record, seconded by Cllr Chicken, Cllr Downes abstained.*
4. **Update on Actions from previous meetings.**
  - a) **Parking - Cllr Chicken has not yet visited the 3 Swans.**
  - b) **Streetlights - ordered.**
  - c) **Library sign – work-in-progress**
5. **Budget Setting 2020/2** The RFO presented the draft budget to the committee. The committee discussed the report and agreed changes to the draft budget. Cllr Knight proposed a motion to vir £1500 from the noticeboard reserves to the CCTV camera budget head. Seconded R Downes. All agreed. The committee also agreed –
  - a. To increase the litter bin budget to £1000 to account for recycling.
  - b. To reduce the £100 footpaths budget to zero.
  - c. To reduce the salt bins budget to £1500.
  - d. An additional £2000 for pigeon control.
  - e. Reduce railway improvements to £3500.
  - f. Streetlights – reduce to £5000.
  - g. To increase income from Christmas lights donations to £7000.A net draft budget of £66953 was agreed. Proposed R Chicken, Seconded K Knight.
6. **Result of WBC speeding panel (speed limit task group) review Lower Denford & Common** – Review on the Common – the panel agreed to reduce the speed limit to 30mph. The Lower Denford review failed, it may succeed in a subsequent review. The committee agreed Cllr Hudson will write to Paul Hendry at West Berks to request a traffic island at the Lower Denford traffic junction. **Action Cllr Hudson.**
7. **PPP Report** – The Chairman agreed, in accordance with Standing Order 1. (b) to move the order of business of agenda item 10. The report was presented (Appendix 1). It was agreed that PPP must clarify the use of gel as a long-term solution. The committee agreed to put the matter to the Full Council at the January 2020 meeting in order to set up Pigeon Working Party. The purpose of the working party is to produce a report on the costs and solutions of pigeon control and present to Full Council for decision.
8. **Wildflower areas** – deferred to the next meeting.

9. **Report of speeding vehicles in Eddington** – nothing to discuss.
10. **Funding options HI bus route** – Cllr Knight reported. Due to the West Berks subsidy ending in March 2020 the bus will only run once a week on a Wednesday.

## **Pigeons in Hungerford High Street and Bridge Street**

### **Review 2016 - 2019**

#### **Why do we wish to reduce the number of pigeons?**

Risk to public health: Feral pigeons act as reservoirs for many micro-organisms and zoonotic organisms which can cause infections and allergic diseases. Pathogens can be transmitted to humans by excreta, secretions or dust meaning that direct contact with the bird is not required. Though risk of transmission to healthy humans is low, there is a greater risk of infection with immuno-depressed people

Feral pigeons can also be the source of accidents. This can arise from slipping on surfaces covered in pigeon droppings.

Damage to buildings: Litter from the birds, either through dropping from nest and roosting sites falls onto roads, pavements and buildings. The acidic nature of the substance can cause brickwork and woodwork to deteriorate.

#### **Steps taken to review the problem 2016**

A survey was carried out in by Countrywide Pest Management in July 2016. The report notes the following:

- Well established pigeon colony
- Numerous methods of control have been used e.g. netting, spikes

The control methods have caused the population to be moved to other areas of the town. This was further exacerbated by the pigeon proofing of the railway bridge. In addition, the pigeon number has increased, with estimates of 50-70 pigeons in the town (July 2016) and given that female pigeons reach sexual maturity at 7 months the population will only continue to expand.

Data, from published research, shows that

- A mating pair can produce 15-20 young every year
- A female can lay 60-80 eggs
- After mating, 1-3 eggs are laid which hatch after 18 days
- Chicks leave the nest around 30 days
- More eggs can be laid in the nest before the first chick leaves

Pigeon numbers reflect the food that is available to them, and a reduction in food would be effective in reducing numbers over time. The main food points in Hungerford are between the canal where people feed the ducks/have picnics and outside the Hungerford Arcade where the kebab van parks in the evening. It has also been observed that pigeons also congregate at the Three Swans, now there is a seating area at the front and food is consumed/dropped.

#### *Control methods suggested:*

- Legal trapping and dispatching of pigeons

## Appendix 1

- Falconry response
- Shooting at night time (in line with the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981)
- Birth control
- Reduction in food availability

Method	Pros	Cons
Legal trapping and dispatching of pigeons	A quick reduction in numbers by 80 %.	Time taken to train the birds to enter the trap; Public perception of trapping.
Falconry response	Make the area undesirable and encourage birds to move elsewhere; Green alternative to culling.	Expensive with a number of repeat visits. Risk of dead pigeons on street.
Shooting at night time	Carried out at night	Public perception and history of town
Birth control	Control by fertility management by feeding with coated corn – slow reduction of numbers.	Expensive, time consuming and must be maintained. Effect on other birds/water ways? Unsure if currently licenced for use in UK
Individual proofing measures	Effective on applied area	Moves problem on
Reduction in food availability	Education time	Time taken to alter behaviours

In 2018 Hungerford Town Council in conjunction with Town and Manor drafted a document “to produce a vision of how the pigeon levels in Hungerford can be controlled to a manageable number... it is hoped that using a variety of methods and taking a long-term view that the pigeon numbers can be maintained at a low population level”.

“The approach would split into three veins:

1. Education of the local population on what HTC and T&M are trying to achieve and why
2. Provide an alternative breeding location
3. The use of pigeon anti-roosting devices”

### **Involvement of Public Protection Partnership (PPP) Environmental Health Team 2019 Review**

Many conversations have taken place with Environmental Health and I have walked the town with a member of the Environmental health team this summer. At the time of this meeting he noted that there have been many problems with pigeons in Hungerford over the years and recommended that pigeon culling needs to take place in Hungerford High Street.

It is of important note that culling of feral pigeons is carried out under licence (issued by Natural England under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981). It is required that the process is justified under licence when there is a threat to public health and other non-lethal methods of control are found to be impractical or

## Appendix 1

ineffective. Hence, it is recommended that control methods are used in combination, generally a culling method and a proofing method.

However it was agreed that culling by way of shooting the birds is not a control that is appropriate given Hungerford's tragic history.

### Alternative view to culling

In 2016 an alternative approach was considered as promoted by the Pigeon Control Advisory Service. ([www.picasuk.com](http://www.picasuk.com)). This approach uses humane and non-lethal methods, following research which has demonstrated that killing birds as a method of control acts to increase the population size.

It was noted in Basel (Switzerland) that the bird population had increased 33 % following 24 years of the council trying to reduce the population size. It was decided to act on the source of the problem which was the persistent feeding of birds in combination with excessive use of culling.

A massive public information campaign began to educate people about feeding the pigeons and the resultant over population. The city provided 9 designated feeding areas where people could feed the pigeons and adjacent to this were well-kept and controlled lofts where pigeons could breed and roost. The lofts were cleaned weekly (in 1 yr. 10 501 kg of excrement removed!). Eggs were also removed and replaced with dummy eggs. This led to a significant drop in the population numbers.

Use of Dovecotes and designated feeding areas have been used in the UK.

Reference: [http://picasuk.com/alternatives\\_to\\_lethal\\_bird\\_control.html](http://picasuk.com/alternatives_to_lethal_bird_control.html)

Feral Pigeons: Problems, Dynamics and Control Methods – paper in office

Whilst the initial summer walk about identified the need for culling the September 2019 survey identified pigeon numbers in Hungerford High Street were not observed to be excessive given similar surveys undertaken over the years within other council areas overseen by the Public Protection Partnership Environmental Health Team such as Wokingham BC and Bracknell Forest Council.

In September survey Officers met with Councillor Keith Knight, the Deputy Mayor. He explained the Town Council had funded an exercise a few years ago to reduce the pigeon numbers. West Berkshire Council had engaged with Network Rail who had put spikes and netting under the bridge to protect the pavements (but not the road). The Town Council also employ a street cleaner who clears the pavements twice a day.

It is believed this proactive collective approach has been beneficial in keeping the pigeon numbers from becoming excessive. However the survey has identified measures that could be taken to improve the situation further:

Premises favoured by pigeons	Observations	Proofing Required	Additional Measures required
130 High Street – Vacant property	Pigeon mess under frontage. No pigeon proofing observed.	Yes	Contact owner to request pigeon proofing installed

## Appendix 1

Under the Bridge	Pigeon spiking come off on one side	Yes	Contact Network Rail to ask that the proofing on the bridge be mended. Cllr Knight suggested netting on the entire underside of the bridge. Whilst there were some pigeons nesting there it could be a huge logistical exercise that would not have that much benefit as people are not walking on the road.
Town Hall			Polite request that the Town Council does not put flower pots on the ledges of the shops next year (to take away potential places to nest).
Sign for Clock Makers (on archway of Wessex signs	Mess concentrated under sign	Yes	Request removal of the sign – or install pigeon proofing.
TSB	Pigeon mess under frontage. No pigeon proofing observed.	Yes	Contact owner to request pigeon proofing is installed.
The Plume	Pigeon mess under frontage. No pigeon proofing observed.	Yes	Contact owner to request pigeon proofing is installed.
Marc Allen	Pigeon mess under frontage. Pigeons nesting behind Town Council Pots. No pigeon proofing observed.	Yes	Contact owner to request pigeon proofing is installed. Removal of pots.
The Kitchen Mongers	Pigeons on the roof.	Yes	Contact owner to request pigeon proofing is installed.
The Courtyard (Elvians, Hungerford Book Shop)	Pigeon mess under frontage. No pigeon proofing observed.	Yes	Contact owner to request pigeon proofing is installed.
115 & 115A – possible residential property?	Pigeon mess under frontage. There is proofing on the sign. Pigeons are nesting behind the Town Council Pots.	Yes	Contact owner to request further pigeon proofing is installed. Removal of pots.
Mr Dodd's Hardware.	Pigeon mess on ground despite daily cleaning by shop owner.	Yes	Removal of metal sign poles to prevent birds sitting on it an fouling the ground below
WH Smith	Repellent gel in use on shop roof. No birds were observed on this property unlike the number birds	No	Maintain proofing method as appear to be effective at this time

## Appendix 1

	seen nesting on the property next door (Mr Dodd's Hardware).		
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### 2019 Survey Outcome

In order to take forward the control measures suggested by Environmental Health, letters can be sent to owner/occupiers of the addresses above with guidance for pigeon proofing. It must however be acknowledged that Environmental Health have advised they could not realistically take enforcement action on any of the owner/occupiers not choosing to cooperate.

The survey identified the most effective proofing appears to be repellent gel. This was evident when viewing the WH Smith building where no birds were seen as opposed to the building next door, Mr Dodd's Hardware store where a large number of birds were nesting.

The gel also offers a more aesthetic appeal as opposed to spikes and netting. This was not a measure favoured by Hungerford Town Council previously as it did not appear to work for reasons unknown.

However research suggests the gel is effective against the larger bird such as the pigeon because it feels sticky on their feet & Pigeons learn to avoid the area where gel is applied. It does not kill them but makes them feel extremely uncomfortable if they get it on their feet.

It is known to be effective if applied correctly by following the instructions. It is also an easy product to apply and is transparent so does not look unsightly which cannot be said for spikes and netting.

The letter will therefore include all types of proofing so that owners/occupiers may provide the best type for their particular building. Environmental Health can advise on the proofing but cannot recommend products.

As stated previously pigeon numbers reflect the food that is available to them, and a reduction in food would be effective in reducing numbers over time. Education by way of a campaign of the local population as put forward by Hungerford Town Council and Town & Management in 2018 would be a good way of delivering the message that a collective approach is necessary and denying a food source to feral pigeons would be key.

Finally the use of Dovecotes in a designated area will also compliment the above measures. Not only will they provide a controlled environment but will again add an aesthetic value to Hungerford and the surrounding area.